

SAMVIT

(Knowledge that leads to enlightenment)



SRI SARADA MATH, DAKSHINESWAR, CALCUTTA-700 076

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SAMVIT

स नो बुद्ध्या शुभया संयुनक्तु ।

May He endow us with good thoughts.

Shvetashvatara Upanishad III. 4.

Universal Prayers

अहं रुद्रेभिर्वसुभिश्चराम्यहमादित्यैरुत विश्वदेवैः ।

अहं मित्रावरुणोभा बिभर्म्यहमिन्द्राग्नी अहमश्विनोभा ॥

I am the source and the sustainer of the powers which radiate from Rudras and Vasus, Adityas and Vishvadevas, Mitra and Varuna, Indra, Agni and the Ashwinas.

* * *

अहं राष्ट्री सङ्गमनी वसूनां चिकितुषी पथमा यज्ञिप्रानाम् ।

तां मा देवा व्यदधुः पुरुत्रा भूरिस्थात्रां भूर्यविशयन्तीम् ॥

I am the Divine Mother, the bestower of wealth; I am the knower of Brahman; the main receiver of all libations. All the divine powers function everywhere, and in every way through me who have entered all creation.

REFLECTIONS

'I Have a Message to Give'

'I HAVE a message to give, let me give it to the people who appreciate it and who will work it out. What care I who takes it? "He who doeth the will of my Father" is my own.'

'I have a message for the world which I will deliver without fear, and without care for the future.'

'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.'

'I have a message to the West, as Buddha had a message to the East.'

These words of Swami Vivekananda bear the stamp of authority and were not uttered in vain. He was the person who said, 'I shall carry out my plans or die in the attempt.'

The sum and substance of Swamiji's message was:

'Each soul is potentially divine.'

The goal is to manifest this divine within, by controlling nature, external and internal.

Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one, or more, or all of these—and be free.

This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'

The Purpose of Preaching Vedanta

Swamiji went to America in 1893 to attend the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. It was a congregation of high dignitaries from the religions and creeds in the world. There were men advanced in age, learned and pious. Swamiji, however, was a twenty-nine-year old stranger, without name or fame to recommend him. But he was a man of erudition, steeped in the sacred lore of his country; he had spent years in ascetic discipline, and had unbounded courage. All this in that gathering helped him to go from obscurity to the pinnacle of fame.

Those who attended the Parliament thought their task was accomplished when the sessions ended and went back to

their own countries satisfied. But Swamiji stayed on in America. Why? He said in his first lecture in Calcutta on his return from America, 'My mission in America was not to the Parliament of Religions. That was only something by the way, it was only an opening, an opportunity.'

His experience at the Parliament of Religions no doubt confirmed in him the idea that what the world needed then was the message of Vedanta as practised and taught by Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji had sat at his guru's feet and learnt his lessons, drinking deep at the perennial fountain of Upanishadic wisdom. He therefore went to convey to the West the message of Vedanta, which had long been silent, but was never stilled. Through his lectures and writings Swamiji reawakened Vedanta to resonant life.

When earnest inquirers flocked to Swamiji to learn more about Vedanta, he gave all that was in him to the world without stint. Thus we see that although in Swamiji's mind had been the thought that he would go to affluent America to get aid for his poor country, gradually his conception of his mission matured. Marie Louise Burke, understanding America's needs of the time, writes in her book, *Swami Vivekananda in the West* (1967) that he believed that Vedanta was:

'... the one unifying force of all the diverse religious, philosophical, and cultural outlooks of man. He showed it to be the philosophy of all religions, the inevitable and ultimate conclusion of science, the justification of all social, moral, psychic, and philosophical efforts of man to realize his own glory, and the method by which that glory might be fully attained. Vedanta, as he conceived it, was India's saving gift to the world ...'

The Medium of Spreading His Message

Swamiji spread his message through the spoken word and the written word. The current eight volumes of the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* include his lectures and interviews, which comprise two thirds of his spoken words. The remaining one third of the matter includes his writings—articles, poems, and letters. Today his teachings have spread wide in the world and he is recognized as a world teacher, and this is because of his rational religious convictions; his wide range

of knowledge; his eloquence; his ready wit and humour; his intensity of feeling, and his passionate adherence to truth. No messenger of God has ever given to the world such an invaluable vast treasure of ideas and ideals.

Swamiji wanted to publish books but it was difficult for him at that stage, while he was in the West. He quickly saw, however, that another popular means of propagating ideas was to publish magazines. Magazines appeared periodically and contained a variety of material designed to appeal to particular groups of interests. Thus there were magazines of general interest, women's magazines, literary and political magazines, philosophical and scientific magazines, and also scholarly journals. Magazines were widely read and occupied the large middle-ground between books and newspapers. The idea of printing magazines came to Swamiji's mind because the lectures he gave at the Parliament of Religions and after, created sometimes bitter controversies, especially in his battle with the Christian missionaries. Marie Louise Burke tells us (1.464) how details of these debates were published in various periodicals such as the *Outlook*, the *Forum*, the *Arena*, the *Monist* and so on. Swamiji never replied to criticisms levelled against him. That was a negative attitude, he thought, and he shunned it. Instead, he thought of a *positive* way of sending out his message to the people—both in India and outside—and that was by publishing magazines. As soon as he thought of it, he put it into action.

The first person Swamiji wrote to about starting a magazine was Alasinga Perumal of Madras. He not only encouraged and guided him in this new venture of publishing a magazine to disseminate Sri Ramakrishna's and Vedanta's message but promised to give him financial help. Like an expert editor, he gave him detailed instructions regarding the policy to be followed, style to be adopted, and so on. 'Start the journal and I will send you articles from time to time' (11-7-1894). 'Calculate the cost of starting the magazine . . . how much the least is necessary to start it . . . and I will send you money myself' (31-8-1894). 'I will also make many subscribers . . . ' (29-9-1894). 'The journal must not be flippant but steady, calm and high-toned. Get hold of a band of fine, steady writers' (6-5-1895). With this backing Alasinga Perumal was able to bring out the first issue of the *Brahmavadin*, a bi-monthly, on 14 September

1895. Swamiji was happy and proud at his disciple's achievement. He wrote to him, 'The *Brahmavadin* is a jewel : it must not perish' (6-8-1896). It later became a monthly.

Any work that Swamiji undertook was God's work, and he made his followers aware of it. He made them understand his formula, 'work is worship'. This is a lesson for all his followers to learn for all time. '[Have] entire devotion to the cause, knowing that your SALVATION depends upon making the *Brahmavadin* a success. Let this paper be your Ishtadevata, and then you will see how success comes' (8-8-1896). The *Brahmavadin* was well reviewed by other periodicals and newspapers. To quote an instance: On 20 February 1896, the *Madras Times* reported, 'It is a scholarly exponent of philosophical Hinduism, and is of considerable literary merit. It has largely met with commendations from high quarters. . . .' But this high scholarly standard of the magazine itself created a problem. The general reader could not understand it, hence Dr. Nanjunda Rao, with other followers of Swamiji from Madras, decided to bring out another, more popular, magazine. Swamiji was equally enthusiastic about it and advised him in many ways. He wrote, 'I have every sympathy with your proposed magazine for boys, and will do my best to help it on. You ought to make it independent . . . only making the style and matter much more popular. As for example, there is a great chance for those wonderful stories scattered all over the Sanskrit literature, to be rewritten and made popular. Avoid all attempts to make the journal scholarly . . . and it will slowly make its way all over the world' (14-4-1896). The monthly magazine was called the *Prabuddha Bharata*. The gifted editor of this magazine, B.R. Rajam Iyer, died within two years. Swamiji was sad, but did not want to stop its publication. So, after two months he decided to publish it from Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati. Captain J.H. Sevier was to look after its publication and Swami Swarupananda was to become its editor. It was the first official organ of the Ramakrishna Math. As in the case of the *Brahmavadin*, Swamiji took full interest in its editing, publishing, financing, and so on.

Swamiji now turned his attention to printing magazines in Indian languages. He had written to Swami Brahmananda at the Math, 'You shall have to edit a magazine, half Bengali and half Hindi—and, if possible, another in English' (25.9.1894). But

as its publication was delayed, he again wrote to Swami Ramakrishnananda, 'Put your energies together to start a magazine. Shyness won't do any more' (11.4.1895). Swami Trigunatitananda was the one younger brother-disciple who came forward to take up the responsibility. Swamiji was in ecstasy. 'Come, here is a task for you,' he said, 'conduct the magazine. Thrust it on people and make them subscribe to it, and don't be afraid' (January 1895). By perseverance and hard work Swami Trigunatitananda was able to bring out the first issue of the *Udbodhan* in January 1899. This was the second official organ of the Ramakrishna Math. As before, Swamiji showered his blessings on it and wrote inspiring articles himself. Thus during his lifetime three magazines were started.

In Swamiji's mind India, his motherland, was one and indivisible. He wanted to flood the whole country with his message. Therefore he wrote to Dr. Nanjunda Rao, 'When you have succeeded in this paper, start vernacular ones on the same lines in Tamil, Telugu, Canarese etc. We must reach the masses' (26.8.1896). Swamiji's hope was realized and today the Ramakrishna Math centres are publishing magazines in various languages. To mention a few important monthlies: The *Prabuddha Keralam* has been published in Malayalam since 1914; *Sri Ramakrishna Vijayam* in Tamil, since 1921; the *Sri Ramakrishna Prabha* in Telugu, since 1944; and the *Jivan Vikas* in Marathi since 1957. The *Vivek Jyoti*, a quarterly, has been published in Hindi since 1963. The publication of the first magazine, the *Brahmavadin*, was discontinued after Alasinga Perumal's death in 1914. But in the same year the Ramakrishna Math, Madras started the monthly, the *Vedanta Kesari*.

The Samvit's Decennial Year

Sri Sarada Math, a Math for women, was formally opened on 2 December 1954 by Swami Sankarananda, the seventh President of the Ramakrishna Math, with the consensus of their Trust Body. In this manner Swamiji's dream of giving freedom to women to live ideal spiritual lives was fulfilled. In August, 1959, Sri Sarada Math was given independent status and the senior *sannyasinis* became its Trustees.

After twenty-five years of Sri Sarada Math's existence, the Trustees resolved to start a journal of their own, having Swamiji's

ideals in mind. It was decided in December 1979 to start a journal, in English, at the first instance, so that the message would have a larger field. The first issue of this semi-annual journal, *Samvit* came out on 1 March 1980. It was mentioned therein that, 'the object is to disseminate the great truths of Vedanta, the spiritual teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda and also those of the founders of all faiths. . . . Its purpose will also be to spread knowledge of the different philosophies and the history and culture of this ancient land, India.' *Samvit* has kept to its avowed object and purpose.

This is the *Samvit's* tenth year of publication, hence we are bringing out a special decennial issue. The journal has been welcomed all over India and has subscribers in England, Australia, Africa, America, Japan, and Malaysia. Was it not Swamiji's message that Sri Ramakrishna's teachings should spread *all over the world*?

It may be mentioned that since 1987 Sri Sarada Math is publishing a quarterly in Bengali, named *Nibodhata*. It is hoped that with Swamiji's blessings, more magazines in other Indian languages will be brought out in the near future by the *sannyasins* of Sri Sarada Math.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa was the only man who ever had the courage to say that we must speak to all men in their own language.

Swami Vivekananda

Genesis of the Women's Math

SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

I AM happy to be amidst you and participate in laying the foundation for an institution which, though started in a humble way, will yet grow in time to be a great cultural and educational institution in the capital city, run according to our ancient cultural and spiritual heritage. I must thank on my own behalf and on behalf of you all, the members of the Sarada Mahila Samiti, who have made it possible for the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission to start this institution here by acquiring land and collecting funds for the purpose. The Ramakrishna Sarada Mission is the counterpart of the Ramakrishna Mission and perhaps you know that it is run by the *sannyasinis* of the Ramakrishna Order.

Swami Vivekananda had realized that if the country is to rise then women, too, should be educated so that they can take an active part in the rebuilding of the country. With this object in view, he wanted a Math to be started for women on the same lines as the Belur Math for men. This idea of his could not be given shape at the time due to adverse social conditions. He therefore left instructions with the Belur Math to help in the building of such a Math when the proper time came. He also left instructions that till women were competent to run the Math by themselves we should help them from a distance, and when they are competent they should be made absolutely independent so that they could work out their own problems for which they were more competent than men. So he wanted the women's Math to be completely independent, and men should not interfere in its affairs.

This idea of Swamiji was entertained by his brother disciples and Swami Saradanandaji, who was the Secretary of the Math and Mission, started as early as 1916 a nucleus with a few dedicated women. This was called the Sarada Mandir, and was a part of the residential section of the Nivedita Girls' School. But the inflow of such dedicated workers was

Swami Vireswarananda, the tenth President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission delivered this speech on the occasion of laying the foundation stone of the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission centre at New Delhi on 2 November, 1968.

not sufficient to start a Math for women. With the spread of education among women, and especially after the country became independent, a number of educated young women wanted to dedicate themselves to the service of the country and for their own welfare, according to Swamiji's motto '*atmano mokshartham jagad hitaya cha*'. Considering that the proper time had come to start a women's Math, the authorities of the Ramakrishna Math, Belur, in 1954, during the birth centenary year of the Holy Mother, started a women's Math—Sri Sarada Math—the counterpart of the Ramakrishna Math or Belur Math for men. They searched and searched for a house but could not get a suitable one till at last they came upon the present property. This was in keeping with Swamiji's idea that the women's Math must be on the opposite bank of the Ganga and should be some distance to the north of the Belur Math. A house with spacious gardens on the eastern bank of the river, north of the Dakshineswar temple, was purchased for them and a few were initiated as *brahmacharinis* by the President of the Ramakrishna Math. For several years the seniormost amongst them were given training in administration of institutions by the Belur Math authorities. They were appointed as office bearers of institutions which were being run by the Ramakrishna Mission but were meant purely for women. After a few years, in 1959, our President at the time initiated a few of the seniormost into *sannyasa* and handed over the Sarada Math to them by a Deed of Trust and they were made quite independent of the Belur Math. They were then advised to register the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission under the Societies' Registration Act, so that they may have a parallel institution like the Ramakrishna Mission to carry on humanitarian work. The Ramakrishna Sarada Mission was registered in 1960. Three main institutions, till then run by us, and which were meant for women, like the Nivedita Girls' School, the Matribhavan, which is a maternity hospital, and the Women's Welfare Centre were handed over to the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission by us. I am glad to tell you that they have run these institutions ably and even improved them after our handing over these institutions to them. For example, the Nivedita Girls' School has acquired more plots of land and put up new buildings for new streams in the Higher Secondary School. The Matribhavan has also added new blocks and doubled its capacity for in-patients. The Women's

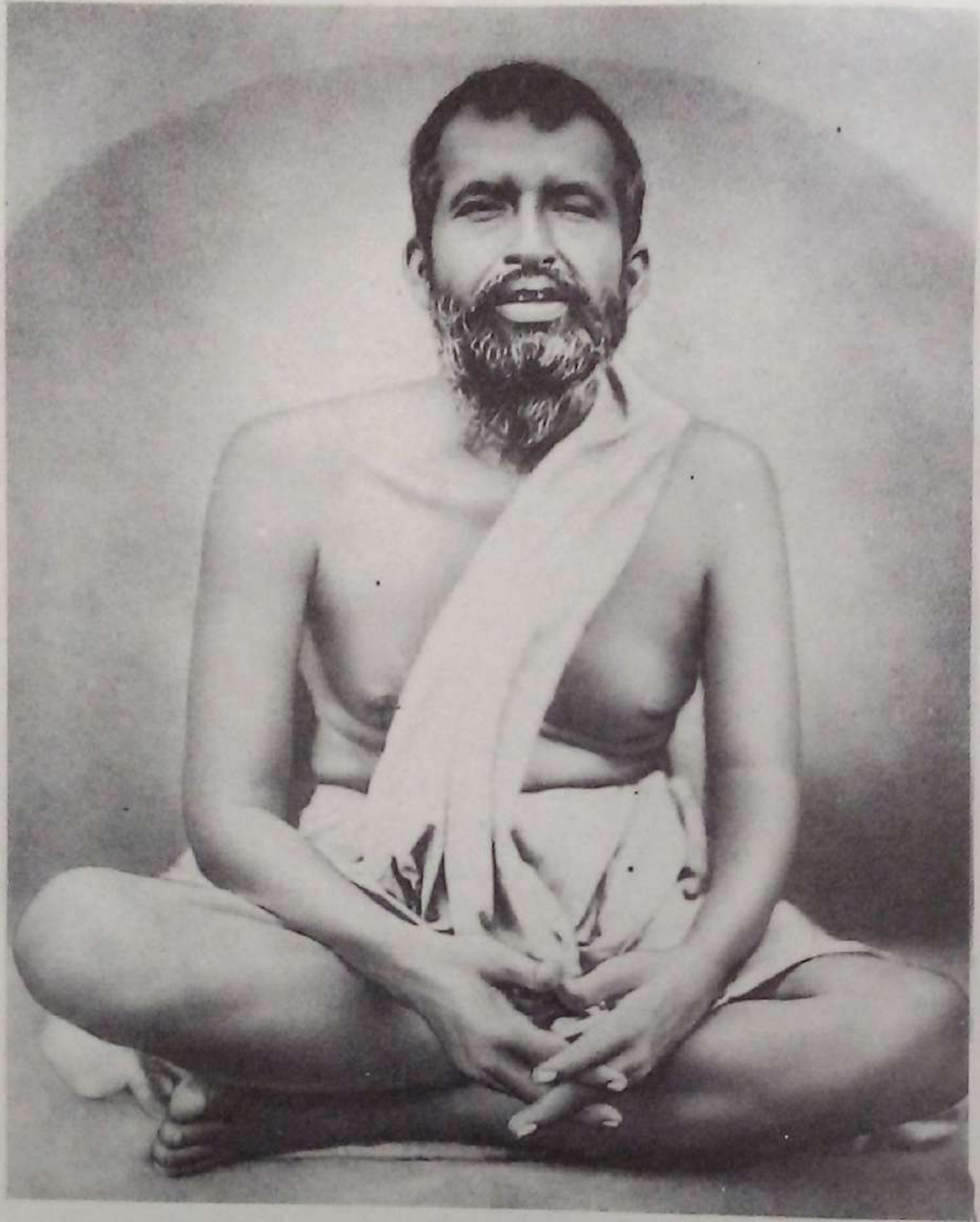
Welfare Centre, now called the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Ashrama, had only a plot of land and a dilapidated building when we gave it to them. Now they have demolished the old building and a beautiful four-storeyed building has come up which houses a Day-Hostel, as it is called, which is a library with textbooks and reference books for college girls kept open throughout the day where students who cannot afford to have copies of their own of the text books come and read. They are given free tiffin in the afternoon and receive coaching for their examinations from the *sannyasinis*. It has also a hostel for fifty college students, a public library and reading room, and a section for adult education where they teach not only reading and writing but also handicrafts such as embroidery and tailoring, so that the poor women of the locality may earn while they learn. The Centre also conducts cultural programmes, classes and lectures.

The Ramakrishna Sarada Mission has started a Degree College for Girls in Calcutta and it is run efficiently. In Kerala the Ramakrishna Mission had a co educational Higher Secondary School. This has now been split into two and a separate school started for the girls, and this has been taken over by Sri Sarada Math. A few years back they started a branch of the Sarada Math in Madras. Besides the work of these permanent centres, the *sannyasinis* are invited to give lectures in various parts of the country by different women's organizations. The organization is growing in influence and is also starting new centres of work; we are glad to note that they are progressing in this way and, I can say, even beyond our expectations. This shows that the Holy Mother's blessings are on them.

May the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swamiji be on this institution and on all who have worked for it till now and will work for it in future. This is my earnest prayer to them.



The Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi



1. Sri Ramakrishna

The Band of Bauls, Singers of Divine Love

PRAVRAJIKA MOKSHAPRANA

AN ALL-RENOUNCING, loving soul goes round the world from epoch to epoch. He is indifferent to worldly affairs; he seeks only those who love God. To this day his search continues. One who sees his face never forgets it; it is for ever etched on the mind of the beholder; it is aglow with divine love, renunciation, and purity; it is soft and lovely like a child's face.

The loving soul is on his journey in search of a companion. Whenever, wherever, he sees virtue in someone, he gladly takes him by the hand and leads him forward. Maybe, that companion has virtues born of good deeds performed in previous lives; maybe the virtues are temporary and disappear and that person reverts back to his worldly nature. Then the loving soul, with a sad smile, falls a little behind, but he does not forsake his companion because the nature of a lover is such!

Sometimes the loving soul pauses and thinks. His mind flows in a different channel. In his profound love and affection he appears like a poor destitute in a world full of woes, poverty, and suffering. He wanders from place to place, lost in high thought, completely oblivious of the failures and faults of others. He has in his hand the key to alleviate worldly sufferings. Once he touches the wounds of the people with his magic wand of love, physical and mental stress and sufferings disappear and all wounds heal. 'Such is the Maya of the Universal Mother that neither gods nor human beings can understand it'—he hums this line from a song and continues on his journey. His hope is that among multitudes of people he may meet some one person on whose shoulders he may place his hand and befriend him. That person may be totally immersed in his own worldly thoughts, so much so that he is startled by the touch—the magic touch of love of the loving soul. He is then as if awakened from sleep; he stands still for a moment, confused by some partly-remembered thought, but the new thoughts stirring within him are then shelved and he proceeds on towards his work.

To awaken such sleeping persons the loving soul makes his appearance in every age. In the present age he appeared along with a band of Bauls, the singers of divine love. He was the King of the Bauls—the Baul-Raja, Sri Ramakrishna, yearning for his Baul companions.

When he was a child, villagers, young and old vied with one another to see his divine face and to hear his sweet prattle at least once a day. In the years that followed, he grew up to be a teacher and tell his enraptured audience about the divine play of the Almighty. After twelve years of a hard ascetic life, he started looking for his Baul companions. The hard austerities he practised were not to serve any purpose of his own, but to make it easy for his companions to recognize him.

Although he was only a singer of divine love, unconcerned with the world, he knew why the Mother of the Universe sent him to the world in this incarnation. To fulfil Her mission, he had to call his near and dear companions to join his fold. It was quite natural that for the world-wide mission that he had to initiate, he would need companions.

The Soul-moving Call from Dakshineswar

Dakshineswar is on the bank of the holy Ganga, washed by its cool and refreshing waters. It is a sacred place of pilgrimage and an abode of peace. It is hallowed with the memory of Sri Ramakrishna who sang the glory of the Mother of the Universe after he knew that it was She who was the Shakti of Brahman, represented in the form of Mother Kali. But did he 'see' Her easily? He rubbed his face in the earth on the bank of the Ganga in great anguish; he wept aloud like a child crying for his mother, till people thought him to be a madman, while others thought that his mother was dead. He gave up food and sleep, and retired into the deep recess of the jungle behind the Panchavati. He tried to kill himself when he could not 'see' Her. The intense longing to 'see' his Mother was fulfilled and was followed by an equally intense desire to meet his inner circle of disciples. That great stream of love for God now merged into his love for his disciples.

Let us now visualize Sri Ramakrishna in Dakshineswar. At the temple of Mother Bhavatarini it is time for the evening services. Sounds of conch shells and the temple bells fill the

air. At that hour he climbs up to the terrace of the Kuthi Mansion and cries aloud for his companions. His Mother has promised to send enlightened souls to help him. But where are they?

The heart-rending call of the Master reaches their inner ears. They are sixteen in number, and they are ready to sacrifice their lives for him. To each one his call presents itself differently. Each one is touched by an independent emotive feeling, a different state of ecstasy, each one is delighted to think that he is perhaps dearest to the Master. The Master's life is unparalleled, therefore the persons whom he calls are also unique. Although they live in the mundane world of Maya, they rise to an elevated sphere where Maya cannot touch them. The most amazing thing is the close relationship each of them has with this lover. They sing in the heart of their hearts the sentiment to which Rabindranath Tagore gives expression in one of his poems:

'You came to this earth with the lamp of your life

A fire with what light I know not,

O my austere philosopher, my lover, my divine madman!'

The Master's love is inextricably mixed with his knowledge. True, his love knew no bounds, but it was based on his devotion to the highest Truth, the Absolute Truth. That transformed the loving soul into a man of knowledge. Comparing his companions and himself to a group of Bauls, the Master said: 'The Bauls came and went, they danced, they sang, they disappeared; none could recognize them.'

As days go by, stories of his divine love for and divine play with each of his Baul-like companions are coming to light as published documents. The devotees now recognize his companions too, whom he loved and who in return bestowed their greatest love on him. So much so, that they could not remain without him. He was the life of their lives, the nearest of the near. Then, when he was no longer physically with them, they renounced their homes and remained immersed in his love.

The Story of One of the Baul-like Companions

Here is the story of one of those Baul-like companions. In the garden house of Dewan Gobinda Mukhopadhyay in a village named Belgharia, there lived a boy who was as wedded to

truth as was Nachiketa of the *Katha Upanishad*. He heard of Paramahansa Ramakrishna who had come to his village. Curious about this Paramahansa, he along with his playmates, went to see him. Or perhaps, Sri Ramakrishna was searching for a companion in this boy. Sri Ramakrishna, in a flash, showed the boy a glimpse of his own real Self. In the words of the astonished boy, 'The Paramahansa was standing before me and from the lower end of his spinal column to his head something like a cord swelled, and the Shakti that reached his head looked like a serpent joyfully swaying its extended hoods.'

This young boy had tremendous steadfastness and adherence to truth. His mother did not know of his devotion to truth. Once she called him a liar, as enraged mothers sometimes do. The boy protested against this allegation again and again. When his mother did not believe him, he tore his sacred thread from his neck and said, 'If I am a liar, then I am not a Brahmin.' The mother panicked at this inauspicious act of the boy and exclaimed, 'Oh, what an ominous thing you have done!' Unfortunately, the next day the news came that the boy's father had been killed in the Second Afghan War. The grief-stricken mother told the boy, 'This has happened because of your curse'.

The boy, whose name was Hariprasanna, saw Sri Ramakrishna a second time at the residence of Keshab Chandra Sen during the autumn celebration of the Brahmo Samaj. Later he met Sri Ramakrishna for the third time at the Kali temple at Dakshineswar. After their initial acquaintance, Sri Ramakrishna asked Hariprasanna who had a good physique, 'Can you wrestle? Come, let us have a bout of wrestling.' Hariprasanna pinned Sri Ramakrishna against a wall while wrestling, but Sri Ramakrishna laughed and freed himself and said, 'Well, so you have defeated me, have you?' Hariprasanna felt very clearly that a power emanating from Sri Ramakrishna's body entered his own body, and filled him with indescribable joy. He was overwhelmed by this feeling.

After this incident, whenever he went to Dakshineswar, drawn there by Sri Ramakrishna's love, his heart was full of bliss. During these visits Sri Ramakrishna unfolded to him the knowledge of the supreme goal of life and taught him how to achieve it by performing austere *sadhanas*. He warned him, 'Remember, keep away from women. Be very careful, do not

let the worldly life entangle you. Many good women may come to you and show their devotion in various ways, but do not even look at them.' And, addressing the other disciples another time, he said, 'Do you know why I tell all of you this? You all are the special attendants of the Divine Mother; you will have to do a lot of Her work . . . therefore I say, be very careful.' These teachings were for his disciples who were themselves spiritual dynamos. In this manner, the loving soul bound his companions to himself with a strong bond. All the Baul-like companions who were drawn towards the Baul King and were touched by the touchstone of his love, remodelled their lives.

Recently, in the *Udbodhan** (90.11) a very interesting incident in the life of Hariprasanna, later known as Swami Vijnanananda was published which shows how through the Master's teachings this Baul-like companion escaped the clutches of Maya.

Hariprasanna's niece narrated that as soon as he became an engineer and got a job as a Government executive engineer in Uttar Pradesh, his guardians made attempts to get him married. But each time he stoutly rejected their proposals. His uncle therefore played a trick on him and sent him a telegram saying that his mother was seriously ill and he should immediately come to his home at Belgharia. In the meanwhile, the bride-to-be was selected and was asked to be present at their home on the day he was to reach there. As soon as Hariprasanna reached home, he inquired about his mother's health. He found his mother hale and hearty. She took him by the hand and led him to the room where the girl was waiting. The mother asked him whether he liked the girl. Hariprasanna now understood that he had been fooled by his relatives. From the threshold of the room he looked only at the girl's feet, addressed her as 'mother', and tried to leave the house. But he found that the main gate was locked. Seeing no way of escape, he jumped over the garden wall, never to return. Soon after, he resigned from his job and joined the Ramakrishna Math. Memoirs of people who knew such personalities tell us that these great men have no personal aim. They only work for the good of mankind.

Being an engineer, Swami Vijnanananda looked after the construction of various buildings at the Belur Math. Even the famous temple of Sri Ramakrishna was completed under his

*The Bengali monthly of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

guidance. But besides construction work, he was also engrossed in literary and scholarly activities. His book, the *Divya Ramayana* and several essays bear testimony to his erudition. When writing the *Divya Ramayana* he became absolutely overwhelmed with the thought of Sri Rama, Lakshman, and Sita. Swami Vijnanananda's daily diary shows that his days were full of busy schedules. Nevertheless, when he was supervising the work of building construction one would often see him seated calm and motionless. People wrongly assumed that his mind was completely absorbed in his interior thought. However, the slightest errors of the construction did not escape his notice—such was his surprising power of observation. Amidst all this work, and other important responsibilities as the Vice-president, and later on, as the President of the Math, he was in constant communion with his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. Many stories of his meeting the Master were revealed by him during his conversations and discussions with others about the higher values of life. It is amazing that he could feel the presence of his own co-disciples and Sri Ramakrishna even after they left their mortal bodies. These experiences made his life replete with wonderful episodes. The incredible spiritual happenings that seem quite simple and commonplace to souls like him, defy explanation and appear supernatural to us, ordinary beings.

This is the story of one of the 'band of Bauls' formed by Sri Ramakrishna. We hope that someday a more complete biography of him will be published. Although such great persons were born within the laws of Nature, they could move about easily outside the influence of Nature, which is called *avidya* in the Shastras. Avidya Maya could not hold them in its sway. These superhuman beings lived extraordinary spiritual lives and at the same time in the sight of others, they apparently lived the life of an ordinary person from birth to death. Such is the characteristic of persons of the spiritual world. This is true not only of Sri Ramakrishna, but also of Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda and all Sri Ramakrishna's inner circle of disciples. Their birth, their work and so on were predestined by God and completely under His control. Every one of this group of Sri Ramakrishna's Bauls was a seer and a great man. At the present time, we surmise that the holy purpose of their advent may be to bring peace and

tranquility and remove from the world misery and discontent which are flowing over the world like waves in a great ocean. Reading the biographies of each of these great personalities, we come across accounts of many people who were benefitted from direct contact with them and realized the ultimate aim of life. Today, when the existence of God is a matter of doubt or conviction, when faith is at a premium, such persons of pure vision enlighten others with the truth derived from their own personal experience. Perhaps in the days to come further ramifications will be revealed to us of this special phenomenon of the loving soul and his group of minstrels who renounced their all for God.

The Loving Sea remembering M.

ROBERT CLARK

'A person of no consequence', he said,
'I live beside an ocean of purest water
that has no other shore. I offer drink
to those who come, tongues parched, from every quarter

'of the blinding desert that lies behind. Some fill
their empty vessels and return again
to what for them is living Others stay.
With lives fulfilled, renounced, like drops of rain

'a few plunge in, never to surface more.
Little enough to do, I know, and yet
for me the only thing, until I feel
no further need for doing. Perhaps the store

'amassed may let me, too, plunge in and be
absorbed into that universal loving sea'.

Robert Clark of Walkerville, South Australia was born in 1911 in India of Australian parents. He is a poet of wide repute. He has published four volumes of poetry and his poems have appeared in many journals. 'M' or Mahendranath Gupta, whose modest character has been beautifully depicted here is the recorder of Sri Ramakrishna's Gospel.

Atom and Self

D.S. KOTHARI

This article has attracted much attention. A recent reference to it is that of Dr. Larry Dossey who, in his lecture on 'Medical Science and Non-violence' delivered on 30 January 1988 at the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, stated: 'One of the most eloquent criticisms ever levelled against the radical philosophy of materialism has been made by Professor D.S. Kothari. In his Meghnad Sah Medal Lecture, entitled 'Atom and Self', which was delivered on 5 October 1979, he provided a point of view which should be studied by anyone having any pretensions whatsoever as a scientist, a physician, or a philosopher. In this landmark paper Professor Kothari states that when it comes to matters of the mind, physics may not be up to the job of providing us with a full description.'

We are happy to reproduce in this journal with Dr. Kothari's permission an extract from his article. — Editor

IN AN oft-quoted statement (1951) Schroedinger says: 'I consider science an integrating part of our endeavour to answer the one great philosophical question which embraces all others, the one that Plotinus expressed by his brief: Who are we? And more than that: I consider this not *one* of the tasks, but *the* task of science, the only one that really counts.'

In other words, the ultimate goal of science and of all moral and spiritual striving is the same. There is no difference. 'Who am I?' is what Nachiketas asks in the *Katha Upanishad*. The question, 'Who am I?' is, on close analysis, no different from the question, What is the abode of *Truth*? Does Truth reside in space and time, or is it outside both space and time? More about this later. Many may not go as far as Schroedinger, but all would agree that the grave dangers facing mankind today—think of the mounting probability of an all-out nuclear war—cannot be met unless earnest attention is paid to an understanding of the self, the human being.'

The search for 'Who am I?' is the foundation of all true morality and religion. 'What is an electron?' is a question which relates to the external world. 'Who am I?' belongs to the internal world.

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Mankind's very survival is at stake. That we need to know more about the atom, about the external world of space-time and matter-energy, is beyond question. But to ignore altogether the knowledge of the self can in the end only invite disaster. The foundation of duty and reverence is self-knowledge, and not the atom, nor the external world. Even to decide to dedicate oneself to Science, this decision, is not a part of science. It is outside science. It is akin to some kind of religious faith. It is, perhaps, no exaggeration when E. F. Schumacher (1977) says: '*The modern experiment to live without religion has failed* (Italics his), and once we have understood this we know what our "post-modern" tasks really are?' A. N. Whitehead said, some years ago, that the future of civilization depends on the degree to which we can balance the forces of science and religion. And in describing the aims of education, he tells us that the essence of education is that 'it is religious . . . which inculcates duty and reverence.' (A. N. Whitehead, *Aims of Education*, 1962).

It has been my belief from my student days (ever since I read the *Gita*, Annie Besant's translation) that the foundations of relativity and quantum theory provide highly suggestive analogies and ideas for an appreciation and understanding of Indian spiritual thought. This has been, of course, immensely reinforced by the inspiring writings of Einstein, Bohr, Schrodinger, Heisenberg, Wigner and others. Also, for a quest of the *foundations* of modern physics, Indian philosophic thought can be very stimulating and suggestive. No longer can the problems of the *nature of reality* be evaded in physics. An occasion to speak on '*Atom and Self*' has, therefore, for me, a special interest.

Two things are important. Firstly, the duality of the two worlds, and secondly, the question of interaction between them. The 'external world' and the 'internal world', that is to say the 'atom' and the 'self' should be accepted as equally significant for human life, the two equally real. Cyril Hinshewood (1962) observes: 'To deny the reality of the inner world is a flat negation of all that is immediate in existence; to minimise its significance is to depreciate the very purpose of living, and to explain it away as a product of natural selection is a plain fallacy.'

Einstein remarked that 'the most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible.' Perhaps, even

more incomprehensible it is that one mind can comprehend another mind, though the two are totally isolated, separate from one another. How does it become possible that we understand one another, at any rate in some measure, whether we talk about the external world or about ourselves? Is it that in reality there are not many minds, but only *One Mind*? This is the assertion of Vedanta. There is a penetrating discussion of the problem by Schroedinger in *My View of the World* (1964). This remarkable book, of no more than 29,000 words, and which for Schroedinger was 'really the fulfilment of a very long cherished wish,' contains two essays: one, *Seek for the Road*, was written in 1925, the year of his fundamental discovery of wave mechanics; and the other, *What is Real?*, was written in 1960. *Seek for the Road* is an enquiry into 'Who am I?' Schroedinger, who was fully occupied in 1925 in elucidating the wave nature of the electron, is responding, as it were, to the reciprocal question of the electron: 'Who are you to know me?' Maybe, his deep pre-occupation at the time with both the electron and the psyche led him to the symbol *psi* for the electron wave function rather than *phi* for it (Greet *Phusis*=Nature). The two essays were published for the first time in 1961. Why this long wait to publish the 1925 essay? Perhaps (as he says), the thoughts expressed were far too strange, far too daring—at any rate for the western world—to be published but in old age. Schroedinger writes: 'A hundred years ago, perhaps, another man sat on this spot ; . . . Like you he was begotten of man and born of woman. He felt pain and brief joy as you do. Was he someone else? Was it not you yourself? What is this self of yours? . . . What clearly intelligible *scientific* meaning can this "someone else" really have? . . . Looking and thinking in that manner you may suddenly come to see, in a flash, the profound rightness of the basic conviction in Vedanta . . . that sacred, mystic formula which is yet really so simple and so clear; *Tat tvam asi*, "this is you". Or, again, in such words as "I am in the east and in the west, I am below and above, *I am this whole world*" . . . It is the vision of this truth (of which the individual is seldom conscious in his actions) which underlies all morally valuable activity. It brings a man of nobility not only to risk his life for an end which he recognises or believes to be good, but—in rare cases—to lay it down in full serenity, even when there is no prospect of saving his own person.'

To understand the physical world, ever since Galileo and Newton, mathematics—the most powerful and penetrating expression of human reason—has been the indispensable key. As mathematics advances, so does our understanding of the external world. This is well illustrated by the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. Newton held that there are two Books of God, one the Holy Bible and the other the *Book of Nature* which is in the language of mathematics.

Mathematics, and experiments, unravel the secrets of the atom. On the other hand, self control and 'moral experiments' lead to self-knowledge and self-liberation. *Moral experiments have the same place for the internal world, as physical experiments have for the external world.* Without continuing experimentation and assessment, there can be no advancement either of the individual or of society. Recall that Gandhiji called his autobiography as *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. He writes: '*(My Experiments with Truth)* will of course include *experiments* (italics added) with non-violence, celibacy and other principles of conduct believed to be distinct from truth. But for me, truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God. . . . I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in pursuit of this. Even if the sacrifice demanded be my very life, I hope I may be prepared to give it. . . . Though this path is straight and narrow and sharp as the razor's edge, for me it has been the quickest and easiest.'

And in his ceaseless quest, he heard the 'Voice of God'. 'I can say this, that not the unanimous verdict of the whole world against me could shake me from the belief that what I heard was the true Voice of God. . . . For the voice was more real than my existence.'

He concludes his *Story of the Experiments* with the words: 'To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the merest of creation as oneself. . . . I must reduce myself to zero. So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow-creatures, there is no salvation for him. Ahimsa is the farthest limit of humility.'

Einstein said (1939) of Gandhi that 'generations to come will scarcely believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and

blood walked upon this earth.' Very significant is Einstein's observation: 'Revolution without the use of violence was the method by which Gandhi brought about the liberation of India. It is my belief that the problem of bringing peace to the world on a supranational basis will be solved only by employing Gandhi's method (*Satyagraha*) on a large scale.' And how spiritually close are these two unquestionably the greatest of human beings

When asked (during a serious illness) whether he was at all afraid of death, Einstein said, 'I feel such a sense of solidarity with all living things that it does not matter to me where the individual begins and ends.' And he added: 'There is nothing in the world which I could not dispense with at a moment's notice.' (M Born, 1971.)

The *Katha Upanishad* declares: 'When every desire that finds lodging in the heart of man has been loosened from its mooring, then this mortal puts on immortality; even here he tastes God in this human body.' (Sri Aurobindo's translation II.3.14). It was about this stanza that Paul Deussen said that no nobler, profounder words had ever been uttered by human lips. It speaks of God realization *here and now*.

There is unambiguous testimony for God realization 'here and now' by seekers of the highest integrity and spiritual attainments in all ages and countries. The evidence is far too significant to be evaded or ignored. It would not be in keeping with the temper of science to do so. William James (whose writings had no negligible influence on Niels Bohr) has given an illuminating discussion of mystical experience in his Gifford Lectures on *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Sri Ramakrishna speaks of his actually 'seeing' God; of 'talking' to him. 'God is beyond the power of reasoning. . . . I do actually see *that whatever is, is God*.'

It is apparent that soul or God cannot be *proved* by reason or logic. Nor can it be *disproved*. This is beyond question. Any logical reasoning must start from some unproved postulates and some undefined terms. Any postulate (axiom) that we may presuppose to prove (or disprove) God would in effect be tantamount to our withdrawing from that position. We may take God and Absolute Truth as identical concepts—undefinable, unprovable. Though reason is indispensable for moral quest, the concept of morality rests ultimately not on reason but on

faith in God in some form or the other. The distinction between 'right' and 'wrong', between 'good' and 'evil' is not a scientific distinction. It goes beyond science, beyond reason. Anti-reason has no place in beyond-reason. Bertrand Russell says in *Wisdom of the West* (1959): 'We cannot give scientific justification for the goals that we might pursue, or for the ethical principles that we adopt. We can begin to argue only if we admit, from the outset, some ethical premises. . . . Most of the principles which make for civilized living are of this ethical character. No scientific reason can be given why it is bad to inflict wanton cruelty on one's fellows. To me it seems bad . . . (but) I am not sure that I can supply a satisfactory reason.' In the end, it is the 'small voice' within a *pure* heart that alone can tell what is right and what is wrong.

If 'self', mortality, and God are beyond science, can science make any contribution to self-knowledge and moral behaviour? The answer is yes; and the contribution is extraordinarily large. It is most far-reaching, and rapidly increasing. Nothing has done more than science to loosen the hold of magic and superstition on the minds of men. When there is no framework of objective knowledge as provided by science, everything seems possible. For example, a bird sitting on yonder tree may be what it seems to be, or it might be something else under a spell of magic. *Science limits the possible*. By continually deepening our understanding of nature, science tells us more and more of what is permissible in nature and what is not. Where can we find a more inspiring account of the impact of science on superstition than in Charles Sherrington's *Man on His Nature*. Writes Sherrington: '(Before Galileo and Harvey) Magic and sorcery were part of the belief not merely of the common folk but of the cultured, especially those of a "progressive" view. . . . Cultured liberal opinion was inclined to medical astrology as the climax of scientific medicine. . . . (Today) our insight into nature is of a different order from theirs of yesterday. . . . The half-gods are not only vanished, they are well nigh forgotten; matter for labels and a museum-shelf.' And he continues: 'Today man can go out into the natural world without carrying the distortion of monstrosity with him. We can interrogate the natural world with a confidence drawn from riddance of misunderstanding no less than from extension of understanding. . . . The position for

reading from Nature's lips what she may have to say of the Godhead never yet in the past was what it is for us today.' (Chapter II, *Natural and Superstition*).

Science education, in countries where it is widespread, has gradually banished to a large measure magic and superstition about the external world. But there still remain, as strong as ever and possibly stronger, the far more dreadful 'superstitions' of the inner world: *Greed, Hatred, and Delusion*. These are the roots of all violence and wars. And though there is no war for science, yet science-based technology has amplified beyond measure the cruelty and destruction of wars. Greed, Hatred and Delusion (GHD) cannot be conquered except by knowledge and self-control. There is no other way, no Royal Road.

The Visions and Wisdom of Sri Ramakrishna

PRAVRAJIKA MUKTIPRANA

INFINITE WERE the spiritual moods of Sri Ramakrishna. Just as his *sadhanas* were unique, so were his experiences and visions unique in the spiritual realm. He used to say, 'Why should I be monotonous?' He absolutely disapproved of anyone imposing his own religious faith on others, and thus destroying their own faith. Everyone has the right to practise contemplation of God according to his capacity and liking. The simile he gave was: 'The mother cooks different dishes to suit the stomachs of her children. Suppose she has five children. If there is a fish to cook, she prepares various dishes from it—pilau, pickled fish, fried fish, soup, and, so on—to suit their different tastes and powers of digestion.'

Truly he was the meeting ground of different paths. When he followed diverse spiritual practices, he had various and

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wonderful visions—such as visions of God in different forms, and different experiences of His formless aspect, and so on. In later days he spoke not only of his *sadhanas* but also of his visions. Can one grasp the meaning of these with one's limited intellect?

Without the slightest trace of egoism, Sri Ramakrishna would say, 'The Divine Mother made me go through various spiritual paths and revealed Herself to me in various ways: first, according to the Puranas, then the Tantras and also the Vedanta. I wept continuously for three days, then the Divine Mother revealed to me all that is in the Vedas, the Puranas and the Tantras. She showed it all to me'.

In the Dakshineswar Kali temple garden many places are associated with some phase or other of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences. These are the Panchavati, the Bel tree, the mansion of the Rani's family, the *sanctum sanctorium* of the temple and the portico on the bank of the Ganga. He said, 'At first I used to practise *sadhana* in the Panchavati; then in the Tulsi grove where I used to meditate.' Once during his practice of *Dasya-bhakti*, that is, devotion in which the devotee assumes the attitude of a servant towards God as his Master, he was sitting in the Panchavati with his eyes open, when he saw from a distance the luminous figure of a woman. The place was illumined by her lustre and in that light he saw the Panchavati. Her countenance expressed extraordinary love, sorrow and compassion. As the figure slowly approached him, he wondered who she might be. Suddenly, with a cry, a monkey jumped down from a tree and sat at her feet. Immediately the idea flashed in Sri Ramakrishna's mind that she must be Sita. He was about to fall at her feet when the figure entered into him. In many cases the forms that he saw entered his body. Another day, he saw a woman dressed in a blue sari near the Bakul tree on the bank of the Ganga. She instantly kindled in him the vision of Sita. In place of the woman, he saw Sita herself appearing as though she was on her way to meet Rama after she returned from Lanka.

One day, talking to the devotees, Sri Ramakrishna said: 'Sitting under the Bel tree I had so many visions.' Once when he saw money, a costly shawl and various other tempting things before him, he tested his mind to verify what it wanted. But the mind was not tempted. He said, 'The mind remained

attached to the lotus-feet of God. The scale of a jeweller has a pin on the upper side and another on the lower side. The mind is like the pin on the lower part. The pin on the upper side is God. Lest the mind move away from God, someone with a trident in hand would stand guard, threatening that if the lower pin would move away from the upper pin, he would strike the mind with his trident.'

Sri Ramakrishna used to foretell what sort of devotees were going to come to him. Once he saw a boy under the Banyan tree. Later he disclosed to his disciples that this boy was Rakhal, who later became Swami Brahmananda. Some years before this vision, he had seen Sri Chaitanya and a long procession of his followers singing *kirtans*; the procession extended from the Banyan tree to the Bakul tree. Among them was the great devotee Balaram Bose. He had seen Sashi and Sarat (later Swamis Ramakrishnananda and Saradananda) among the followers of Jesus Christ.

Sri Ramakrishna described the vision he had of Keshab Chandra Sen before he met him: 'In the state of *samadhi*, I saw Keshab Sen and his followers sitting before me among a large crowd of people. Keshab looked like a peacock with its plume spread out; the spread out plume represented his group of followers. On his head was a ruby; this was the symbol of his *rajasic* nature. Referring to me, Keshab told his disciples, "Listen to what he says." I told mother, "Mother, these people follow the opinions of Englishmen, why should I talk to them?" Then Mother explained to me that in this present age it would be like that. Then they accepted from me the names of Hari and the Divine Mother (for their spiritual practices).'

One day, in the Kali temple, Totapuri was reading from the *Adhyatma Ramayana*. Sri Ramakrishna was attentively listening to it. Suddenly he saw a river, a forest near it, the green trees, and Rama and Lakshman walking along. Once in front of the Kuthi Mansion, he saw Arjuna's chariot with Sri Krishna as the charioteer. It would be wrong on our part to consider all these visions as Sri Ramakrishna's fantasy. His chief disciple Narendra, too, had told him that all this was his imagination; though later he had to admit that his visions were true.

When the mind reaches a higher state of consciousness, then it goes through many experiences and it has visions which are incomprehensible to the ordinary intellect. Sri Ramakrishna

described one of the visions as follows: 'One day while worshipping an image of the Lord Shiva, it was revealed to me that this Virat, this Universe, was nothing but Shiva Himself. After that my worship of Shiva through an image came to an end. Another day I was plucking flowers for worship, when it was revealed to me that the flowering plants were so many bouquets.' Someone who heard this exclaimed, 'Ah! How beautiful is God's creation!' Sri Ramakrishna answered, 'Oh no, it is not that. It was revealed to me in a flash. I did not calculate about it. He showed me that each flowering plant was a bouquet, adorning the Universal form of God. From that day I could not pluck flowers. I see human beings in a similar manner. It is as if He is moving about having put on a human body; as if a pillow is floating on the waves. The pillow bobs up and down with the waves.'

The Divine Mother revealed Herself in so many ways to him: 'Yesterday I saw Mother', he said, 'She was clad in a seamless garment, and She talked to me.' Another day, the Mother appeared to him dressed as a Muslim girl. With utmost ease his mind would soar into ecstasy. One day he was taken to see the zoo. At the very sight of a lion his mind plunged into *samadhi*, for it reminded him of the Divine Mother riding on a lion. He could not see any other animal at the zoo that day. Once he saw an English boy leaning against a tree; his body was bent in three places and in a flash the vision of Sri Krishna came before him.

From his own experience Sri Ramakrishna explained how Mahamaya throws a veil of delusion over the world. 'Mahamaya one day showed me Her Maya. A small light inside a room began to grow, and at last it enveloped the whole world. Again, She showed me a vast reservoir covered with green scum. When the scum moved a little by the wind, immediately one could see the clean water; but in the twinkling of an eye, the scum from all sides came dancing in and again covered the water. She revealed to me that the clean water is like Satchidananda, and the green scum like Maya. On account of Maya, one cannot see Satchidananda. Though now and then one may get a glimpse of It, again Maya covers It.'

When Sri Ramakrishna was in Shyampukur for treatment of his throat cancer, many devotees came to see him. One evening a large number of devotees were assembled and

Dr. Mahendra Sarkar came to see him. The great dramatist Girish Chandra Ghosh was also present. Someone started to sing a song from Girish Ghosh's drama, *The Life of Buddha*, 'We moan for peace; alas! but peace we never find.' When the next line was sung, 'Destroy all the darkness; shine forth; without you there is no Saviour, that is why we seek refuge at your feet', Sri Ramakrishna went into ecstasy. A few moments later he said, 'As you sang, "destroy all darkness" I had the vision of the Sun. As He arose the darkness vanished and all took refuge at His feet.'

Sri Ramakrishna's visions always corresponded with his spiritual moods. For instance, when he was practising disciplines according to the Shaktas, Vaishnavas, Tantras and so on, he would show with the help of these visions that all these, in fact, lead to the same Truth and that basically there is no difference between them; that the main schools of Vedanta—Dvaita, (dualism), Vishishtadvaita (qualified monism) and Advaita (monism) were but progressive stages in spiritual growth. His visions of God with form were as extraordinary as his experiences of the formless aspect of Reality.

Vedanta says that there is One Self in all. Many arguments have been offered by scholars regarding this statement. But through arguments one cannot have spiritual experience. Sri Ramakrishna clearly perceived that the same Atman is in all. He saw the effulgent Divine Mother shining even in a wicked person standing in front of the Kali temple. That is why he once gave to a cat the food prepared for the worship of the Divine Mother; he saw that the consciousness which he called the Divine Mother had become everything, even the cat. Of course, his 'Mother' really meant Brahman, as he knew Kali and Brahman to be inseparable.

It was natural for Sri Ramakrishna's mind to dwell on a high plane of consciousness, that is why he forgot all about his fatal illness when he was in Cossipore. Looking at the devotees graciously, even while his body was emaciated, he said, 'Do you know what I see right now? I see that it is God Himself who has become all this. It seems that human beings and other living beings are made of leather, and it is God Himself who moves the hands, the feet, the heads. Once before I had a similar vision when I saw houses, gardens, roads, human beings, cattle—all made of One substance; it was if all were made of wax.'

Sri Ramakrishna's teachings were in harmony with the wisdom of the ancients; they were simple and easy to understand. He gave similes from facts of everyday life which made the abstruse truths of the Shastras easily understood. Many people who read the Shastras and the different interpretations and commentaries on them do so without trying to imbibe their spirit and purpose. That is why Sri Ramakrishna told Pandit Shashadhar that the study of the Shastras is necessary only to learn about the Reality or the Truth. After knowing what is in the Shastras, one should act accordingly. 'A man lost a letter which he had received. He could not remember where he had kept it. After searching for a long time, at last he found it. It was mentioned in the letter that he had to send some sweets and a piece of cloth. After reading the contents, he threw away the letter, for what was the need of it? What was necessary now was to buy sweets and a piece of cloth.' 'How long does one have to study the Shastras? As long as one has not realized God. How long do bees make a buzzing sound? As long as they have not found a flower to sit upon. After they find a flower and sip its honey, they no longer buzz.'

During M.'s second visit to Sri Ramakrishna, he was asked 'Tell me, what kind of person is your wife? Has she knowledge or is she ignorant?' M. answered, 'She is all right, but I am afraid she is ignorant.' M.'s wife was not educated in the modern sense of the term, hence, this reply. Sri Ramakrishna said with evident displeasure, 'And you are a man of knowledge !' Later M. learnt that to know God is knowledge, and not to know Him, ignorance.

How does one get the vision of God? His answer was that if one can feel attraction for Him with the combined force of the following three attractions, he can see God: the worldly man's attraction for his possessions, the mother's attraction for the child and the attraction of a chaste wife for her husband. One's experience of God depends upon how intensely one can direct these three powers of attraction towards him. What a beautiful simile to show how much one should love God !

Yearning for God and dispassion for worldly things are other qualities necessary to realize God. To explain what this kind of yearning is he gave the following example. 'Once a disciple asked his guru how God could be realized. The guru

took the disciple to a nearby lake and held his head under water. After some time he released the disciple and asked him, 'How did you feel?' The disciple replied, 'I was dying for a breath of air.' Then the guru said, 'When you pant for God like that, you will realize Him.'

The grace of God is another essential factor in God realization. Therefore Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Without the grace of God, one cannot realize Him. It is only through His grace that God reveals Himself. He is the Sun of knowledge; a single ray of His has illumined the world. That is why we are able to see one another, and acquire various sorts of knowledge. One can see God only if He turns His light towards His own face. The police sergeant carries a lantern at night. No one can see His face; but with the help of that light he can see everybody. If you want to see the sergeant's face you must request him: "Sir, please turn the light towards your face so that I may see you." In the same way one must pray to God, "O Lord, be gracious and turn the light of knowledge on Yourself, that I may see Your face." Through His grace one gets knowledge and the vision of God. Suppose a room has been kept dark a thousand years, the moment a light is brought into it, darkness vanishes all at once, and not little by little.'

How does one feel after getting the vision of God? Sri Ramakrishna says that one cannot express it. What Brahman is cannot be described. 'All things in the world have been defiled like food that has been tasted. The Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras and the six systems of philosophy have been defiled for they have been read or uttered by the tongue. Only one thing has not been defiled and that is Brahman. No one has ever been able to say what Brahman is.' When the learned Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar heard these words from him, he felt very happy and said, 'Ah! That is a remarkable statement. I have learnt something new today.'

Sri Ramakrishna said, 'People often think they have understood all about God. Once an ant went to a hill of sugar. One grain filled its stomach, so taking another grain in its mouth, it started homeward. On its way it thought, "Next time I shall carry home the whole hill." That is the way the shallow minds think. They don't know that Brahman is beyond one's words and thoughts.' 'Once a salt doll went to measure the depth of the ocean. It wanted to tell others how deep the ocean was.'

But this it could never do, for no sooner did it get into the water than it melted. Now who was there to report the ocean's depth?

The following question may arise in the mind: How then do the Vedas and other Shastras explain the realization of Brahman? Sri Ramakrishna answered, 'As for what has been said in the Vedas and Puranas, do you know what it is like? Suppose a man has seen the ocean, and some one asks him, "Well, what is the ocean like?" The first man opens his mouth as wide as he can and says, "Oh ! what a sight, what tremendous waves and sound, how grand !" The description of Brahman in the sacred books is like that. It is said in the Vedas that Brahman is of the nature of bliss, It is Satchidananda. 'In *samadhi*, one attains the knowledge of Brahman—one realizes Brahman. In that state reasoning stops altogether, and man becomes mute. He has no power to describe the nature of Brahman.'

When the highest Truth of the Hindu religion was forgotten, it became a religion of only rites and rituals. As a result of this, besides the Brahmos, many traditional Hindus, too, forgot the real meaning of the worship of God in different forms and called it 'idolatry'. Sri Ramakrishna came to destroy these false notions and to re-establish the essence of the realization of Truth. He proved that image-worship was not idolatry. The worship of an image made of clay is in reality the worship of the Supreme Spirit. For the majority of people, it is essential to choose the worship of God in some form because, as long as a person is body conscious, the feeling of being a separate entity cannot altogether vanish; so to realize his oneness with Brahman is absolutely impossible for him. Sri Ramakrishna's life has greatly contributed to the universal recognition of the value of worship through symbols.

Throughout the thirty years Sri Ramakrishna spent in Dakshineswar, from 1855 to 1885, he was always either in *samadhi*, or absorbed in the thought of God, or intoxicated with love while singing devotional songs.

The Bane of Worldliness

SHIV DHAWAN

On the banks of a river, fishermen had spread out the day's catch,
when a hungry kite spying the morsels, swooped, and a fish did snatch.
With the tantalizing morsel held firmly in his beak,
he eagerly flew all over the vast river, a secluded eating spot to seek.

Gently flapping his large wings, he glided through friendly currents of air,
surveying the terrain below, and saw nothing but water, water everywhere.
'This fish is mine, the prize for my efforts,' contemplated the kite
who finding no place to land, began enjoying the exhilaration of fancy free-flight.

Immersed in thoughts of the fish, in the clear sky he did glide and climb,
his wings cutting the air rhythmically, as he lost all notion of time.
Suddenly, a harsh and jarring noise caused him to swiftly dart around,
only to confront a horde of angry crows who had followed him from the ground.

Sensing danger to self and possession, the whole world blurred before his eyes,
as he charged away from his pursuers to another segment of the sky.
But the cawing crows closing in, began to mercilessly attack the hapless kite,
they wanted his fish, which to eat all by himself, he had no right.

Adapted from *Tales and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna*

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The petrified kite to shake off his tormentors flew east and then
west,
finding no respite, he flew south, but the crows would not let
him rest.
Noisily they pursued him, mercilessly they struck him with
talons and wings,
until in sheer desperation, the harried kite his tasty morsel
did fling.

After the fish dived the horde of crows, letting out a wild war
cry.
'That wretched fish was the root of my sorrows' the relieved
kite did sigh.
Dispossessed, hungry and hurt but peaceful at heart, the kite
continued to soar,
seeing plenty of fish below, but having learnt his lesson, he
dived no more.

Man suffers from worry and restlessness so long as he seeks
the fish of desire,
only by renouncing all, can he attain Ananda, and emerge
unscathed from the fire.

Memories of Ida Ansell, Ujjvala

SWAMI VIDYATMANANDA

Samvit has been offering a series of articles about Swami Vivekananda's Western women disciples who helped him with his work. This article is the fourth in this series.

AT NOON on the last day of January, 1955, at the Vivekananda Home of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, a small, lame, grey-haired woman died at the age of seventy-nine. Her name was Ida Merrill Winkley Ansell. Anyone would have said that there was nothing unusual about this event or about the life which had preceded it. And to a certain extent this is true. From any social or vocational standpoint Ida Ansell's life was rather routine. She was born in New York City, spent her childhood in Boston, and moved to the Pacific West Coast before reaching her teens. There she finished the eighth grade, studied shorthand and typing, and worked as a stenographer for many years, first in San Francisco and later in Los Angeles. After she retired, from 1948 on, she stayed at the Hollywood Vedanta centre, where she lived as one of the monastic family and assisted with office work.

From a religious standpoint, however, Ida Ansell's life was extraordinary. For she was, from the time of Swami Vivekananda's second visit to the West, and until she died fifty-five years later, associated with many details of the work of the Ramakrishna Order in America. Five direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna went to the West; she met four of them: Swami Vivekananda, whose lectures and classes she attended in 1900; Swami Turiyananda, who initiated her as his disciple and gave her the name of Ujjvala—'the shining one'; Swami Abhedananda; and Swami Trigunatitananda. Of the second generation Swamis who went to the West, she knew and kept in touch with nearly every one.

'Ujjie', as her friends called her, was a participant in, and a major witness of, the opening stages of the Ramakrishna-

Swami Vidyatmananda of the Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna, Gletz, France, is a notable writer. His series of articles published in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, documenting Swami Vivekananda's visits to Europe and the Near East are an important contribution to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. He was for many years the Editor of the quarterly journal, *Vedanta and the West*, and of the book, *What Religion Is in the Words of Swami Vivekananda*.

Vivekananda movement in America. And Ujjvala was among its first historians. This happened mostly by accident. True, she was interested in writing; she studied books on composition and always dreamed, as so many do, of one day producing a literary masterwork. Historical subjects would not have interested her; her ambition was to be a glamorous lady novelist. But the years went by and the dream remained a dream. Then in her seventies Ujjvala realized that she possessed much valuable material in the accumulation of notes she had taken at the time she had known Swamiji and Swami Turiyananda. She came to understand that it was her obligation to give this material to the public. In doing so her lifetime desire to be an author was fulfilled. Her memories of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Turiyananda, published in *Vedanta and the West*, were received eagerly. They were read appreciatively in America and Europe; in India they created a sensation and were translated into several Indian languages. These reminiscences have great value for the picture they give of the pioneering days of Vedanta in America. They are written in a candid, lively, childlike style, reflecting Ujjvala's personality.

Finally, Ujjvala began the most exacting literary job of all—the transcription of the shorthand notes she had taken in the spring of 1900 of thirteen lectures by Swami Vivekananda. (Four other lectures from her notes had been published previously in the Northern California centre's *The Voice of India*.) Her notes were 'cold' (little or no preparation) as well as not always complete. She debated with herself as to whether the lectures should be given out at all, out of fear of doing violence to Swamiji's wonderful style and fluency. At last she came to this decision: 'Now we see that Swamiji was a special messenger of God and that every word he said was full of significance. So even though my notes were somewhat fragmentary, I have yielded to the opinion that their contents are precious and must be given for publication.' Completing the heavy labour of making these transcriptions only two months before she died, Ujjvala gave the publication rights to them to any organ of the Ramakrishna Order which might wish to use them.

Ujjvala explained that the lectures were given in San Francisco, Oakland, and Alameda, in churches, in the Alameda and San Francisco Homes of Truth (New-Thought associations of that day), and in rented halls. Some were free to the public,

and others were given in courses of three for a dollar. Altogether, she calculated, Swamiji gave, besides daily interviews and informal classes, at least thirty to forty major addresses in March, April, and May. He was phenomenally prolific. 'How he could speak so often and yet always with such originality is something no one has ever been able to explain,' she remarked. 'He himself confessed that time after time on his lecture tours he felt exhausted intellectually and incapable of appearing the next day. Then, as his authorized *Life* explains, he would be aided by an inner, sometimes outer, voice suggesting subjects and ideas.'

Swamiji's lectures, Ujjvala recalled, attracted all levels of people, drawn by various incentives such as curiosity, interest, a desire for information, and a real yearning for truth. There was something in every one of Swamiji's discourses for each; and perhaps some of the apparent contradictions in them, she conjectured, were due to his attempt to help people at various stages of development.

As Ujjvala explained, 'I was just an amateur stenographer at the time I took the notes of Swamiji's lectures. The only experience I had had was in connection with the talks of Miss Lydia Bell, the leader of one of the Homes of Truth of San Francisco. Miss Bell spoke slowly and deliberately, and I could almost always get down every word. But,' Ujjvala explained, 'one would have needed a speed of at least three hundred words per minute to capture all of Swamiji's torrents of eloquence. I possessed less than half the required speed, and at the time I had no idea that the material would have value to anyone but myself. In addition to his fast-speaking pace, Swamiji was a superb actor. His stories and imitations absolutely forced one to stop writing, to enjoy watching him.'

Thus Ujjvala must always have a definite place in the story of the development of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement in the West. But to those who knew her and lived with her, as I did, she was not a bit like a historical figure. She was an interesting person and a responsive friend. She was ingenuous, having the true, if sometimes tantalizing innocence of a child; it is significant that Swami Turiyananda often called her Baby. Ujjvala had a strong zest for life and had more vitality than many people half her age. It was an experience to hear her talk of the old days; a visit to her room was like a trip to a museum



Swami Vivekananda



Ida Ansell, Ujjvala
Courtesy: Swami Vidyatmananda

or an antique shop crammed full of books, photographs, bric a-brac, and other mementos accumulated during a long life. Sitting in her rocker in the midst of the congestion, Ujjvala would tell perhaps of how Swami Vivekananda had once made rock candy for her when she and other devotees spent some memorable weeks with him in 1900 at a summer retreat in Marin County. Or she would recall advice given by Swami Turiyananda more than fifty years before at Shanti Ashrama in central California, where the Swami had begun to train a small band of students in work and meditation. She would take out from one of the innumerable boxes which overflowed the space on shelves, in drawers, and even under the bed, perhaps the stub of a ticket to one of Swamiji's San Francisco lectures, or a letter from Swami Turiyananda, or some rare photograph. When the daily worship was instituted at the Ramakrishna Monastery at Trabuco, Ujjvala gave as a holy relic for the Trabuco shrine her most precious possession, a portion of a yellow silk turban Swamiji had once owned and worn.

At Shanti Ashrama Ujjvala had made the acquaintance of Cornelius Heyblom, later Swami Atulananda, Gurudas Maharaj. The two became good friends and remained so until Ujjvala's death. During most of their fifty years of acquaintance Gurudas Maharaj lived in India, but the relationship was maintained through a twice-monthly exchange of letters. What Ujjvala wrote to Gurudas Maharaj is not known, but his letters to her, found after her death, comprised a great trove, carefully preserved by date. Ujjvala was by nature curious, and since she loved India, especially curious about that country. Probably her letters to Gurudas Maharaj contained questions about his life in India, together with reports concerning the people he had formerly known at the Centre and comments on the political and religious events of the day. Gurudas Maharaj replied with fascinating descriptions of the daily life he pursued as a sadhu established in India. He replied also to her small talk, often humorously, by urging her to carry on her daily tasks with intelligence, and take a Vedantic view of people and events. I am glad to hear that the correspondence of Gurudas Maharaj to Ujjvala may soon be published.

When I first met Gurudas Maharaj in India in 1953 he immediately asked for the latest news of Ujjvala. He wondered what he might send her. It was decided that this should be a

cane, which I purchased in the Kankhal bazar and carried on the trip back to Los Angeles. Ujjvala was delighted and used Gurudas Maharaj's gift continually from then on. She was not parted from it even in death; I slipped the beloved Indian cane, given by her oldest friend and brought directly from what was to her the Holy Land, into her casket; it and her old body were cremated together.

Some of the most entertaining of the reminiscences Ujjvala used to recount concerned her experiences during the great San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906. I have Ujjvala's notes describing this momentous event and its effect on her life; they are so lively and give such a vivid portrait of her that I cannot resist the temptation to include them in this account. Should I not do so they might easily be lost forever.

'On the 18th of April in 1906, "Mother Nature, herself, awakened us", as Swami Trigunatita said in his lecture the following Sunday. It was a rough awakening and produced an upheaval in half a million lives. Many thousands were made suddenly homeless and lost all their possessions except what they could carry with them. With some the shock somewhat marred their judgment as to what was essential. I saw a bewildered gentleman pushing a carpet-sweeper in front of him. There were no streetcars running. In many places the tracks were wrenched loose and had become broken and twisted masses of steel. The water mains were broken and control of the many fires that started south of Market Street was impossible. Martial law was immediately declared and warnings posted that pilferers would be shot. A five-story hotel in the Mission District sank in the ground to the level of the fourth story, so that the occupants who were not hurt just walked upstairs and out onto the sidewalk. It was a great leveler of rank, and for a time there was real democracy. I saw a little Japanese boy with his head on the lap of a fur-coated lady who was sitting on the steps of a Nob Hill mansion to rest her aching feet.

'After the first shock the adaptability and resourcefulness of the people were amazing; tent colonies were soon established in the city parks for those whose homes were destroyed; big auditoriums were used to house the sick and injured; doctors and nurses volunteered their services; the government distributed blankets and food; barrels of hot coffee were made in the Presidio and anyone passing by who felt a need of a little

stimulant could dip in the tin lying there and drink all he wanted. A few took refuge in neighbouring towns, but the great majority remained, and were actually able to enjoy the experience. Those whose homes remained standing shared their sleeping facilities with others, but could have neither fire nor light. Many erected little makeshift stoves on the curb in front of the home. Some put fences around the stoves to keep off the wind, and on one such fence we read a sign in big letters: "Palace Hotel". Many quickly accepted the situation gamely, made light of the hardships, and the ruined city gained the atmosphere of an immense picnic and a very genial hilarity prevailed. Even while the city was still burning, clearing of the ruined portions began. Arnold Genthe, the famous photographer, who lost all his possessions including his life's work and a valuable art collection, wandered all over the city even while preparations were being made to destroy his home (to help the firebreak) taking memorable photos of endless variety.

'Food supplies and money were soon received from all over the world. Food distribution depots were established in many places, and rich and poor alike stood in line to get their allotment. Swami Trigunatita permitted me to go to the ashrama for a rest. Grandma Reynolds and I took a position until the re-establishment funds were available and then rented space in the hallway of an apartment building on the corner of Franklin Avenue and O'Farrell Street, one block from Van Ness Avenue, which now become the main street of the city. We knew that there would be plenty of business for public stenographers; and the amount allotted was sufficient to obtain two typewriters and a multigraph. All the big department stores and restaurants put up one-story wooden buildings. It was like a country town having a grand celebration of some special event. Flags were waving on all the buildings.

'Although the atmosphere was one of gaiety, there was plenty of work to do. Many times we worked all night, going first to the Poodle Dog or some other French restaurant for dinner. Then we worked merrily for the first half of the night, drowsily but steadily for the second. We employed a young stenographer to help, and Grandma's ten-year old son Franklin became our office-boy and delivered the daily menus which we multigraphed for the Toke Point Oyster House and the Golden Pheasant. We took many of our meals at these places, and

Franklin, wishing enlightenment regarding the various unknown food items listed, would also have a morning snack when he delivered the menus, selecting some unfamiliar item such as *pate de fois grass*. He was often disappointed.

'Soon the work became so heavy that we decided to expand a little. We added a small room that had been used as a servant's room and used it for a dictation room. There I took dictation from various celebrities, from a prize-fighter for whom I wrote a contract, to Father Sasia, Dean of the Jesuit Order of the Catholic Church, who used to come before breakfast to dictate letters. Working for him was an ideal beginning of the day's work. Then, finding that so much time was lost in coming to the office and going home, we rented the large former kitchen behind our office, which became parlour, kitchen, and bedroom. A piano was added against the huge French range which we did not use. That was our sitting room. In one corner we had a breakfast nook, with a gas plate and a small cupboard. The remaining corner formed a bedroom for Grandma and Franklin. I slept on the back porch which was screened in for the purpose. We remained there until space was available for the office in a downtown building.'

Back in the early 1950's I was given to appraising everyone. I had not yet fully understood the import of that intriguing verse in the *Bhagavad-Gita* affirming the fact that everyone follows his own nature, 'even the sage'. I was trying to judge Vedanta to see whether it worked, and Vedantists to see if the religion they professed changed and improved them. It was natural that I should attempt to evaluate an old-time Vedantist like Ujjvala. To my unpracticed eye of that period Ujjvala seemed vaguely worldly. She had a lively interest in the news scandals of the day, she loved to go to the movies, and there was something hedonistic (or so it seemed to me) about her considerable fondness for sweets. Occasionally she would get mad at us and take refuge in a restaurant at the base of Ivar Hill, walking there rapidly and determinedly with the aid of her cane. Arrived at this destination, she would console herself by ordering pancakes drenched in syrup. As soon as I sensed what had happened I would get out the Centre's car and bring her back. On these occasions she would be remorseful like a scolded puppy. By then Alfred Kinsey's monumental book on the human male had become a bestseller. Ujjvala went

through the volume concealed inside an issue of the *Prabuddha Bharata*. Much of this apparent waywardness stemmed no doubt from the fact that Ujjvala had been a cripple since childhood and had been forced to live vicariously, experiencing very little of life except as an onlooker.

In any case, any doubt I might have had about Ujjvala's inner condition was resolved when she died. I was present during her final hours, and I know that Ujjvala was in contact with something or someone divine in her last moments. I know that whatever she may have seemed outwardly, Ujjvala inwardly was the loving child of Swamiji and his master and brethren.

The story is this. The *brahmacharini* who came to her room, as was usual, about seven o'clock on that Monday morning, found Ujjvala in bed, unconscious. She had been her usual lively self the evening before, having especially enjoyed some chocolate fudge I had made. We had, all of us, been sitting in Swami Prabhavananda's room. Suddenly Prabhavananda had asked Ujjvala: 'Ujjvala, have you become butter?' He later said that the question had come to him unexpectedly and that he had given expression to it without quite knowing why. This was a reference to something Swami Turiyananda had told her around 1900 at Shanti Ashrama, that if she worked hard at spiritual life she could become butter. (The allusion of course being that one's *sadhana* is a process of separating what is useful and precious in one's true nature from what is worthless). To everyone's surprise, as Ujjvala by nature tended to be self-deprecating, she had firmly replied: 'Yes!'

The doctor stated that Ujjvala had a massive stroke in her sleep. I went to her room. She was very attached to me, so I knew that I could rouse her if anyone could. In effect a certain consciousness did return, only to reject my salutations, as if to say, 'Now let me be; I have serious things to do' and plunge inside again. It went on like this until about noon. Then she whispered 'Mother', and tears flowed from the outside of her eyes. Swami Turiyananda had once told her: 'What you want, you will get. If you want entertainment, you will get entertainment. If you want Mother you will get Mother.' In an instant—from the dramatic change which came over her face—yes, it changed from flesh to clay—I saw that Ujjvala had died. Swami Prabhavananda had waited gravely in his room. When I brought him the news, he said, 'Her guru came for her.'

Glimpses of the Man-God

PRAVRAJIKA AJAYAPRANA

PASSING THROUGH the Suez Canal, a ship on her way to London entered the Mediterranean. The sea looked beautiful under the evening sky. The sun had almost set on the western horizon, and the moon was spreading her silvery rays over land and water. The ship was approaching Sicily. Against the setting sun the erupting volcano, Etna, was silently spitting balls of reddish fumes up into the air. On the other side, the Messina beach lay sprawled out, displaying the wealth of her powerful beauty. Piercing the heart of the placid sea, the ship was coursing her way towards the Atlantic. Aboard her was the great Swami Vivekananda from India. He was accompanied by his Irish disciple Nivedita and a brother monk, Swami Turiyananda. Nivedita, keeping pace with her Master up and down the deck, drank deep of this luxurious exhibition of nature's splendour. The yogi was speaking, emphasizing his point that 'beauty is not external, but already in the mind'. Suddenly clear rang his voice, 'Messina must thank me for her beauty. It is I who give her all her beauty.' The boldness of the utterance struck awe and wonder in the heart of the western woman, but its genuineness and sincerity could not be denied. Cutting asunder the limitations of body-consciousness, Vivekananda's personality was identified with the Infinite Self behind this ephemeral universe. He had become one with the omniscient, omnipotent, ever-glorious soul.

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Madame Calvé, in a very crisp but significant statement, tried to describe the multifaceted gem that Vivekananda's personality was: 'It has been my good fortune and my joy to know a man who truly "Walked with God", a noble being, a saint, a philosopher, and a true friend.' The 'Songbird of Europe', as she was popularly called, based this meaningful observation on her own personal experience. She lost her only child in a fire accident. This event gave her such a shock

that she felt the earth slipping away from under her feet. The world appeared empty, bereft of love or support. In utter desperation she decided to end her life by drowning in the lake some distance away from her home. Trying to draw her out of morbidity, friends advised her to meet the Indian yogi, of Chicago fame, who was at that time living in a friend's house nearby. Obstinate she declined the offered help. But great was her surprise to see that her steps on their own guided her to the house where the monk was living. She turned back home and again started for the lake. Four or five times she tried to reach the lake but, to her consternation, she found herself standing before Swamiji's door. Bending her head before the decree of Providence, she knocked and walked in. The monk was deeply engrossed in writing. Standing outside the door at the end of the corridor, Madame Calvé quietly studied his leonine head, strong jaw and handsome profile. Suddenly she was roused from her reverie by a clear, powerful voice: 'My child ! What a troubled atmosphere you have about you ! Be calm ! It is essential !' The endearing voice continued speaking. Before the astonished lady were laid bare many of the secret incidents of her life which she had never before divulged even to her closest friends. The voice soothed her burning soul with a refreshing balm, but she asked him point-blank how he could divine her innermost secrets. Had anyone talked to him about her? The Master raised his head and two piercing eyes engulfed her in deep affection and compassion. He smiled and said, 'No one has talked to me. Do you think that is necessary? I read in you as in an open book.' He advised her, 'You must forget. Become gay and happy again. Do not dwell in silence upon your sorrows. Build up your health. Transmute your emotions into some form of external expression. Your spiritual health requires it. Your art demands it.' All the tumultuous commotion of her heart was quelled, once and for all. She felt an ineffable peace settling on her. She offered herself heart and soul at the feet of this God, Lord Mahadeva, come in human attire to redeem mankind. Never again was she sad or morose. She says of this wonderful transformation, '... he lulled one's chaotic thoughts into a state of peaceful acquiescence, so that one could give complete and undivided attention to his words.'

Hari Singh was a professed Vedantist; he would vehemently attack image worship. But behind his hard exterior there dwelt a sincere soul. Swami Vivekananda loved him very much. One day, while out for a walk together, they came upon a large group of devotees carrying in procession the image of Sri Krishna and singing devotional songs. Swamiji and Hari Singh stood and watched. Suddenly the Master touched him lightly and said, 'Look, there is the living God.' He turned his head, and there was a sudden tenseness in his body. He stood rooted to the spot, his whole being became inert, and tears of ecstasy flowed unchecked from his eyes. The complete metamorphosis brought about by the divine touch of Swamiji was wonderful. Hari Singh remained ever afterwards an ardent believer in image worship.

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Ernest C. Brown was a great admirer of Swamiji and in later years a staunch worker for the Ramakrishna Movement in San Francisco. He describes beautifully his impressions when he first attended a lecture given by Swamiji. When he entered the hall accompanied by a friend, a German lady, the place was packed to overflowing, and a loud chattering filled the air. Suddenly an orange clothed figure appeared on the platform. His coming was quiet and abrupt. He stood like a bronze statue, with his hands folded in salutation—a figure of extreme poise, wonderful serenity, and striking majesty. Instantaneously, the hall sank into absolute silence. Mr. Brown was surprised. He asked himself, 'Who is that? An emperor?' To quote him, 'His walk was that of a god, a man accustomed to ruling. When he sat down the audience burst into tumultuous applause. But he sat there unmoved, his face reflecting the perfect calm within. Then he rose and just held up his hands with palms facing the audience, and at once there was a silence that you could feel, it was so tense, so palpable. I said to my companion, "Who is this person who can make a large audience like this yield and in a moment become silent? He is obviously accustomed to commanding others."'

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The same sentiment and complimentary tribute echo in the words of Harriet Monroe, the celebrated poetess, who had the good fortune to hear Swamiji in 1893. She writes, 'One

cannot repeat a perfect moment—the futility of trying to has been almost a superstition with me. Thus I made no effort to hear Vivekananda speak again during that autumn and winter when he was making converts by the score.'

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The saintliness of Swamiji's character shone forth at intervals. Some very fortunate disciples and intimate friends had a wonderful time in Ridgely Manor where the Master stayed for about ten weeks. A glimpse into the fantastic and unforgettable experience they had is given by Mr. Leggett, the master of the house. 'One night at Ridgely we were all spell-bound by his eloquence—such thoughts I have never heard expressed by mortal man such as he uttered for two and a half hours. We were all deeply affected. The Swami was inspired to a degree that I have never heard before.' After such an evening the guests retired to their rooms one day, silently, without even bidding good-night to one another. 'Such a holy quality pervaded.' Solicitous about the comfort of her guests Mrs. Leggett chanced to enter a room occupied by a lady, an agnostic. The hostess was astounded to see the lady weeping. On enquiry the lady confessed, 'That man has given me eternal life. I never wish to hear him again.'

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Mrs. Hansborough writes about one of her personal experiences when the saint in Vivekananda was manifested. 'One evening, after one of his lectures at Washington Hall, several of us were walking home with him. I was in front with someone, and he behind with some others. Apropos of something he had been discussing, he said, "You have heard that Christ said, 'My words are spirit and they are life.' " He pointed his finger at me and declared, "So are my words spirit and life; they will burn their way into your brain and you will never get away from them!"'

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On 25 March, 1900, Swamiji was to give a talk at 3 p.m. in the Union Square Hall in San Francisco. Mr. Allan, the organizer and director of the programme found to his dismay that contrary to his custom the Swami didn't make his appearance in time, not even at 3:30. The audience was getting restless. Mr. Allan became panicky. At last he saw the

Indian monk walking quite leisurely along the road as if there was ample time still left for the lecture to begin. Mr. Allan admonished him saying, 'Swamiji, don't you know you are late? The audience has been waiting.' Quietly came the reply, 'Mr. Allan, I am never late. I have all the time in the world.' As if to convince Mr. Allan about the truth of this assertion, Swamiji stopped on the way by a shoe-shiner to have his shoes polished. Mr. Allan now reached the end of his tether. He remonstrated, 'Well, Swamiji, the audience may not feel the same as you do'. There was no rejoinder to this. Perhaps the western gentleman had yet to learn the true significance of the Indian yogi's remark to some other person on a similar occasion. 'You (westerners) live in time; we (Indians) live in eternity.'

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A comradely touch, a sudden squeeze of the arm, a loving word, an imperceptible nod in recognition of appreciation were all zealously cherished by his friends and disciples as precious gifts till the last day of their life. Till many years later, Mr. Rhodehamel remembered with all the freshness of its experience the loving touch of the Swami. He says: 'Again (one) feels the pressure of a friendly arm about him, and he knows, for the time being, at least, that his efforts are not in vain.' Mrs. Allan's remarks are thought-provoking, 'He was kindness itself to me. Most people emphasize his great power, the side of him that was so awe-inspiring. But there was this other side to him—his great love. He was like the most tender and loving mother.' Again she says, 'Before he left California, he told me that if I ever got into psychic difficulty again, or any other kind of trouble, to call on him and he would hear me wherever he was. I've had occasion to take advantage of his promise many times.'

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'You must think well before you plunge in, and after work, if you fail in this or get disgusted, on my part I promise you, *I will stand by you unto death* whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedanta or remain in it. "The tusks of the elephant come out, but never go back"; so are the words of a man never retracted' were the words written by the Master in assurance of his unfailing help and support to his beloved

disciple Nivedita. He again wrote to her, 'A leader must be impersonal. What I mean is what I am, intensely personal in my love, but having the power to pluck out my own heart with my own hand, if it becomes necessary, "for the good of many, for the welfare of many", as Buddha said. Madness of love, and yet in it no bondage. Matter changed into spirit by the force of love.'

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Was he a man or a superman? It is not at all possible for us ordinary mortals to gauge the depth or vastness of his personality. Whatever it be, it is but true that he came down to this earth and allowed himself to be caught within the mortal frame only with a view to redeem us. When one of his disciples, Manmathnath Ganguli, lamented as to whether he would ever be able to follow the behests of his great guru, who was Lord Shiva Himself, out came the awe-inspiring but reassuring retort, 'Go and fall to the very depth of an abyss. It is I who shall raise you by the tuft of your hair. There is no power on this earth to keep you fallen.'

This is a promise given not to that particular disciple alone, but to all of us, his children, who have taken refuge at his feet. Let us, therefore, go forward, holding aloft the flag of the Master, with firm determination, sincere hearts, and full faith in his sure support and unconditional blessings for all our endeavours.

*Faith, faith, faith in ourselves, faith, faith in God
—this is the secret of greatness.*

In the Company of Swami Brahmananda

BOSHI SEN

Many books have been published about Swami Brahmananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and the first President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. More material is coming to light through the memoirs and letters of his contemporaries. One such contemporary was Dr Boshi Sen, the scientist who did fundamental research in plant physiology at the Vivekananda Laboratory in Almora, which he started on 4 July 1925. This great scientist of world renown was a child at heart, treasuring fondly in his mind every word and act of love showered on him by the Holy Mother and Sri Ramakrishna's disciples. Some portions about Swami Brahmananda from Dr. Boshi Sen's letters written from Calcutta to Sister Christine are published below. (From Mrs. Gertrude Emerson Sen's collection)—Editor.

9-12-1917

FOR THE last 6 days I was too busy and tired to take my Ganges bath. I have resumed it since yesterday and after bath I go to the Udbodhan where Swami Brahmananda is stopping (Raja Maharaj). He is so loving and to see him gives one such joy. He said today, 'Yes, continue your Ganges bath. It is good for health but don't take your bath when you catch cold.' Such sweetness and concern about such trifles. Really one feels that they are Gods living on Earth. So they are.

21-12-1917

I generally get up at 6.30 a.m. Then after a wash I go to the Ganges and have a 'swim'. I carry a shawl and a silk Dhoti for a change. Then I go to the Udbodhan when Swami Brahmananda is there and he is there for the last month. I have a talk with him for a few minutes and then come back and do the *puja* and have tea, toast and milk and then dress to come out. . . .

Now about Swami Brahmananda. He is generally so exceedingly sweet and kind. I feel awfully nice when I am with him. He was talking the other day about Shiva—generally he addresses someone when he means me. 'There is no one like Shiva. You see', he said, 'all the gods and the great ones are always afraid that some one is going to take away their power. But says that *soothingly effulgent* Shiva, "Oh I will cover the Infinity—Time and Space—through one meditation" and there

He is eternally meditating—and the Mother springs forth from the body that is His. Body dead—ah yes, dead to all the infinite charms and allurements of Maya. Such is Shiva! That absolute *White*, the snowclad Himalaya his abode, the snowy Ganges rests on His head and the crescent moon shines (on) his forehead—all white Himself, whitest of the white—mad, white—whitens all on whom His blessings descend. Jai Swamiji—jai, jai! Thou Shiva—the beloved and all—Thy blessings entwine all—Thy mercy comprehends all—and Thy love enfolds us forever and evermore—Jai Jai! Oh! these moments are just like having the supreme realization of life and I really do wonder why do people take to drugs to get intoxicated, I cannot imagine that there could be any drug so potent as to give us a fraction of that intoxication which is His—and to think that we touched the great ones—been with them in life—as human beings, makes us so humble in love and gratitude and so proud in our *birth*! They have been with us and they are with us.

Swami Brahmananda says *Purna-jnanam*, 'knowledge complete' when I make *pranams* to him. I think he blesses me with those words and says, 'Take His name and be "joyous" always. Everything will be right—the body, the mind, and the spirit.' I told you that he said, 'Take Ganges bath. It is good for health'. These little things make one so happy. They show that they are concerned, and that through their love universal.

10-12-1920

Swami Brahmananda is here and I am very happy. He encouraged me a great deal in my work. He is so loving and loveable. He came to the Math on the 5th and I couldn't go to see him before the 12th. He inquired what had happened to me from different people, not finding me at the Math. When I went there he said, 'Hello, here is Boshi. He is a "season flower". He has his seasons'. Really that expresses a great deal of my activities. I spent the night at the Math. In the morning he spoke about many things and (encouraged me) a great deal in continuing my (work) . . . that science has given me more than monastic discipline could have. One feels his love and blessings. He is so considerate too.

23-12-1920

Swami Brahmananda has gone to Bhavanipore and I do miss him. Really, he satisfies a man's demand. He is so sweet, so deep and above all, so compassionate. Things which used to jar before are now made quite clear. He seems to have a steady gaze and when he talks he does it indifferently. As when we have something very absorbing in our mind yet we can exchange politeness and courtesies. At his deepest he is frightening. It seems that nothing is bad. If there be a God—or to put it differently—'Let it be granted there is a God. Then how can we get frantic over anything and (any) condition unless it be an effective stimulus for further progress?'

24-3-1921

I saw Swami Brahmananda last Sunday. It is always a great delight to see him. I now gradually realize what Swamiji meant by 'he is a pillar of spirituality'. He has such a deep and abiding concern for all. It is not one or a group they are concerned with. It is a feeling for the Universe.

One of my greatest regrets has been that Swampsee (Swami Sadananda) did not live to see me grow, so that I could talk to him and how delighted he would have been. I could have seen in him many things in detail. That to some extent is satisfied in Swami Brahmananda. Why, the very fact that men like S. Brahmananda do live in this world is a great blessing to humanity. All attempts of humanity in the direction of evolving perfection have been futile in one sense and more than fruitful in another.

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2-3-1918

Swami Brahmananda is founding a new centre at Bhubaneswar, near Puri. He has been thinking and working for it for the last 7/8 years. I remember the day when he came to see Swampsee (Swami Sadananda), he told him about it and Swampsee said, 'Maharaj, I shall be the *keeper* there'. To which Raja Maharaj said, 'Dear child you get well and things will be done'. The sweetness and love with which he said these few words were so concrete and I can still hear those words, and that was the first time I found what love he has for Swampsee. Now the Math is going to be built. So last

Wednesday he asked me, 'Hello Boshi, what allowance do you get?' I said, 'Maharaj, Rs. 150'. Then he began to think and said, 'You give Rs. 15 a month and Tabi*, Rs. 10 a month for Bhubaneswar'. Oh, I simply jumped at the idea. You know how proud one feels when Raja Maharaj asks for something. I took the dust of his feet. When I came and told Tabi he simply began to *laugh* outright with joy. Poor boy hardly leaves the room. So the next morning I told Maharaj, 'Tabi simply laughed outright when I told him about his contribution'. To which Maharaj said, 'Tell him, "This is not eating sweets but a check (a term in chess playing which means, 'look out'))"'. He said it so teasingly and full of fun.

7-5-1919

Last Monday, 5th, I went to see Swami Brahmananda. He all of a sudden asked me how much I was getting from Dr. Bose and whether Dr. Bose has given me any increment. I told him that I get Rs. 150, though there are other posts of Rs. 200 which he has given to others. He was sorry that Dr. Bose should be so inconsiderate. He said, 'Oh well, if He wishes He will force Dr. Bose to give you something or, in other ways you might get money. Anyway *dal & bhat* (curry and rice) you can get'. Awfully sweet.

26-1-1921

This is just a line to say that I am still very busy but I have got such a new *vision* and with it the attitude since Swami Brahmananda's arrival here. Oh, the way he helps one in his own line. Whenever I can manage I see him. He is now at 57 † He was telling me about the life of plants. He is not merely passing remarks. He sees and feels. 2 years ago he told me, 'Do not give it up You will attain your vision and realization through this'. He said, 'Knowledge Knowledge. It is Infinite. Don't you realize that?' I was exactly thinking about it then. Yesterday he said, 'I wish that at least some of you ought to direct your inquiries about the *purpose* of life'. I said, 'Maharaj, is it possible to realize that through Science?' He said, 'Why not? What science has discovered is amazing.

*Boshi Sen's younger brother, Matleswar Sen.

†57 Ramakanta Bose Street, Balaram Bose's house.

Man has the knower of God in him. Certainly nothing is impossible for him. It is *difficult* no doubt but do not give it up. Many by-paths, many misleading signs. But continue. Someday it *will open*.' The beauty of the whole thing is that when he says these things he is so convincing, as if he himself sees what he is talking about. Really it is wonderful. One gathers a great deal of inspiration even in a few minutes. I thought how you would have enjoyed it. Certainly you will hear him soon. He will be in Calcutta for another month or two. He will be going back and forth. I can realize what you saw in Swamiji. I am so happy with the present visions. They seem to come by jerks as it were—a pause—a light—then sudden illumination.

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25-2-1918

Swami Brahmananda is here and is very kind to us. Yesterday we had a Ramnam Sankirtan. It was superb. Music pure, voice pure, the atmosphere purity herself. I have hardly enjoyed any music so well as I did last night.

14-5-1918

Swami Brahmananda is here and we have Bhajan chorus by the monks. It is so splendid. I realize how I have been starved of this emotional food. The imageries they create, the traditions these little songs embody, and above all, the supreme intimacy they breathe regarding God or Godhead! The songs of Ramprasad I like best. It is always . . . so intimate, half childish and full of realization.

17-8-1922

The last 3 days we are having a glorious time. 15th was the birthday of Krishna—Janmashtami, and we observed it by having a special *puja* of Raja Maharaj. We thought of it on the 15th at 1 a.m. and in the morning I left Rs. 5 with the monks to buy flowers and fruits and I was phoned at 5 p.m. to come at once at 8* Bosepara as the Swamis (big ones) would be coming to see us. Tabi came at 12 and added Rs. 10 to it and we had a feast and music and chanting. Sarat Maharaj said he

*8 Bosepara Lane, Dr. Boshi Sen's house.

would be unable to come in the evening as there was *puja* at the Udbodhan. So he came in the afternoon. Of course we offered bread and butter and fruits to Raja Maharaj. You know on Janmashtami day people observe complete *fast*. Sarat Maharaj came in and we gave him a chair. He squatted on the floor and changed the whole atmosphere. He talked in easy language about Krishna, referring to Raja Maharaj. Had a cup of tea and a piece of bread and butter—all forbidden—then he said, 'Should one remark why I took it, I will tell them, Raja's *prasadam*.' It was all so sweet; so highly charged atmosphere. No show, all feeling and sweetness. Then later he sent a note addressed 'to the foolish scientist, B. Sen'. I opened it, found a Sanskrit couplet which may be translated: 'Abandoned in thy sports with Madhava (Sri Krishna) in the bellowing, heaving Kalindi (the favourite lake of Krishna), Oh, thou Brahmananda, Guru true, shepherd sure, salutation to thee'.

In Sanskrit the rhyme and rhythm are so sweet. Anyway that couplet has been adopted by the devotees as the prayer. It was very nice in every way.

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6-4-1922

Raja Maharaj (S. Brahmananda) had an attack of cholera on the 24th March and though his cholera is cured, his diabetes has attacked him again and just now he is so very very weak. He can hardly talk. I had the privilege of nursing him along with 20 other *sannyasis* and *brahmacharis*. I cannot think that he is going to leave us. Thakur used to say that he would live a 100 years, that gives S. Brahmananda another 15 years but oh . . . what he has to suffer just now! Fortunately Dr. Bose went to Darjeeling the same day he (S. Brahmananda) had cholera and I was free to take up this work. He is at 57.

13-4-1922

This is just a few lines to say that Raja Maharaj entered *mahasamadhi* last Monday (10th) at 8.50 p.m. You can imagine what it means! No one expected it, though his illness was so serious. His body was taken to the Math early in the morning from 57. We crossed the Ganges by the ferry steamer and watched them from the Math side. It was on such a frail boat, and against the tide that the stalwart monks reached their

charge to the destination. The 'Nephew' (Sankarananda) was at the helm and other monks at the oars—a sight for those who had eyes to see! Tears of joy one couldn't check. Yes, these monks will reach their charge safely across the River—against tide and wind, to the destination. Forty-eight hours before he entered *mahasamadhi* Brahmananda revealed himself. He said, 'Look, look, there is Krishna. Oh! You haven't eyes to see!' 'Put on my anklets. I will dance holding the hands of Krishna.' 'Oh, my Krishna is not of the weary and leaden; my Krishna is of the Gopas.' 'I am the cowherd of Braja.' 'I know Premananda. My Vivek—Naren, Oh yes, I see Naren—Vivekananda, but I don't find Hari (Turiyananda).' Then he said, 'Get me some lemonade.' When offered he said, 'Wait. Let me first get the Brahman stuff settled.' There have been some great misunderstandings between the 'nephew' and Raja Maharaj for the last three years. He called him, 'My child, my very own, my jewel, my beloved darling, I have made you wander round and round these years. Do not mind that.' Nephew burst into tears and said, 'My lord through your grace I understand you did all that to kill my vanity. I know everything through your grace.' Brahmananda said, 'Why did you leave me and stay away from me?' N. said, 'You sent me away, Maharaj. I am thy servant always.' 'I will give you a blow', and gently and sweetly he planted one. To another young monk he said, 'My child, be not arraid. Why, you who have served me, what fear cans't thou have, my child?' Then he said, 'A little child is gently stroking my body and calling me'. That was the worst thing and by far the most definite thing he could have said. Still we all hoped and prayed. He began to call everyone as *Baba*, even Swamis Saradananda and Shivananda. Evidently he was addressing as his own real Self. Well, I had the privilege of nursing him for the eighteen days he was ill. One knows not what awaits the Math and the Mission. I am thoroughly depressed over it. But a great change of outlook has come and I am learning to wait and hope and love others as much as possible.

28-4 1922

I do not miss Raja Maharaj so much now. I try to think that he is away in Bhubaneswar. Saturday 22nd there is going to be an *utsab* to commemorate the event. A new President will

have to be elected. According to the Constitution the *oldest* disciple becomes the President. Swami Sivananda would become the President, I think. . . . Swami Brahmananda helped me all along to be a good dog of Swampsee. Even monks were not allowed in his room during the illness. His *brahmachari* attendants alone were allowed to nurse him. But in accepting me he recognized Swampsee. That was about all the claim in my favour. Because of Swampsee he took us as his own. People used to wonder that I who was not his formal disciple should be given such privileges and outsiders used to think I was one of his disciples. Of course I loved him not for any earthly or heavenly reasons. Just satisfied me and I did it. I never expected anything but to have the pleasure of hearing his conversation and just watching his movements.

13-7-1922

Since Maharaj gave up his body a new outlook has come and one can at least understand why they say 'getting which all other gains seem mere trifles'. With this vision one finds it difficult to work with the same fetters and goading of desires. But the loss in quantity is more than compensated by the quality of the work.

29-6-1922

. . . Raja Maharaj fulfilled the life I began. A new strength with authority to back. It has established my own relation with things.

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9-12-1922

The 'Old Man' rather the 'Bearded Blessed One' (Sri Ramakrishna) as we call Him can work miracles and indeed we have every right to feel blessed as we belong to Him and His.

Mahasamadhi of Srimat Swami Gambhirananda



THE NEWS about the *mahasamadhi* of the eleventh President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Srimat Swami Gambhirananda was broadcast through the news media on the night of 27 December 1988. The ninety-year-old *sannyasi* gave up his mortal body at 7:27 p.m. on that date; it was consigned to flames on 28 December on the bank of the Ganga on the hallowed grounds of the Ramakrishna Math at Belur.

We are told that as a young man of twenty-four, after graduation, he served in the military accounts department in Rangoon. Seeing the austere way of life, the strict discipline

and dutifulness of the soldiers staying in a military camp near his house, he dreamt of two ideals—one, to become a soldier in the army; two, to follow Swamiji's call and become a 'soldier' in his army. The latter ideal captured his mind and he joined the Ramakrishna Order in 1923. And to the last days of his life he followed the ideal of austerity, discipline and dutifulness of a soldier towards his *sangha*.

He served the organization in various administrative capacities, and together with his scholarly bent of mind found expression in writing many books which show his mastery of the Sanskrit, Bengali and English languages.

Since 1966, when he became the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, he took keen interest in the activities of Sri Sarada Math and the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, and gave his guidance when needed. Though formal in his attitude and impersonal in his care and concern, he was never unkind or indifferent. His courtesy and modesty were exemplary. Those *sannyasinis* who are in the vanguard of the women's movement have learnt a lot from Swami Gambhirananda's spiritual leadership and his good wishes gave them great encouragement. At the foundation-laying ceremony of the temple at Sri Sarada Math, Dakshineswar, on 8 March 1976, Swami Gambhirananda said, 'Swamiji had a vision of a great spiritual Order of women that would be led by the Holy Mother. He would foresee that *sannyasinis* would gather together in her holy name and go round the world preaching the cultural and spiritual ideas of ancient India and replenish them, according to the needs of the time. Today Sri Sarada Math stands as a fulfilment of that ideal.'

On behalf of Sri Sarada Math and the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, and all its centres, the *Samvit* offers its respectful homage to the sacred memory of Srimat Swami Gambhirananda.

Inner Peace, or Nervous Tension ?

BARBARA FOXE

TWO YEARS ago I saw, quite by accident (if there is such a thing as accident in this world of Maya) the first of a weekly series of talks given on BBC television, and to my surprise and delight I found that an elderly, distinguished and deeply compassionate doctor, Dr. Claire Weekes,—a medical practitioner, not a psychiatrist,—was speaking and answering questions on the subject to which she has devoted her life's work; the problem that Swami Vivekananda referred to as the terrible nervous tension which is in man. With the most down-to-earth experienced practicality this eminent woman was giving advice which was an exact echo of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings—even if she had never heard of them—and so much of her advice, and so many of her conclusions, brought to my mind immediately quotations from the Master and Swamiji, and Jesus Christ also, that I decided to watch the whole series. I listened with deep interest each week, because today, nervous tension, as we all know, is pressing those who live in the West, not only into violent clashes and riots, drug-taking, crime, drink, murder, muggings, sexual promiscuity, and child abuse, but also among the many quiet people who long for peace and the living of a good life, this atmosphere of tension is producing illness and mental breakdown, and opening the door to much physical illness. Even cancer is among the many illnesses which doctors are now beginning to suspect may, in some people, take its grip because excessive nervous tension had already prepared the way. Emotion and excitement are thrust upon us in pop music, on the television screen, at football matches; the words 'serenity' and 'tranquillity' are so old-fashioned that one hardly dares use them. And doctors are confronted daily by patients whose illnesses may have their roots in, or are certainly worsened by, the whole atmosphere in which we live. But this does not only apply to the West. Dr. Weekes found that anxiety, nervous

Barbara Foxe, a member of the Vedanta Centre, U.K., is deeply devoted to the ideal taught by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Among her printed works are *Long Journey Home* and *Harmony in Chaos*. Her stories, plays and documentary programmes have been broadcast on BBC radio.

tension, and restlessness of mind are not confined to western nations, they are universal. She travelled widely and found them everywhere.

I think often of the Master's words, 'The upshot of the whole thing is that no matter what path you follow, yoga is impossible unless the mind becomes quiet. The mind of the yogi is under his control, he is not under the control of his mind'.¹

I should like to share with others what I remember of those talks and questions; obviously I cannot quote her words exactly, but since Dr. Weekes' whole life is dedicated to the spreading of inner peace to those in need of it, I am sure she will forgive me if I remember the matter rather than the exact form of her words. And as the talks proceeded, thousands of letters poured into the BBC asking for advice, help, and further details, which showed that I was by no means alone in my interest, so I listened and observed how a practical woman, a doctor in the West, and now well-known all over the world, was applying principles which are also basic principles of Vedantic thought, and healing as she did so.

Dr. Hazel Claire Weekes, M.B., D.Sc , F.R.A.C P., was then consultant physician at the Rachel Forster Hospital in Sydney, Australia; (she has since retired), she has addressed conferences on nervous illness and all forms of nervous anxiety, all over the world; and she spoke from her life's experience of working with patients, not from theory. Her teaching is simple in the extreme. But, as she said herself, 'simple' is not at all the same thing as 'easy'.

Dr. Weekes based all her teaching on three basic points. She found, in her early years as a practising medical doctor, that so many of her patients were unaware that many of their problems originated in the mind and the nervous system, that before she could help them as a doctor, it was necessary to emphasize one important, universal truth; that though we have a mind and a soul, both of which can take us far ahead of animals and birds in our development, we also inhabit a body which we share with the animal kingdom. But, because of our restless minds, we have lost the instinctive innocence of animals, and we do not understand just what is happening in our bodies when our minds become over-tense,

whether the stress is temporary, as in bereavement, or some unexpected anxiety,—or long-term.

Her first point is always, — acceptance. People become afraid, and therefore more tense, when they find they are developing irrational fears, serious phobias, fainting, migraine, ulcers, — the list is endless — so they fight their own fears and struggle when they should relax. Once they have accepted that something is wrong, Dr. Weekes then leads them to understand just what is happening in their bodies when they become tense. Tension is very important to an animal; it is a signal; and he acts immediately. He runs away, or, if he is a predator, he runs after his prey. Then he lies, utterly relaxed, and his mind does not go over and over the recent chase, or worry about the next one. A deer, mauled by a predator, must obviously be in pain, but, having escaped, the deer grazes peacefully with the herd. An animal does not add to its pain, as we do, by remembering past pain and wondering about future pain ('And how will they manage at home while I am in the hospital'). When tension is over, the animal enters into its natural state of calm; busy or resting, but unafraid. The sudden tension of nerves and muscles, pumps adrenalin into the body, which causes the animal to take immediate action. But we cannot do that; our minds and bodies may be tense, and we worry and increase the flow of adrenalin. Then, if we faint, or build up a splitting headache, or take our first steps towards a more serious illness or mental breakdown we do not realize that too much adrenalin is causing actual bodily changes within us which we cannot see. Messages are passed along the spine, like an electric current, which cause actual hormone changes, temporarily, in the body; and when the brain can no longer cope with this, we faint. Or we may have a heart attack. Or unknowingly, we are building up prolonged physical and mental troubles for the years ahead. So, the very Vedantic teaching of 'acceptance', is her starting point. And over and over again, she teaches her patients just what is happening in their bodies when they become tense, and, unlike the animals, can do nothing about it. Tension increases tension, anxiety becomes a habit of the restless mind.

Dr. Weekes was asked if she had found that a religious belief helped her patients. She replied that it certainly did, when it was a deep and genuine faith, but she had found that some religious people tend to think of themselves only as soul

or spirit, and do not at first accept that soul, spirit, and mind are housed in a body which is still animal in its reactions, and the instinctive animal reactions must be accepted, and used for good purposes, not ignored as though we were already living in paradise. Of course, we do not wish to become animals, but we should have the humility to accept our kinship with them, and to learn from them. (A point often made by Swami Vivekananda, as, for instance, when he told us to rejoice when we saw a mother cat defending her kittens; and the parables of Sri Ramakrishna are full of charming references to the animals and birds around us).

Her insistence on the first great point of acceptance of what we are, and facing up to our nervous or mental difficulties, reminded me of the words of Walt Whitman, the American poet:

'I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and
self-contained.

I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,

They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,

They do not make me sick '*discussing*' their duty to God,

Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of
owning things' . . .

And later in the poem he says,

'No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God
and about death'.²

After acceptance, which means a great deal more than a merely intellectual acceptance, Dr. Weekes comes to her second point, which is really the great basis of her teaching.

She calls it 'floating', and it seems to me an exact parallel with Sri Ramakrishna's advice to drift like a leaf carried by the wind, floating in the stream of the spiritual current. The illustration she gives, as she is an Australian, is that of the surf-riders, and as I too have watched this sport on the great waves breaking on the shore in Cornwall, England, I saw at once what she meant. The great waves, as they break on the shore, may be many times higher than a man. If the surf-rider runs away, the huge waves will overwhelm him, and drag him down. If he stands rigid, tense, facing the sea, the sea will overwhelm him;

it is far stronger than he is. So he takes his surf-board, faces the oncoming wave and dives straight into the wave itself; and he finds that the sea holds him up, he is floating, and he emerges on the crest of the wave, and, lying on his surf-board, is carried on to the shore. But he has to make that first dive into the wave, himself. After that, the sea takes over and carries him; which reminded me of Sri Ramakrishna's teaching that the wind of God's grace is always blowing, but we do have to hoist the sail ourselves; after that, the wind carries us along.

It reminded me also of a time, more than half a century ago, when, as a child, I was trying to learn to swim in a quieter and more shallow sea. I was terrified. But I found that if I lay on my back and floated, the sea would carry me. Childlike, however, I cheated, at first. I kept one foot on the seabed, near the edge of the beach, and let my body, two arms and one leg, float. The whole essence of Dr. Weekes' teaching about floating, must obviously imply faith and renunciation, and renunciation may be taken to mean 'letting go'. I was not completely 'letting go'. I wanted the best of both worlds. Then one day I decided that if the sea could carry all of my body except one leg, it could carry that, too. So I brought up the second leg beside the first and found that I could float as long as I liked, and for as far as I liked, and I could swim on my back by moving my arms. From then on, I had faith in the sea, completely, and I was willing to 'renounce', in the sense of letting go.

Dr. Weekes, who was talking to an audience of several million people on TV, many of them possibly non-believers, did not use the words 'faith' or 'renunciation', but without these, obviously one cannot 'float' in one's mind—or in the sea.

She made it clear that it is not a /azy 'floating'; it is an attitude of mind. In her later years, she did much work among people who are agoraphobic, that is, they have a fear of open spaces, even of going out of the house. Many of her patients were business men, who suffered torments of mind when they had to force themselves out into active life. One of the saddest things about this kind of illness is that people are ashamed of it; their minds tell them that it is nonsense, and they try to fight it, which of course makes it worse. As an illustration of 'floating', she described a business man who knew that he faced an unpleasant interview with his boss at work. If he became

tense, he would collapse. But if he 'floated', in his mind, detaching himself from fear and trusting to his inner self to 'float him through', at the very least he would emerge unscathed, and would give an impression of quiet confidence; and he would avoid a collapse.

I was reminded, as I listened to her, of how often we think of ourselves controlling our minds as though we were struggling with a powerful, restless horse. We read in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that Arjuna said to Krishna, in the chariot, 'Restless man's mind is, . . . how shall he tame it? Truly, I think the wind is no wilder'.³

Sri Ramakrishna told a woman who wanted to control her mind, but found that the mind would not obey the reins, to think of herself as a leaf carried on the wind of the spiritual current, floating. Dr. Sarkar suggested to him that the mind should wear blinkers, like a horse, and again Sri Ramakrishna told him that love of God should swallow up other emotions and thoughts; this also implies 'floating', of course. We are carried by God, or by the great sea, or carried in the arms of the parent God,—however we like to think of it. And to an atheist, there is still the belief in something great and quiet within himself, his greater self, on which, as Dr. Weekes said . . . 'he can lie back and float, as on a cloud'.

The third point she made, and by no means the least important, she summed up in one word: 'Time'. Indeed, she returned to give a brief interview on TV recently, after her retirement, in which she emphasized this again.

We cannot float perfectly at once, and we cannot continue without set-backs. She stresses (as Swami Vivekananda also did) that mistakes, and falling back, are necessary to progress and we should rejoice in them, for they give us a chance to learn and to test if we can *really* cope. By mistakes we learn. After recovery, she said, her patients can burn all her books and throw away her cassettes, because they will have learned to cope with nervous tension by themselves. This reminded me of Sri Ramakrishna's teaching that if a friend has sent you a letter of instructions, when you have carried out all the instructions, the letter can be torn up. And her insistence that recovery—a word she prefers to use, rather than 'cure'—does not happen overnight, reminds us, perhaps of the comment of Brother Lawrence in the seventeenth century. 'One does

not become holy all at once'⁴ And when Priya told Sri Ramakrishna that his mind was not under his control, the Master told him to remember Abhyasa Yoga; yoga through constant practise.

Lastly, Dr. Weekes brought to the television screen a young woman who was a living illustration of her teaching. She expressed great respect for her courage in speaking to a vast TV audience, including, of course, her own neighbours, simply to help other sufferers. This young woman had been struggling to maintain her job, while at the same time she was making arrangements for her wedding, and her wedding dress, with no mother to help her. In the middle of this her father fell ill, to add to her anxiety, and she had to visit him in the hospital, and while she was sleeping alone in the house, a man broke in. The police arrived, and all was well, but it was the final tension which, though she did not know it, finally drove her overstrained nervous system too far, and so began long years of nervous trouble for her. She could not sleep. Then she also began to develop depression and serious phobias, even after her marriage and the birth of her children. She said that it was like living in hell; she no longer had control of her nervous tensions or her phobias, however much she struggled, and her family suffered too. Then, very slowly, she learned from Dr. Weekes, how to 'float', how to trust life and herself, and she told us that coming into this inner peace, however many of life's troubles and anxieties might still lie ahead for her, was like stepping into sunshine from a dark room. She said also that nobody who had not experienced nervous tensions could understand how wonderful the discovery of inner peace is. Certainly the serenity of her face must have made those who watched, deeply thankful for the life's work of the compassionate woman who had helped her and thousands of others.

The great religions of the world teach us the same thing. But do we always follow what we believe, all the time? And non-believers, Dr. Weekes has proved, can still find that strong and peaceful Self within themselves, by whatever name they call it, and must come back, again and again, to 'floating' when they become tense. Dr. Weekes has given a lifetime to teaching, in simple practical terms, as a doctor, the message which the saints and sages have always brought us. One remark of hers I particularly remember . . . 'The patient's inner voice is his

salvation'. He will discover, and respond to, that inner voice when he has learned to hear it.

To the believer in God, the separate and over-anxious mind is an illusion. There is no separation from God. 'Bondage is of the mind. A man is free if he constantly thinks, 'I am a free soul. How can I be bound, whether I live in the world, or in the forest? I am a child of God, the King of Kings. Who can bind me?' Those are the words of Sri Ramakrishna.⁵ And, in the words of Psalm 139 . . . 'Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? . . . If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me'.⁶ And the Abbé de Tourville wrote, 'Above everything else you must develop confidence in the love which our Lord bears you. That must become your chief virtue. Consequently you must practise gratitude, tranquillity, joy and affection'.⁷ Tranquillity and joy; these things do not flower overnight; but, as Dr. Weekes constantly says, and has proved again and again, 'It takes time to grow into peace'. Acceptance, floating, and time; this is the way nervous tension changes into peace, and it is also the way of Vedanta, of Christianity, and of all those great Voices which come to us across the ages. And it is the inner voice, as Dr. Weekes said, of each one of us.

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The Holy Mother

BINDUMATI GHATE

IT IS a paradox that a human being with his limited capacity tries to investigate the unlimited. Since Vedic times, however, man, with whatever limitations he has, has been trying to fathom the unfathomable. And every time he has tried he has caught hold of some new aspect of it from a new standpoint and thus arose from his investigation the different schools of philosophy. The same we see in the lives of great men. The more we study them, the more we discover new facets of their versatile personalities. In the Vedas and Upanishads seers tried to explain Brahman by learned arguments. Many devotees have written about their spiritual experiences and the memorable favours they received in the company of holy men. But without seeing the Holy Mother, the wife of Sri Ramakrishna, I am trying to tell you what I think of her.

The first thing that strikes me about the Holy Mother is the strenuous, continuous mission she carried on for more than thirty years after the Master entered *mahasamadhi*. No saint in the history of mankind had such a staunch, stalwart follower as Sri Ramakrishna had in his wife; a wife who consistently gave spiritual guidance to all. What Swamiji did on an international scale was done by the Holy Mother for the devotees in India. It seems to have been preplanned by Sri Ramakrishna. Take the incident of Sri Ramakrishna, in his youth, suggesting to his mother and brother to seek for him the hand of the daughter of Ramachandra Mukhopadhyaya of Jayrambati. Could it have been a whim or fancy? No! Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother were two aspects, *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, of the whole Reality or Paramatman. This is seen in their sameness of thought, behaviour, style of speaking; in their usage of words and giving common examples of everyday life. Could it have been so had they not been echoes of the same voice? Sri Ramakrishna himself had openly called her his power. Once he said, 'You can hurt me, but never insult or do any wrong to her. It would be harmful for you.' The fact that he performed a

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special worship of her as the Divine Mother shows clearly how he was aware of her capacity and power.

Sri Ramakrishna once tried to bring to her notice that she was spending money a little exorbitantly for food and such domestic things. She did not deny it but determinedly told him, 'No one need guide me in domestic affairs. I know now how to manage them very well.' Such occasions undoubtedly show that she was asserting women's rights. Sri Ramakrishna, with the most sensitive seismograph possible, would easily respond and respect her power to decide things properly. She was his own better-half.

In this respect it should be remembered that Sri Ramakrishna did his very best to train her in worldly as well as spiritual matters. He always took great pains to see that she mastered everything to his satisfaction. He must have realized that because of his strenuous penance, ecstatic trances and physical emaciation as the result of various religious practices, his physical strength was exhausted and very little energy was left to carry on his mission. In Swamiji and the Holy Mother, he found two reliable persons to spread his message. This can be verified from the incidents about different devotees who sought initiation from her or, for that matter, the correct diagnosis she made about the method of their *sadhana* as in the case of Swami Virajananda. Even the apostles of Sri Ramakrishna could not find out what was wrong with him but she could easily detect it. She advised him saying, 'You are meditating on the wrong centre. You should meditate on the heart.' Following her advice he became all right. She was a perfect authority on spiritual practices, but she would give all instructions in the name of Sri Ramakrishna. 'He will do it,' or 'I will speak to him for you,' she would say in her humble and unassuming way. This was her way of keeping herself out of the limelight even when the Master was no longer alive, although she did this all the more during his lifetime.

The Holy Mother's treatment of everybody coming to her to quench their spiritual thirst was extraordinary. Sri Ramakrishna had apparently wanted her to express to the full her motherly feelings for the welfare of the dejected, the forlorn, and the downtrodden, from different provinces of India as also from various parts of the world. Many were attracted by her motherly love and desired to be initiated by her. Her's was a

universal motherhood, which not only nourished them with spiritual food and bestowed affection, but also gave protection, encouragement, or instruction as the occasion required. A so-called uneducated village girl like her could so naturally and easily handle any situation. Could it have been possible unless there were a supernatural power in her? Sri Ramakrishna would many times draw people's attention to the divine capacity of the Holy Mother. None but Swamiji realized it fully. A rational man who would never be blindly swayed, he always respected her advice and opinion as when he prepared to go to the Chicago Parliament of Religions or at the time of founding the Ramakrishna Math. In the latter, she played a pivotal role; by her inspiration it took shape.

It is interesting to see how the Holy Mother could understand Sri Ramakrishna's mind. Somebody asked her whether Sri Ramakrishna was incarnated to promote a synthesis of all religions and creeds, (*Sarvadharmā-samanvaya*). She said, '*Sarvadharmā-samanvaya* was not the aim of his life. He actually practised the principles of all religions and creeds not to amalgamate them all but in order to show to the world that all religions in their own way lead to the final Truth.' How beautifully, in simple words, she could explain the Master's ideal. Who could do it better than she?

In her care of Sri Ramakrishna, and even in small details of preparing food for his devotees according to their liking, we may see how keen was her motherly instinct. It can be said that after his passing away this motherly attitude which she infused in all, through her practical example, was the unifying factor for his followers, both ascetic monks and householder devotees. Every devotee coming to her was sure of receiving her attention, solace, and comfort. She served humbly but with confidence and self-respect. When she had first gone to stay with Sri Ramakrishna, he had asked her whether she would be a hindrance to him in his spiritual life, she respectfully asserted, 'I have come to help you; not to distract you. My part is supplementary.' What self-confidence!

It is meaningless to say that there was a worldly relationship of husband and wife between the Master and the Holy Mother. The Master had from time to time explained to her her real personality. She was part and parcel of his own Self: their union was of the Self, so no question of external union arose

at all. This question harassed the minds of common people, but not the inner circle of disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. They had realized the meaning of the Shodashi Puja. She was the Universal Mother. How could she have been a wife in the ordinary sense of the word? The Holy Mother's nature as the Universal Mother was expressed in her dealings with the devotees. She had love in abundance, her sympathy had no limits. She had full control of her emotions. Many times she said, 'Persons coming to me sometimes trouble me very much. But I must control my indignation or ill feelings because my unfavourable attitude would incur some mishap or misfortune to them.' 'There can never be a bad mother.' (कुमाता न भवेत् क्वचिदपि).

Throughout the Holy Mother's life, full of struggles, hardships, and severe poverty, she never complained nor showed any grudge. Rather others were, and still are, basking in comfort and well-being in every way because of her favour.

All Is Not Lost

INDU RAMCHANDANI

IN THE penultimate decade of the twentieth century, when we human beings have reached giddy heights in our discovery of science, in our advancement in technology, why has it become essential to seek reassurance such as this: All is not lost?

Today, in the various fields of science and technology, we have achieved what was undreamt of not so long ago. Yet there pervades an air of despondency; an atmosphere of despair, frustration, and helplessness. It seems ironical, almost a contradiction in itself. On the one hand our scientific progress has not ceased to amaze us, and on the other hand we wallow in the anguish of fear; burn in the fire of hatred; grovel in abject despair. We are like caged, angry, and utterly confused animals, desperate to break all shackles. Yet we cannot be

equated with animals—we have evolved far beyond. While the animal has the simple quest of hunger that motivates his search for his prey, we have lust, anger, greed, desire and arrogance enough to make us five times the more desperate hunter and hunted. While the animal has pure instinct as his driving force, we have an intellect, a mind, and unending emotions to accelerate our momentum.

The only question that surfaces again and again amidst the chaos is 'Why does this superior creature of evolution find himself in an abyss? With all that he has discovered why does it seem that he has lost more than he has ever found?' Life, as we see it around us, is a strange phenomenon of cause and effect. It is a perpetual see-saw of ups and downs, gives and takes, and haves and have-nots. Yet despite these oscillations and play of contrasts, or perhaps because of them, the universe is a harmonious, unified, complete whole. Buffeted in this cause and effect, in time and place, we remain tied up in the game as mere pawns, unable to visualize the entire game-board. Therefore within the very first adverse moves we flounder, and 'drown' in the darkness of ignorance.

We get 'lost' because we search for permanence in the transitory. We get 'lost' because we want and are not prepared to give. We get 'lost' because in the limited we search for the unlimited. This is not merely a play of words; it is the essence of the one sided game we play. The name of the game is Maya. Yet Maya is neither illusion nor theory. It is a simple statement of facts of what we are and what we see around us. The oscillations between pessimism and optimism; the struggle to stay alive in the inevitability of death; the greater avenues of anxiety that come with the greater progress; the razor's edge between hope and despair—all these contradictions are Maya. And this *is* Life. Where there is good there must be evil; with happiness there must lurk misery; with life there has to be death. This desperate search for permanence is in itself futile and yet it is all that we yearn for—permanent happiness, eternal youth, unchanging relationships, unending fulfillments. This is Maya. We want to live our lives without having learnt the art of living. Whilst shuffling around as mere pawns we aspire to be Masters of the Game—the Grand Masters.

The irony is the simplicity in the intricacy. Nothing is lost. It was merely *never* found. The futility does not lie in the search, it lies in the direction. We have looked around us and seen despair; we have reached out and found only emptiness; we have sought with our senses and discovered fear and seen despair; we have reached out and found only emptiness; we have sought with our senses and discovered fear and horror. We have found ourselves caged and shackled and called it Fate, Destiny, *samskara*, karma and thereby justified the anguish, sorrow, and suffering. But we have neither reached out and opened the doors nor broken the shackles. We have wept in despair or rebelled in anger and violence, but never opened our eyes and searched.

Inside each one of us is the unending, unfathomable ocean of joy, peace, and happiness, the Eternal Light of Reality, of Bliss—the Ultimate Truth. Once engulfed in this Light there is no pain, no anguish, no contradiction, no death. There are no limits, no boundaries. There is only the One complete unified whole. The regrets and memories of the past, the uncertainties and fears of the future remain permanently diffused in the effulgence of eternal love and peace that is yours and mine, here and now, if only we would let ourselves go. If only we would free ourselves, opt out of this game of emotions, senses and desires and widen our limited horizons, we would find ourselves.

This means of reaching, seeing, and touching the Light is primarily through FAITH. If we cannot reach out and touch It because we are bound in this game of cause and effect, then we have to hold on to the faith and belief that the Light is there. We may not have seen, experienced, or fully comprehended It, but it does not mean that what we have not seen does not exist. Surely it is easy to accept that beyond the game of life there is the Giver of Life, the Master Player? If that be so, then why should it be so difficult to move over to the winning side and become one with the Player?

Since time immemorial, again and again, the Master Player has come to us to teach us how to play, how to live. Yet, with some strange obstinacy, or masochistic perverseness we refuse to see, to understand, to realize. Instead, we continue to leap headlong into the quicksand of illusion. Is it so much easier to be lost and flounder in abysmal despair, blinded by

our senses than to be consciously aware of the beauty that is within? Is it so much easier to be buffeted in the roller-coaster of happiness-pain, ecstasy-misery, life-death than to find inner peace? Is it so difficult to realize that nothing is lost, because the answer has not yet been found? No.

The March of Life and the Eternal Answer

There is a positive answer to all these questions. We have to look 'inward' when we are forced by a deep-rooted habit of looking 'outward'. The answer appears too simplistic perhaps when we are limited in our comprehension because of our blurred vision. Life after life we have been churned in the whirlpool of activity, and, overwhelmed by a plethora of experiences, that is why we cannot suddenly realize that the answer, the inner peace or absolute calm is within us. Over the ages, there have been seers, saints, philosophers, prophets, and incarnations of God, all of whom have come into this world solely to remind humanity of that inner peace. But if their lives and messages appear too legendary or mythical merely because they belong to a long forgotten past, we have today the blessing of knowing of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda. They lived in the recent past and epitomized the art of living. We have before us recorded facts of their lives and messages. We have to study them.

Sri Sarada Devi, Sri Sri Ma, was the ideal of unlimited love, sacrifice and devotion. In her absolute simplicity she gave motherhood and universal love their true meaning. As a human being, she experienced the traumas and tribulations of life; only there was a difference. Her pain and suffering was not limited to her individual self or ego but it encompassed all humankind. She felt the pain and trauma of others as her own; she cared, consoled, and comforted them. She loved one and all as her own children and therefore took upon herself each one's pain and suffering so that one could understand the true meaning of universal love and oneness. Limited to ourselves, from our life's experiences we can feel 'pain' and 'trauma', but with the inclusion of others' experiences we can feel 'compassion' and 'tolerance'. Sri Ramakrishna came into this world and lived his entire life as a simple human being. But in his life-span he gave ample and irrevocable proof of God's manifestation in man.

His life, his teachings, his own experiences are an absolute Gospel on what is the meaning of our experiences. Why are we here? Why do we suffer? What are our options? The answer is interwoven with his life's experiences projected before us for us to assimilate and comprehend. Swami Vivekananda, the great messenger, philosopher, and guide, further elaborated what Sri Ramakrishna's life represented. He prodded us to arise and awake. He reiterated once more that there is a goal to be reached. He reaffirmed the fact that man is essentially Divine, and the goal of human life is to realize that Divinity within.

If we really want to transcend darkness and enter Light we have merely to assimilate the teachings of these great teachers and apply them to our day-to-day life. They have given us various methods and left us free to choose our own way of life: selfless work (Karma Yoga), absolute faith and devotion (Bhakti Yoga), or conscious awareness (Jnana Yoga). The see-saw of cause and effect will remain. As long as there is this universe there will be life and death, joy and misery, love and hate. But by no means are we bound or forced to be mere pawns. There is wisdom in life's insecurity. What is here today is gone tomorrow: then why fret today about the unknown tomorrow which will soon be gone as yesterday?

Surely we cannot get lost in the so-called reality which changes its hues with the passage of time? There has to be, and is, something much more tangible and real here and now. So let us at the outset realize that nothing is lost, only, it was never found.

One who feels no joy and no hatred, who does not regret and does not even desire; who is indifferent about weal or woe, such a devoted person is dear to Me.

Two Heroic Women of Maharashtra

PRAVRAJIKA SHRADDHAPRANA

IN THE political history of Maharashtra the names of Jija Bai and Ahalya Bai top the list of women who are specially noted for their greatness and glory. Indians still feel overwhelmed with emotion when they remember Chhatrapati Shivaji, who vowed to unite a divided India; but along with him, the image of Jija Bai, his noble mother, also appears before their minds. Jija Bai played a very important part in building up young Shivaji's character and was a constant source of inspiration for his thoughts and deeds.

Jija Bai, the daughter of Lakhji Yadava of Devagiri was born in 1594. She was married in 1605 to Shahji Bhonsle, the son of Maloji, a distinguished chief in the court of Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar. Harassed by the constant invasions of the Mughuls, Shahji could not stay for long in his homeland. When his father-in-law Lakhji Yadava took sides with the Mughuls, Shahji parted from him. When war broke out, Shahji escaped and Jija Bai, in a state of advanced pregnancy, went to the fort of Shivneri near Junnar, which had been gifted by the Nizam Shahi to Maloji, the father of Shahji. The small principalities of the Maratha chiefs were then attacked and looted by the Mughuls; as a result, the common people lived constantly in anxiety and terror. The soft-hearted Jija Bai was upset at this painful plight of the Maratha people. While staying at the fort of Shivneri, she would constantly pray to the Goddess Shivali, the presiding deity of the fort, to grant her a son who would, in the future, resist all attacks of the Mughuls on the Marathas and strengthen Maharashtra. Her prayers were answered, and Shivaji was born on 6 April, 1627. Till Shivaji was nine years old Jija Bai's life was full of danger and adventure. As Shahji was constantly fighting the Mughuls, his wife and son had to wander from one place to another because there was always the danger of being captured. Once when Jija Bai was captured, she cleverly hid Shivaji in a small village. She was released after paying a huge fine. When a formal treaty was concluded

between Shahji and the Mughul Emperor, Jija Bai settled in Pune with her son. She lived there for ten years and then lived at Raigarh in their newly built fort.

Shahji did not keep much contact with Jija Bai and their infant son, for he had married a second time. Shahji's conduct made Jija Bai's basically religious and pious mind more introverted. Her religious life made a deep impression on her son. She inspired him to be a kind and benevolent ruler when he grew up. About Shivaji's triumphs the historian G.S. Sardesai says: 'Shivaji's success in life was, however, mainly due to hard and incessant knocks he had to share with his mother in his early days. Proud of her Kshatriya extraction, with vivid memories of her loyal ancestors of Devagiri and their splendour, chastened by years of suffering ever since her marriage and now practically deserted by her husband, this spirited lady developed in her son a spirit of defiance and self-assertion and became to him a veritable guardian angel. All her life's ambition and solace now entirely centred in this boy's well-being and good fortune.'¹

When Shivaji killed Afzal Khan in 1659, Jija Bai was in the fort of Pratapgarrh, praying for her son's well-being. When he returned victorious, she ordered a court poet to compose a poem about his heroic deeds. Jija Bai never confined herself to the inner apartments of her home, but always remained by the side of her son while he governed the kingdom. Shivaji also held constant deliberations with his mother on important matters of the state. All the Maratha chieftains respected her as a woman with a strong personality. It was at her insistence that Tanaji Malusare went to conquer Simhagarh. The fort was conquered but Tanaji never returned. Once, during the absence of Shivaji, Jija Bai acted as the Head of the Council of Regency.

From his mother Shivaji learnt to respect every woman as his mother. He also instructed his soldiers to do so. In his wars with the Muslims, if ever a Muslim woman was captured, he would address her as 'mother' and with due respect send her back, either to her husband or to her father. In those days hatred against the Muslims was extremely strong but when Shivaji captured them in battle he did not treat them cruelly. This was his mother's teaching. If ever a Hindu man was converted by force to Islam, he was not accepted again in the Hindu society. Jija Bai understood the terrible plight of these

people and was full of sympathy for them. That was the reason why she not only accepted back into the Hindu society, Bajaji Nimbalkar, the ruler of Phaltan, who had been converted forcibly into Islam, but honoured him by giving away Shivaji's daughter Shaku Bai to him in marriage.

Jija Bai lived till the age of eighty. She was fortunate to live to see the grand coronation of her son Chhatrapati Shivaji, as a king of a sovereign state. The lofty dreams of her young days were fulfilled; the divided people of Maharashtra were united into one harmonious state. Eleven days after the coronation she peacefully breathed her last at the Raigarh fort.

Rani Ahalya Bai

Ahalya Bai is another great woman who is remembered to this day. She was unique in many ways. Almost all the sacred places of India bear the stamp of her immortal deeds. Her character was a wonderful blending of various high ideals. On the one hand she had wisdom, political experience, a keen sense of judgement, unconquerable courage and the spirit of a fighter; and on the other hand, she had love for her subjects, compassion, affection, selflessness, and devotion to God. Like an able queen she ruled over her kingdom; and like an ideal ascetic she practised renunciation and detachment.

Ahalya Bai was born in 1735 in the village of Pathardi in Malwa. Her father Anand Rao Schinde, and his wife worshipped the Universal Mother. By Her grace and the blessings of a *sannyasin*, Ahalya Bai was born as their daughter. In her childhood she received education at her village school.

After Shivaji, Malhar Rao was another amongst the Maharashtrian chieftains who achieved great fame and distinction. From a humble shepherd he rose to become a king. Ahalya Bai was married to Malhar Rao's son Khande Rao. She was loved by everyone in her father-in-law's house and performed her daily domestic chores with pleasure. She performed worship and was initiated by a man named Ambadas Pauranic. In 1753 Khande Rao was killed while defending Kumbher fort near Bharatpur. At that time Ahalya Bai was only eighteen years old. She wanted to immolate herself with her husband on his funeral pyre, but gave up her desire on the entreaties of her father-in-law, who told her, 'I shall think my daughter-in-law has

passed away and consider you as my son.' Gradually he gave her the full responsibility of managing his kingdom. In 1766 after the death of Malhar Rao, Ahalya Bai's son, Male Rao, ascended the throne. But Male Rao was a dishonest and wicked man. Ahalya Bai was distressed day and night by his conduct. He created obstacles in the performance of her meritorious activities and would derive pleasure from insulting brahmins and oppressing his subjects. Ahalya Bai shed tears and tried to offer solace to the distressed people by distributing various gifts to them. Male Rao soon became insane and died within a year of his succession. His two wives immolated themselves with him. Her only daughter Tarabai also immolated herself when her husband died. In her old age Ahalya Bai had to go through all these sorrowful experiences, but although her heart was broken she was as firm and sincere in her duties as ever before.

In her long reign she had to face many dangerous political situations, but she overcame all obstacles by her brilliant mind and strong will. After the death of Male Rao, his minister Gangadhar Yashwant conspired with Raghunath Rao, the uncle of Peshwa Madhav Rao, to seize Holkar's private treasury and put a minor on the Holkar throne. On hearing this, she stopped grieving over her son's death and boldly took steps to defend her kingdom. She first called the court officials and told them firmly, 'The two sinful brahmins have stooped to a treacherous deed, but let no one think of me as an ordinary woman. If I were to take up a spear in my hand, even the throne of Peshwa would tremble. My father-in-law procured this kingdom with the strength of his sword and not with the help of flatterers. We are willing to serve the Peshwas in the same way that the late Maharaja did. If we wish to sever that relationship, we will take the help of the Mughuls or the British, or do what we think best. But if they try to take away the treasury or the kingdom, we shall not let them succeed in their efforts.' After that Ahalya Bai sent confidential letters to all the Maratha chiefs. The gist of the letter was this: 'It is the duty of the Peshwas to provide shelter and to save the wealth of those who had earlier helped them, and are now in distress. Ahalya is in trouble and prays for their assistance. May they send their armies immediately.' Everyone knew about the intrigue of Raghunath Rao and Gangadhar Yashwant. The leaders of Maharashtra promised

to help Ahalya Bai. She had also written to the Peshwa Madhav Rao and his wife Rama Bai.

In the meantime, Ahalya Bai appointed Tukoji Rao to command the army and started making preparations for the war. Dressed as a warrior, she herself marched in the front line in battle. Raghunath Rao was frightened to see Ahalya Bai in the dress of a soldier. Realizing that she had very quickly succeeded in getting assistance from many Maratha rulers, and comprehending the seriousness of the situation, he retreated from the battlefield. Thus Ahalya Bai succeeded in defending her kingdom without bloodshed. Later Raghunath Rao was invited by her with due honour. He was impressed by her magnanimity and his ill feelings towards her were gone. Ahalya Bai proved her greatness in pardoning Gangadhar also. Sir John Malcolm in his *Memoir of Central India*, (Vol. I) speaks highly of her long, good and just rule. To quote:

'The character of her administration was for more than thirty years the basis of the prosperity which attended the Holkar dynasty; it continued to sustain its rank during her life as one of the principal branches of the Maratha empire. The management of all the provinces in Malwa and Nemaar was her peculiar department and her great object was, by just and moderate government, to improve the condition of the country, while she promoted the happiness of her subjects. She maintained but a small force, independent of the territorial militia; but her troops were sufficient, aided by the equity of her administration to preserve tranquillity; and she relied on the army of the State actively employed in Hindustan and the Deccan, and her own reputation, for safety against all external enemies.'²

With her talent, combined with virtue and energy, Ahalya Bai understood that the responsibility of the state should be in the hands of an able man. So she selected Tukoji Holkar to rule the state and got his selection approved by the Peshwas. Tukoji revered her as his mother. Once without the permission of Ahalya Bai, he gave permission to an officer of his to work under the Peshwas. Ahalya Bai reprimanded him for this. Tukoji realized his mistake and asked her forgiveness. On another occasion, when Tukoji was suddenly attacked by the enemies he was puzzled and did not know what to do. He wanted to compromise with the enemy. Ahalya Bai, then sixty

years old, sternly wrote to him, 'You are old now. If you are unable to go to the war, let me know. I shall go myself.'

Under her careful management, the territory of the Holkars enjoyed peace and prosperity. She duly honoured all those Maratha chiefs who had helped her in troubled times. Rulers of many states were impressed by her extraordinary personality and, desiring her friendship, sent her gifts of various kinds. She did not rule with any craving for wealth or power, but only with a sense of duty. With the utmost self-respect she fought for truth and justice against all those who tried to violate them. She bravely and diplomatically controlled her enemies and established good relations with foreign powers. As a result her territories were rarely invaded during her life time.

When Ahalya Bai found that her kingdom was free from danger, her involvement in state affairs decreased. Wisdom and benevolence now guided her to use her wealth for the purpose of charity and good works, such as the construction of roadways, *ghats*, rest houses and establishments to feed the poor. These were regularly done, not only in her own territory, but throughout India. Religion was the one motive which inspired her towards these activities. At the root of all her actions was her strong faith in God. She used to say, 'I owe to God the best use of the ability that he has given me.' The Vishnu temple in Gaya and the Vishwanath temple in Varanasi were built and later repaired by her. Though a queen, she considered herself a maid of the Lord. Because of the magnanimity of her soul, both the Hindus and the Muslims prayed for her long life. Though she lived amidst grandeur, her life was plain and simple. She often spent her days in prayer from morning till night. One is amazed to contemplate Ahalya Bai's tremendously powerful character which contained all the stately and saintly qualities, and transcended all selfish interests. She died in 1795.

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The Role of Hanuman in the Ramayana

KAMALA RATNAM

OUT OF the many characters described in the *Ramayana*, none is more interesting and inspiring than Hanuman. In India he is visualized as a very special kind of monkey, with his soft golden coat, red face and extra long tail. Outside India, in the countries of South East Asia, Hanuman has assumed a much more aesthetic and distinguished form. He has an almost human body, most perfectly formed and well ornamented, a handsome face and a fine tail. He is known as the 'white monkey' since his body is covered with thick shining white hair. In popularity he vies with Rama, in fact, both in India and abroad he emerges as the most popular and spectacular hero of the *Ramayana*. The *Ramayana* after the 'Kishkindha-Kanda' is dominated by Hanuman. Other characters, even Rama himself, pale into insignificance before him. In India the temples and shrines dedicated to Hanuman are far more numerous than those built for Sri Rama himself. Any convenient spot on the roadside, a shady tree or a large stone, is good enough to worship this monkey-god. His image in bright vermilion is often shown as one ever ready to move forward, to scale any height, even to fly up to the sky.

Description in Literature

Although described severally in the various versions of the *Ramayana* in Sanskrit and other Indian languages, special attention to the character of Hanuman was paid early in the eleventh century A.D. by one Damodara Misra, the author of *Hanuman-Nataka*. Written in chaste Sanskrit, more poetry than prose, this drama was acclaimed as the *mahanataka* or the 'Big Show' of the time. Here, Hanuman's enormous resourcefulness, self-confidence, alertness and mercury-like swiftness of action and

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mind endear him to his masters. When Rama is searching for his wife, Sita, and learns that she has been abducted by Ravana and confined in his pleasure-garden, the Ashoka-Vatika, Hanuman jumps to attention with no loss of time and says: 'My Lord, order me! What shall I do? Bring Lanka here to you or carry this land of Jambudvipa (India) thither? Or dry up the sea which separates the two? Or, with pieces broken from the Vindhya-chala mountain and golden rocks wrenched from the sides of Shiva's Kailasa, build a causway across the ocean?'

In this, his very first utterance in the famous drama, Hanuman's character has been summarized. He has a sharp mind to visualize all the pros and cons of the situation, his foresight takes stock of all possible developments and nothing is impossible for him. His only wish is to serve his master in any way he desires.

After the *Hanuman-Nataka* there is a spate of works written in prose and poetry in praise of Hanuman, culminating in the panegyric of Tulsidas, known as *Hanuman Bahuk*. This work, though insignificant compared to his Magnum Opus, the *Rama-Charita-Manasa*, (popularly known as the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas), is not less important. It is said that Tulsidas wrote this work to remove the severe pain in his arm and he wanted Hanuman to request Sri Rama to relieve his suffering. Tulsidas wrote another short poem of forty verses known as the *Hanuman-Chalisa*, in which he praises Hanuman as the most easily approachable medium to Sri Rama. Just as a door-keeper is propitiated by one who seeks audience with the king, so it is necessary to propitiate Hanuman and know his powers to approach Sri Rama. In most works he is referred to as Ramaduta, Rama's envoy. His speed is even greater than the wind; he works even as fast as the mind of Rama. It is not surprising, therefore, that this little book has become the constant companion of devotional Indians everywhere in the world. Many memorize it and repeat it in times of trouble.

The Power That Hanuman Symbolizes

Philosophically speaking, the *Ramayana* has its own spiritual significance. Rama is the divine spark symbolized by Vishnu—the power which holds together or preserves the universe. As such he is the creative energy which is present in every human

being or beast, bird or stone. This urge or divine spark requires a powerful and all-pervasive agent to activate it. And Hanuman is that agent. Hanuman is the son of Vayu or the Wind god, and as such he is all-pervasive and all powerful. He can move mountains, go everywhere and assume all forms. From the infant's breath, he can become the raging tornado; churn the sea and break open the heart of the Earth. Hanuman is blind power who receives direction from Sri Rama and therefore always engages himself in constructive activities. As the beloved son of Vayu, the god of Wind, he is dear and as near to us as our very life-breath.

When Hanuman returns to Rama after obtaining news of Sita, Rama is so impressed with him that he exclaims: 'Hanuman, you are indeed my son and a good servant. You have climbed mountains and crossed the angry ocean. Except Vayu and Garuda none other can do what you have accomplished.'

A typical conversation between Hanuman and Rama, after his return from the quest for Sita, shows his ready wit:

'Hey Hanuman! is there any news of Sita?'

'Yes Sire, she is without blemish in Ravana's Lanka.'

'Is she alive?'

'Well, my Lord, you might ask, "Separated from me why did she not die?" Her life rests on you. That is why the god of Death cannot approach her.'

Hanuman is also pictured as humorous and intelligent. He looks for Sita everywhere, in the wilds of the countryside and in crowded cities. Inside Ravana's harem he sees the beautiful Mandodari (we have to remember that Hanuman had never seen Sita before) and concludes that this cannot be Sita because Ravana is near at hand (a situation which Sita would never tolerate).

Scholar and Poet

Some reliable sources have depicted Hanuman as highly learned and have given him high praise as a poet. Tulsidas in the opening verses of the 'Sundara-Kanda' of his *Ramayana* pays homage to Hanuman in the following terms. 'Hanuman of immeasurable strength, is like the devastating forest-fire which destroys the jungle of the evil Rakshasas. He is foremost

among the savants and is the abode of all virtues.' He is sometimes painted as a diligent student sitting before Rama, while the latter expounds the mysteries of the Supreme Truth. The Madhva school remembers him as 'the great churning of the Ocean of the Science of Grammar', only to sing correctly the praises of Sri Rama. In the 'Uttara Kanda (the last chapter) of Valmiki's *Ramayana* it is said that Hanuman in his quest for the study of the science of grammar 'looked straight at the Sun, and carrying his books, commentaries and annotations, followed him from the point of rising to the point of setting. With the result that now there is no one who can match him in his knowledge of the *Nirukta* and the *Chhandas*, the sciences of words and prosody. He enjoys the title of 'Nava-Vyakarana-Arthavetta', the most erudite scholar of the Modern Science of Grammar.

Liberator from Danger

Surdas, the singer of the glorious deeds of Lord Krishna, has described Hanuman as the only one who had the power to save Sri Rama in moments of dire need and danger. A very specific example of this would be the time when Lakshman lies mortally wounded with the blow of *shakti*, a spear, in the battlefield. Hanuman is the only one who can bring the life-saving drug from the Himalayas, a journey of more than five thousand miles. The drug is to be obtained from the top of Mount Kailasa where Lord Shiva sits in deep meditation. The Vaidya Sushena describes the drug to Hanuman, but the monkey is unable to identify the herb correctly. With super-human power and intelligence, he decides to lift the entire rock from the mountain and flies with it down to Lanka in time to save Lakshman's life. This journey is performed by him twice. Once before he had brought similar drugs from the heights of the Himalayas to revive the dead bodies of Rama's army of monkeys, killed by Ravana's armies.

These incidents so vividly and powerfully described in the *Ramayana*, have created the belief that Hanuman is *samkata-mochana*, the liberator from danger. Tulsidas was inspired by this aspect when he wrote his *Hanuman-Chalisa*. In this way he remembered his childhood days spent in Ayodhya, when as an orphan boy he had taken shelter in a Hanuman temple. In

the *Rama-Charita-Manasa* Hanuman is a devoted friend and trusted companion of Sri Rama. In several touching references, the poet confesses that when as a child he was wandering from door to door in search of food, it was Hanuman who befriended him and gave him sustenance. Towards the end when the poet was afflicted with a serious skin-disease and other ailments, he attributed these to his having forgotten Sri Rama. He then came to Hanuman to beg his help to regain his Lord's favour.

It is well-known that the genius of our Indonesian brothers has contributed much to the enrichment of the *Ramayana* story. In the 'Wayang-episode', known as the '*Wahju Makuta Rama*', Hanuman is made to link together the stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Both the Kauravas and the Pandavas are looking for the *Wahju Makuta Rama*, the divine spark of inspiration which would decide who is going to be the forefather of the Javanese. Hanuman is keeping guard in front of Rama's hut and after some time permits Arjuna to come into the presence of Rama. For this lapse of duty, Hanuman is punished that he will not be able to die, even if he wants to.

Hanuman's role as helper and messenger is emphasized from the very beginning of the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas. When Sugriva finds out that two unknown young men are approaching Kishkindha, the capital of the monkeys, he sends Hanuman his nephew to find out who they are. Hanuman cleverly disguises himself as a brahmin student so that his own identity may not be revealed. Sugriva was already under threat of Vali, and in case the visitors proved to be friends of Vali, he had every intention to escape. No sooner does Hanuman realize that the visitors are Sri Rama and his brother, Lakshman, than he quickly removes his disguise and assumes his monkey-form. This is a very important trait of Hanuman's character. No matter what he does and what impossible tasks he performs, he never gives up his monkey nature and habits. At one place in the *Ramayana*, Hanuman himself wonders whether man is greater or monkey: 'for he can jump from tree to tree!' It does seem that in terms of physical mobility combined with speed and cunning, the monkey appears to be superior to unaided man. Soon after his first meeting with Rama, Hanuman changes his role from investigator to advisor. He advises Rama to enter into alliance with Sugriva, who would send 't ousands of monkeys in all directions in search of Sita.' He places the two brothers

on his back and takes them to Kishkindha. Friendship between Rama and Sugriva is established with the Fire god as witness.

Just before crossing the ocean and reaching Lanka in quest of Sita, Hanuman hesitates for a moment, thinking he may not be able to cross over in one leap. Jambavan, the elder monkey, then restores his confidence, telling him categorically, 'Your appearance on earth is solely to fulfil Rama's will, which is God's will' (राम काज लागि तव अवतारा). After listening to Jambavan, Hanuman expands his body and crosses the ocean in one leap. Tulsidas has devoted the whole of his 'Sundara-Kanda' to the exploits of Hanuman in Lanka. This portion of the *Ramayana* enjoys great popularity and is invariably read in homes in times of trouble. Hanuman is supposed to live under the splendid Parijata tree. He reduces the ocean to the status of a puddle and exterminates the Rakshasa hordes like mosquitoes. Just before his great leap, Hanuman meets Surasa, the mother of the serpents. As soon as she sees him she opens her mouth to eat him up. As she opens her mouth wider and wider, Hanuman makes his body grow bigger and bigger so that it is twice her size. Finally, when her mouth becomes a 'hundred *yojanas*' (one *yojana* is twelve miles), Hanuman reduces himself to the tiniest speck and enters her mouth from which he comes out unharmed and most probably unnoticed. In the end, Surasa is pleased with him and bestows a boon on him. In order to gain unhampered entry into Lanka, Hanuman assumes the form of a mosquito. Moving around, he sees a house displaying Rama's insignia and bearing the holy Tulsi (Basil) plant. 'Here in the domain of the Rakshasas; how can any godly man be found?', he wonders, when he discovers that the house belongs to Vibhishana, Ravana's brother. Hanuman assumes the disguise of a brahmin priest in order to meet Vibhishana and finds him sitting deep in meditation with his mind fixed upon Sri Rama. Vibhishana tells him how to locate Sita and also describes to him his own plight in the Rakshasa capital. He is like the 'soft tongue inside the mouth, surrounded by sharp teeth.' Hanuman's visit to Lanka serves many purposes; he obtains news of Sita, he reassures Vibhishana in his resolve to leave Ravana, and he acquaints himself with the topography of the enemy's country.

In the Ashoka-Vana, Sita is under extreme duress. She spurns the amorous advances of Ravana, and the latter threatens to kill her in thirty days' time if she does not accept him. Sita decides to burn herself on the funeral-pyre when Trijata, the demoness who guards her relates to her her dream, in which she has seen the three of them, Rama, Sita and Lakshman dressed in resplendent white raiments and riding snow-white chariots attended by flocks of white swans. Sita rises upwards from her husband's arms and gathers the sun and moon in her embrace. Notwithstanding Trijata's discussions, Sita builds the wooden pyre and asks Trijata to bring some fire. Trijata refuses to oblige. At this psychological moment, Hanuman, hidden on top of the Ashoka tree, drops Rama's golden ring 'like a flash of burning fire' right into Sita's lap. Overjoyed, she picks it up and reads Rama's name engraved upon it. Hanuman now shows himself to Sita and assumes his powerful form, 'bright as burnished gold and of the magnitude of a mountain'. This reassures her. Having given her Rama's message, he obtains her permission to satisfy his hunger with the fruits in Ravana's garden. He not only eats the fruits, but plays havoc with the garden. Meghanada, the son of Ravana, is sent to fight the monkey. Hanuman surrenders and is brought into Ravana's presence. Asked about his conduct, his reply is full of wit and wisdom. 'Why did I eat your fruit, break your trees? Well, it is my monkey-nature to do so!' This is the great thing about Hanuman. He does great deeds, gives the best counsel, without for a moment forgetting that he is essentially a monkey.

Even as Ravana's prisoner, he advises him to give back Janaki and surrender himself to Rama. He tells him that if he would, even now, go back to the path of righteousness, no one would dislodge him from his kingdom. But as fate would have it, this advice falls on deaf ears, and Ravana runs headlong towards his own destruction. As his tail is about to be wrapped in cloth and soaked in oil, Hanuman once again expands his body to an enormous size, so that 'there is neither enough cloth nor oil in Lanka to cover his tail'. When they set fire to his tail, Hanuman resumes his normal form; he climbs a tree and 'jumping from roof to roof, burns the golden city'. Says Tulsidas, the forty-nine winds (who are actually his cousins because he is the son of the Wind-god) blew at the time and helped him

reduce the city to ashes. Only the house of Vibhishana was saved. Hanuman jumps into the ocean to extinguish his tail. Then he goes to see Sita again and receives from her the *chudamani*, the hair-ornament, to be shown to Rama. Some works have said that Hanuman, while comforting Sita, took from her the fire of her sorrow and with that very fire he burnt Lanka. Back on the continent, the conversation which ensues between him and Rama is a masterpiece of Tulsidas' skill and poetry.

'Well, son, how is Janaki? And how does she keep herself alive?'

'Day and night she sits lost in meditation, thinking of you. Her eyes are shut like a lock, and so life finds no outlet to leave her body.'

At the end of the interview, Rama is so overwhelmed that he addresses him as his own son and says he can never repay his debt. 'The lotus-hand of Sri Rama resting on the bent head of Hanuman—even Tulsi's genius cannot carry the scene further, so he switches over to the beginning, where Lord Shiva is relating the story to Parvati.

The Devotee

During the course of centuries, Hanuman gradually evolved from an extremely witty, intelligent and daring attendant of Sri Rama into his most beloved devotee. He became the promulgator of the *Dasya* form of *Bhakti*. The saints have spoken of the nine forms of *Bhakti*, *navadha-bhakti*, the easiest of which is the *Dasya* form in which the devotee considers himself to be the servant of the Lord, ready to perform his slightest wish.

In the *Ramayana* paintings and other art-forms, Hanuman is always depicted seated at Rama's feet, his head bent in devotion. In most paintings he is seated in the foreground resting the lotus feet of his Master upon his two hands. Another favourite picturization of Hanuman is where he is shown tearing his breast open, only to reveal the image of Rama and Sita enshrined in his heart.

The study of Hanuman can be concluded with a story concerning the birth of Hanuman as related by that venerable sage

of the South, Agastya, in the 'Uttara-Kanda' of Valmiki's *Ramaya*. A question was asked about Hanuman's extraordinary strength and why he was unaware of it. Why did he not kill Vali himself and help Sugriva? In reply, the sage tells the following story: Hanuman could not kill Vali as he was his maternal uncle, as was Sugriva. His mother, Anjana, was married to Kesari, the king of the monkeys, who ruled on top of Mount Sumeru. For long the couple remained childless, until Vayu, the Wind-god, begot a son through Anjana. One day, the mother left the child alone and went into the forest. The child felt hungry and began to cry. Suddenly, he saw the rising orb of the Sun, and thinking it to be a ripe fruit, he sprang towards it to eat it. Sensing danger to his son, Vayu, making himself ice-cold, ran up to the Sun to protect him. Out of fear of the Wind-god and natural compassion for the infant, the Sun spared the child. Now, it so happened that this was the day when Rahu was to swallow the Sun and cause a solar eclipse on earth. Since the Sun was already in the grip of a second Rahu, Anjana's child, Rahu was prevented from doing this. Deprived of his prey, Rahu went to Indra, the Lord of gods. Indra, remembering his previous enmity with Anjana, hurled his Vajra, the thunderbolt, at the child, thus breaking his left jaw. Since then, the child came to be known as Hanuman, one with a deformed jaw or chin. In a later incident, Hanuman was blessed by all the gods, Indra, Surya, Varuna and Yama, and became endowed with extraordinary powers. But owing to his monkey nature, he again misused his strength and created confusion for the Rishis, who in turn cursed him that he would have all the power but would remain unaware of it.

How truly Hanuman represents the plight of man himself. Man has all the power within himself, but owing to his monkey or animal nature he misuses it, and is made unaware of it. It depends upon the mercy of God, and the divine grace of Sri Rama to activate that power and give it direction. Tulsidas has truly said, 'The Lord of the Universe makes us all dance like monkeys to his will' (नट मरकट इव सबहि नचावत). Indeed we are all Rama's monkeys and proud to be so. We acknowledge Hanuman to be our king and pay homage to him.

Purandara Das—the Saint-Poet

VISHALAKSHI VISVESVARAYA

PURANDARA DAS was born in 1480 in Karnataka during the period (between the years 1400 and 1600) when there was a resurgence of the Bhakti movement all over India. He was known as Srinivasa in his early life, was the only son of Varadappa Nayaka and Kamalamba, and the answer to their prayers to Lord Venkateswara. Varadappa Nayaka was staying at Purandar Gada (Bellary District) near Hampe which was the capital of the Vijayanagar Empire.

Varadappa Nayaka was a jeweller by trade and did banking business as well. To Srinivasa was imported the teachings of the Shastras and other traditional knowledge. It is supposed that he had some training in music also, in his youth. He was married to Saraswati Bai when he was sixteen years of age. When Srinivasa started carrying on his father's business he did it adeptly. Within a short time he was able to amass a lot of wealth. But as he became richer, he also became more miserly. In fact, he had no feelings for anyone nor did he stop to sympathize with or help anyone. It is said that he used to visit Hampe, to sell precious stones and so he was called 'Navakoti Narayana'.

In contrast to Srinivasa, his wife Saraswati Bai was generous and kindhearted. It so happened that one day an old brahmin went with a small boy to Srinivasa in his shop and begged for some assistance in celebrating the *upanayanam*, the sacred-thread ceremony, of his son. Srinivasa at first ignored him. The old man went again the next day and also the following day, but could not extract a single coin from him. Then the old man decided to approach Saraswati Bai. She was kind and pious and did not feel like sending him away but pleaded her helplessness because she did not have any money of her own to offer him. The old man hinted that she might give him the diamond nose-ring that she was wearing. Saraswati Bai took the hint and immediately gave it to him so that the needs of the old man could be met.

Vishalakshi Visvesvaraya is deeply devoted to the ideals and philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and also to the Vedanta philosophy.

The old man had not told the lady of his visit to the jeweller's shop (Srinivasa's) and with the nose-ring he went straight to the shop. There Srinivasa recognized his wife's jewel. He wanted to teach her a lesson; so he locked up the nose-ring safely in his shop, rushed home, and demanded to know where her nose-ring was. The poor lady was in a great predicament and she straightaway ran into the shrine and locked the door. She was very much afraid of the consequences of telling the truth. In desperation she decided to take poison. As she raised the cup to her lips to drink the poison, there was a sound of something dropping, and when she picked it up she found it was her nose-ring. She ran and gave it to her husband. He was wonderstruck. He asked himself, 'Did I not lock it up in the shop?' He went back to the shop and, when he opened the lock, to his surprise he found that the nose-ring had vanished. He then realized that it was a miracle. He looked for the old man but he was nowhere to be found. He went home and asked his wife to explain the mysterious event. Hearing her story, it struck him that the old man was no ordinary mortal but that this was the play of the Lord to teach him a lesson.

This event was a turning point in his life. It dawned on him how foolishly he had spent his life, only increasing his riches and not giving anything to anyone, or paying regard to the higher values of life, or taking the Lord's name. He burst into a song, 'Oh! I have been duped' (meaning I was a fool not to take the Lord's name for these thirty years). After this incident Srinivasa gave up all his possessions, his business, house, and wealth. He became a '*virakta-samsari*' or '*grihastha-sannyasi*'. That is, staying in society as a married man, he renounced all pleasures and comforts and begged his daily bread. He gave strict instructions to his wife not to keep anything for the morrow. They led a contented life with whatever he earned each day and they fed whoever came to their house. The life that he led was that of a *rishi* of yore.

It is said that Srinivasa left his place of birth and wandered for some time, and then stayed at Pandharpur. Lord Vitthala of Pandharpur became his *Ishta Devata*, his chosen Ideal, and from Him he drew immense inspiration and sang His glory till the end of his life. It was the very same Vitthala who had inspired the other great Bhaktas: Namadeva, Jnaneshwar, Tukaram, Nivrattinath and Ramadas. The question arises as to how

Srinivasa Nayaka, a Kannadiga, went to Pandharpur and stayed in Maharashtra for twelve years. The explanation that it was then in Karnataka is plausible. For, according to M.S. Mote, Vishnuvardhana of the Hoysala dynasty conquered the area in Maharashtra and built a temple of Vishnu there in 1117-1137. There are references to this fact in Namadeva's songs. While Srinivasa was staying in Pandharpur, he had a dream wherein he was asked to go to Hampe and become a disciple of Sri Vyasaraya who was the ruling pontiff of the Madhva religion and Rajaguru at Krishnadevaraya's court. This was in the year 1525. Vyasarayaswamy gave Srinivasa 'Haridasa-diksha' (initiation). From then on, the songs of Srinivasa had the 'signature' (*ankita*), 'Purandara Vitthala'. He thus became known as the famous Purandara Das.

It is said by some that this saint-singer composed 1,75,000 songs, and by others, 1,25,000 songs. But many of the songs have been lost and only about a thousand are available today. Of these, there are those which are sung especially at the time of worship. Then, there are songs which he composed to different deities when he travelled to places of pilgrimage. The Krishna-lila songs occupy a very important place in his works. They portray, in a picturesque manner, the pranks of Sri Krishna. There are some songs which are of moral content and others which are the mere expression of feelings arising out of the states of his mind or the situations in his life. Of course, the predominant sentiment in all of them is Bhakti.

Among the followers of Madhvacharya there were two sects. One sect laid emphasis on the *Brahma-Sutra* of Vyasa and was thus called the 'Vyasa-kuta'. The other sect gave importance to *Bimbopasana* and in this the Dasya-Bhava predominated, so it was called the 'Dasa-kuta'. While the former sect was engaged in debates on the Siddhanta of Dwaitism, the latter was engaged in singing the glory of the Lord, and thus inculcated Jnana and Bhakti among the common people. By singing poetical compositions this sect encouraged good conduct and religious occupation.

The people of the Dasa-kuta sect were guided by the teachings of Madhvacharya, such as, 'The remembrance of the Lord dispels sins even of the evil-minded' (हरिर्हरति पापानि दुश्चित्तैरपि स्मृतः). According to Madhvacharya, even though Jnana is the main means for the attainment of *moksha*, it is considered to be

only a part of Bhakti. He says, 'Bhakti is superior to all *sadhanas*, there is nothing else like it.' (साधनेभ्योऽधिका भक्तिः नैवान्यत् तादृशं क्वचित्). In fact he has defined Bhakti as the essence of Jnana (ज्ञानात्मिका सा). Here Jnana means that Hari is *Bimba*, the *jiva* is *pratibimba*, and love, *parasneha* means *Bimbopasana*. True *Bimbopasana* (worship of God) can take place only when there is knowledge of the greatness of the *Bimba*. Thus Madhvacharya instructed, 'Let the greatness of Lord Vishnu be widely known among the people' (विष्णोः सर्वोत्तमत्वं सर्वदा प्रतिपादय). People of the Dasa-kuta sect thus made it their mission in life to sing the glory of the Lord. Since the *jiva* is only a *pratibimba* of the *Bimba*, the Paramatman, lordship (*kartritva*) belongs to him and so the people of the Dasa-kuta sect gave themselves up to the feet of Lord Hari. It was thus that they were also called Haridasas, the servants of God. According to the Madhva philosophy, the final liberation is through God's grace. Thus the realization of the greatness and goodness of the Lord leads to unbroken love for Him which in turn begets His grace.

Generally people have Bhakti with the desire for the fruits of their actions (*phala-apeksha-bhava*) and hence it is *malabhakti*, tainted devotion; whereas the attainment of *moksha* through Bhakti is possible only if it is *amala*, pure. Thus Bhakti can blossom only if there is a mood of dispassion. In many songs Purandara Das mentions the emptiness, transitoriness and restlessness of worldly life, and glorifies dispassion.

It is interesting to note that for a Haridas *shravana* means *Harikatha-shravanam*, listening to the glory of God; *mananam* is *nama-smaranam*, repeating the name of God; and *nididhyasa* means *akhanda-smriti*, contemplation on God without any consciousness of the world outside, and without break. The Haridasas lay much stress on mental worship. Purandara Das says in many songs, 'This worship can be done with ease. Do mental worship and see your God dwelling within you.' Vyasaraaya had said that one who does not see Hari in his heart is like one born blind. Purandara Das went a step further and sang, 'See Hari with your eyes, with your inner eyes see Him who is the Lord of the three worlds.'

Madhvacharya gave importance to the *Bhagavata-Purana* because it is called 'the essence of all the scriptures' and also, 'the destroyer of worldly miseries'. He and his disciples like

Vijayadhwajathirtha have written commentaries on the *Bhagavata-Purana*. Hence it was natural for the Haridasas to study the *Bhagavata-Purana* and draw heavily on it, in composing their songs. In fact, since the *Bhagavata-Purana* deals mainly with Sri Krishna, it is held in high esteem by all the worshippers of Sri Krishna or Vishnu. Vallabhacharya and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu also gave a high position to the *Bhagavata-Purana*.

Purandara Das, though a disciple of Vyasaraaya, did not follow in the footsteps of his guru. Also, because he did not want to serve man (*nara-seva*), but only to serve God (*Hari seva*), he did not take protection from the king or assistance from the rich. Although Purandara Das thus led an ascetic's life, completely devoted to *Hari-seva*, many people doubted his sincerity. Even the king Krishnadevaraya wanted to test him because he thought Purandara Das had been so avaricious that he could not have become completely detached. So, one day when Purandara Das came begging, someone (following the instructions of the king) gave him alms of rice mixed with small pieces of precious stones. These people had expected that Purandara Das or his wife would have picked out the precious stones before making use of the rice. However, on interrogating Purandara Das on this issue, he displayed complete innocence of the matter. They could not believe his words, but when these very people searched in the garbage thrown outside the house they found, to their amazement, the precious stones.

Musical Compositions of Purandara Das

Now let us consider the songs of Purandara Das as an expression of his Bhakti. Just when he set foot on the path of Bhakti he was in a remorseful mood. He sang, 'I am tongue-tied. I can't even plead before you, Oh Lord, for my faults are limitless'. He wondered how Sri Hari could uplift a person who had been spending his days in a worthless manner. As his faith in the Lord became firm, his mood changed and he said, 'Come what may, let there be Hari's grace.' A few of Purandara's songs beautifully exhibit his Bhakti full of dispassion: 'I shall be as you keep me, O Lord'. 'When Lord Hari is there, what have I to worry about?' How can I be poor or homeless when You, the consort of Lakshmi are there.'

The Haridasas had a duty to fulfil—to elevate the masses and inspire them to live piously. Purandara Das achieved complete success in his mission by composing songs which were beautiful as poetry, which were set in *ragas*, musical modes, and which appealed to everyone, and contained the highest truths in understandable language. In many songs he speaks of the transient nature of this life and the things in this world and feels sorry that much time is wasted on ineffective and worthless things. He says, 'Human birth is a great thing, do not waste it, O ye fools! Death comes without any notice before one is ready to leave. The messengers of death have no mercy and will not wait, whatever be your grounds of petition (for example, if you were married just a few days ago or if your two buffaloes have just begun to yield milk, and so on).'

In society, there are always people who are content merely to observe rituals and engage themselves only with the externals of piety and orthodoxy. Addressing such men, Purandara Das said: 'If your mind is full of evil tendencies like rancour and jealousy the Lord will not be pleased by your merely getting up early in the morning and having a dip in the river or by your putting a *tilak* on your forehead. Again he said, 'This show of dispassion is only for earning bread.' He indicates in a few of his songs that, 'Where faith is firm, God's grace is sure to descend.' Some compositions are worth special mention, for fine sentiments of *Bhakti* are brought forth. Such feelings seem to have arisen out of intense *sakhya-bhava*, a mood in which God is looked upon as a friend. He says to the Lord, 'I am luckier than you because I have a Lord like you and You have none.' In another song, it is as though he has entered into a pact with the Lord. He says, 'If I leave You and worship another, mine is the violation. If you let my hand drop and go away, You will be violating the pact.'

The very same Purandara Das who says that his faults were limitless when (as Haridasa) he later set foot on the journey of spiritual life, says, 'He is not the guilty one' for everything on earth is directed and controlled by the Lord.' He had come to a stage where he felt that he had no independent will of his own, and that everything depended upon Hari's will. He feels convinced of the truth that without Him a leaf of grass does not move

The truths of the Upanishads are disclosed in some of Purandara's songs. For example he says, 'Controlling the mind, see the Lord: see Him in yourself in the end and *mukti* will not be further from you than the distance between the little finger and the thumb'. 'Then', he says, 'there will exist complete knowledge and pure bliss'. Purandara Das's guru proclaimed the greatness of Purandara's utterances and said they could be assigned a position among the Upanishads and be called *Purandara-Upanishad*.

The contribution to music made by Purandara Das is of a very basic nature. To teach music he evolved a series of graded lessons of various types of composition, such as *swaravali*, *alankaras*, *pillari-gitas*, and *ghanarag-gitas*. His *suladi* and *ugabhogas* are also worthy of note. He was the first person to realize the importance of *mayamalava-gowla* scale. This helped in the development of the seventy-two *mela-karta-raga* scales of Venkatmukhi which has been adopted both by Hindustani and Karnataka musicians. The *suladi-sapta-talas*, rhythms, acquired significance from the time of Purandara Das. The *kriti* form, which was given a complete musical structure and was developed fully by Tyagaraja, (1757-1847), has its origin in the compositions of Purandara Das. Tyagaraja himself acknowledges this. Purandara Das was thus called the 'Adiguru' and 'Karnataka-sangita Pitamah', the first guru and forefather of Karnataka music. The saint lived till 1565, serving Hari, and rendering immeasurable service to humanity at large for all time to come.

Even if the whole world becomes hot like fire with anger, a saint should become water (to extinguish it). A word hurts like a weapon, but a saint should take it as a piece of advice.

Muktabai

The Magic of Work

ANEES JUNG

HE MADE his bed with greater precision than would a uniformed room-boy in a five-star hotel. And his bed was not as easy to make. It was really not a bed to start with. It became one as he made it. It began with two lines of even red bricks, over which he spread out a torn bamboo cover. Gently, he then spread over it a pile of empty gunny sacks that had carried cement from a big town factory. He shook each one out in the air and placed one over the other, patting each with tender care, the way one would an eiderdown. Over the sack mattress he then spread an old discoloured quilt, stitched out of cheap chintz patches, years ago, perhaps by an indulgent mother.

Staring at it, as if figuring out the right print of each faded patch or disentangling perhaps diffused memories, he finally flung over it a thin white towel, new and respectable, his equivalent of bedsheet. He took his time making the bed as if it was a daily evening ritual. He had no pillow. He sat on his bed, smoked a *bidī*, hummed a song that had the feeling of a distant region, and folding his rugged arm in the form of a V, rested his head over it and stretched out.

I withdrew to get him a pillow, hoping to complete the scenario of a bed, and returned to find him asleep. I heard his breathing, like that of a child. It had a rhythm that comes with sleep that knows tranquillity.

He was a labourer, they said, without a name; brought with others like him in an open truck from a village in Bundelkhand. I watched him from my terrace, moving in a pattern through the day with men and women. While the summer heat raged he helped raise a house of brick. One evening I did not see him. In the space on his bed where he rested was spread a worn English newspaper over which was stretched another man, humming another tune. It was a Bombay film song. The song was borrowed, as was the newspaper that made for a bed. The man

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with the ritual bed had been sent back in the open truck with his tribe to that nameless village in Bundelkhand.

It was no longer summer. The rains had come. The sun was gentler, the air cooler. It was time for the building contractor to bring his own tribe, the men from Haryana. Small men are not given a notice, I was told. Their work was ordinary, hence it lacked distinction. And they worked with the monotony of animals. Hence they were treated that way, they said. But even bullocks that go in circles are worshipped once a year. Their horns are painted, their bodies decked, and a day is set aside for them to rest and receive worship.

But man, it seems, is less than an animal. Did not his daily work also have movements that spoke of a tenacity, a strength, a rhythm? Did this work not reflect the real nature of a man? Talking of Karma Yoga, Swami Vivekananda had once said: 'If you really want to judge the character of a man, look not at his great performances. Watch a man do his most common actions; those are indeed the things which will tell you the character of a great man.'

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Where there is work, there is no *bhed* (difference), said Raju *mistri* (artisan), walking into my house, leaving his well-worn shoes at the entrance, the way he would have before entering a temple. He was a *mochi*, he said, a cobbler by caste and profession. While his father lived walled in with the smell of leather, Raju played and slept, clinging to the fragrance of his mother's quilt. His father's death pushed him into the role he was destined to fill. '*Man changa to katori mein Ganga*', said Raju, implying that he was blissful at the thought that he had made shoes for fifty years and found his Ganga and his joy in the small cobbler's bowl. His village, he said, was Bombay.

To his mind, a place where every one knows the other, was a village. And in Bombay everyone in the 'shop-business' knew him. He only gained their respect though, when a big white man came and watched him work. There was art, *kala*, in his hands, the white man told him. Raju's shoes were transported across the seas. He found himself, too, in a jet plane and in the U.S.A., where people wearing coats and hats, and braving cold winds, came to peer at his shoes and admired them with a reverence people show for objects of art. They would have even asked him to initial his signature on them if he told them

he could write. When he said he could not, they smiled politely and withdrew. Thumb marks are not yet a shoe brand.

'Can a black crow ever become white?' said Raju *mistri*, sitting drooped in a cane chair. 'I was born into a caste that has given me an indentify. I can't negate it. I will take it with me when I go'. He had returned from Washington and gone back to his *jhuggi* (slum-dwelling) in a crowded Parel street. He did not talk about the award that the Delhi *sarkar* (Government) was to confer on him. Nor did he glow with tales of the land where lived the free and the brave.

'I could not see the statue that stands in the sea,' he said with a touch of regret. In his mind it was one more of those statues raised to commemorate great men. When I told him that it was a statue of a woman, one who stood for liberty, he looked vague; he was unimpressed. He was keen to show me a small card enshrined in a plastic cover that he carried religiously in his shirt pocket. That gave him his new identity, affirmed him as a member of the 'Jai Hind Sarkari Charma-utpadaka Sangha' It was an association of nameless cobblers who knew the art of making shoes. He was only one of them he said with a humility that I reckoned was one more of the indices that reflect the spirit of a great man.*

The philosopher, the worker, and the devotee, all meet at one point, that one point being self-abnegation.

Swami Vivekananda

Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, A Trilogy of Rural Work

S N. BHATTACHARYA

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA regarded women as 'living images of Shakti'. He expressed his sentiment by saying, 'That country and that nation which do not respect the women have never become great, nor will ever be in future.' He quoted Manu, 'Where women are respected, there the gods are delighted; and where they are not, there all works and efforts come to naught'.

'The national ideals of India are renunciation and service,' said Swamiji. To proceed towards that objective, he founded the Math and Mission of the Ramakrishna Order and wanted a similar organization for women. He indicated this in one of his letters, '... My first endeavour is to start a Math for women.' Further, elucidating his idea, he wrote, 'With the Holy Mother as the centre of inspiration, a Math is to be established on the eastern bank of the Ganga. As *brahmacharis* and *sadhus* will be trained in this Math (the Belur Math) so in the other Math also, *brahmacharinis* and *sadhvis* will be trained.'

Yes, the Holy Mother was to be the 'centre of inspiration', as she, to quote Sister Nivedita, was 'Sri Ramakrishna's final word as to the ideal of womanhood'. Sister Nivedita also raised a pertinent question: 'But is she the last of an old order or the beginning of a new?'

The Ramakrishna Sarada Mission

Swamiji's idea of founding the women's Math was not fulfilled during his lifetime. It was fifty-two years after his *mahasamadhi* when a number of women, inspired by his teachings, adopted the life of renunciation and service. In 1954, the year of the Holy Mother's birth centenary, on 2 December, the Math for women, Sri Sarada Math, was established. In 1960, the Trustees of Sri Sarada Math founded the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Association, registered under Act XXI of 1960,

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with headquarters at Dakshineswar. The General Report of the Sarada Math and Mission states:

'The object of the Mission is to carry on educational, cultural, charitable and similar activities among women and children, looking upon them as veritable manifestations of the Divine, irrespective of caste, creed, colour or nationality. Thereby, the Mission is trying to bring about a kind of harmonization between secular and spiritual development, specially among the women of India.'

Expansion of Activities

In addition to the headquarters, the Math and the Mission run fifteen centres in India and abroad. The main activities of the Mission can be put under five general heads: educational, medical service, rural uplift, help to the needy, and spread of cultural and spiritual ideals. In India, these are achieved through five centres of the Mission in Calcutta, three in rural Bengal, and one each in Delhi, Trivandrum, and Khonsa (Arunachal Pradesh). I wanted to know more about the intrepid *sannyasinis* working in far-flung, isolated areas of the country than the printed reports convey. I approached the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Sarada Math and Mission, Pravrajika Muktiprana, then on a short visit to Delhi. The interview was fixed for 8 September 1988 at eight in the morning. The conversation proceeded as follows:

Q. Why has the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission suddenly taken up welfare projects for the people?

A. It is not sudden. Swamiji emphasized Sri Thakur's and Sri Ma's belief in service to the people. You may recall how Sister Nivedita was inspired by Swamiji to raise a corps of social workers to fight the dreaded plague raging in Calcutta in 1898. You may also recall how in the face of innumerable difficulties she started a school to educate girls.

Q. In this vast country there is so much ignorance and poverty, is it of any consequence to start a few rural centres?

A. Still, a beginning has to be made. We cannot afford to be mere onlookers. Rural work is a continuous

process and when a project takes root, we look for new pastures, as you will discover.

Q. What gives you strength and encouragement when we find that so many Government schemes for rural development have reached a blind alley?

A. It is the sincerity of our Mission workers and the enthusiastic participation of the village people, coupled with generous help from the public at large.

From general aspects, we settled down to detailed ones, covering the Mission's activities in three villages of West Bengal. Pravrajika Muktiprana had most of the information at her fingertips and where she was unsure, she promised to send the information soon. I was supplied with the required statistics within a fortnight.

Thakurnagar

Sri Sri Ma wished she had a *charkha*, a spinning wheel, to spin yarn, and she advised the Ashrama organizers of Koalpara, near Jayrambati, to introduce handlooms for weaving cloth in the village. She also desired to spread education amongst the women of Koalpara and adjoining villages. But her wishes could not be fulfilled for want of teachers.

However, this is not so now in the very backward and remote village of Thakurnagar in Midnapore District, West Bengal, thanks to the initiative of the villagers. Two teachers of the girls' school, the Nanda Mahila Vidyapith, Bimalprativa Pradhan and Jogamaya Mondal, donated land and extended much help to the Sri Sarada Math *sannyasini* working in the village. The Ramakrishna Sarada Mission authorities, on 15 August 1980, started a tailoring course, temporarily held in a hall of the school. The next year, in April, a weaving course was formally inaugurated. The object was to help village girls to acquire vocational training while earning from the sale of their production. In July 1983, the training centre was moved to a new shed built on the Mission's own land. In September of the same year, the Thakurnagar centre was recognized as a branch of the Mission. The Mission now offers a three-year training course in weaving and sewing. On an average, thirty

trainees are admitted to the class, though the demand for it is heavy, since women from neighbouring villages also apply.

Learn and Earn

The women are given weekly/monthly labour charges so that they can earn while they learn. During 1985 87, four trainees from the Centre creditably passed the Lady Brabourne Diploma course. Five of the trained girls are now engaged as teachers at the Centre. Others are earning money, working from their homes. Two names in this connection deserve special mention. Molina Acharya of Amdabad village purchased a machine after the training and is now working independently. So also is Bhaktisri Jana of Begnabari village. Such successful trainees are acting as catalytic agents, encouraging others to learn and earn. The Mission Centre also holds adult literary classes. There is a great demand for admission, but unfortunately, many applications have to be refused for want of space and the necessary training facilities.

The Centre runs on donations received from the public and the sales proceeds. From this money the trainees are paid labour charges and given tiffin; also raw materials are brought, salaries are given to instructors, and other contingencies are met. A donation, received from Uma Sundari Devi of twenty-five thousand rupees went a long way to help this cause. Pravrajika Muktiprana gave me some news which will gladden the hearts of all well-wishers of the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission. In June, 1988, the Danish International Development Agency, through the Royal Danish Embassy, New Delhi, granted the Mission eighty-five thousand rupees for the expansion of the vocational training scheme. This will surely go a long way to meet the growing demand of the women of Thakurnagar and neighbouring villages.

Not by Bread Alone

People cannot live by bread alone. The Ramakrishna Sarada Mission also takes care of the spiritual upliftment of the village women. Regular classes are held on India's cultural heritage. Religious discourses and readings from the lives of great men and women are also given. Sri Sri Ma's birthday

is celebrated with *éclat*, and *prasad* is distributed to all the villagers. In addition, National Youth Day on Swamiji's birthday and Independence Day are observed by enthusiastic villagers.

When the Mission started working in this area one had to cross the river Haldi by boat to reach Thakurnagar. Sometimes it overflowed and was therefore difficult to negotiate. Pravrajika Muktiprana narrated to me the difficulties of crossing the Haldi river. Now a bridge spans the river and a tar road takes one easily across. In 1986 floods submerged a portion of the Thakurnagar village, including the Mission's weaving shed, with the result that raw materials and also finished products were spoiled. It was then decided to construct two rooms and a prayer hall on the first floor. And this has been done, thanks to the munificence of the generous public.

The picture of the centre's work would be incomplete without the mention of a tube-well set up in its compound by the district authorities for the supply of safe drinking water. The rural interior of the village of Thakurnagar suffers from neglect and penury. When the Mission started to work there, there was no electricity, nor any sanitation facilities or drinking water in the village. As the soil was sandy, the area was declared a non-tube-well area. Through the District Magistrate's sanction, however, the Mission was able to have a well bored on its land to a depth of 740 feet. Having no other drinking water facilities, villagers constantly crowd at the Centre to obtain water. But now the tube-well has become exhausted and choked. Therefore the boring of a new tube-well is an immediate necessity.

The Village of Shillya

Unlike Thakurnagar, at Shillya, which is 35 km. from the town of Burdwan, the Mission concentrated on education first. Swamiji said that education is the panacea for all evils. On 19 April 1981, the Mondal family of the village donated to the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission eight acres of land to establish a school. A Primary School was opened, without much fanfare, in two small rooms of the ancestral home of the Mondals. In November of the same year, the school was moved to a thatched mud-hut built on the land which had been donated. Now the

school, with classes from nursery to class V, boasts of an additional covered space to accommodate two hundred and forty-three students. The students receive free books and stationery, tiffin and, occasionally, clothes. Besides *sannyasini* teachers, there are a few paid teachers. In addition to developing the mental and physical capabilities of the school children, the Mission has initiated a number of welfare activities for the village women. Sri Upendra Nath Barman has donated a lakh of rupees to accelerate the work. A capital grant of thirty thousand rupees was also donated from the Union Government's National Children's Fund.

Honorary Workers

Under the auspices of the Mission, Shi'lya has a club, the Atmashakti Sangha, which, under the inspired leadership of Dr. Dhirananda Mondal and his brother Sivananda Mondal arranges for free distribution of allopathic medicines to the patients. Also Dr. Krishna Sen Gupta travels from Durgapur, a distance of about forty kms. to visit patients. Similarly, a local Homoeopath, Dr. Durga Das Ghosh, treats patients free of charge, once a week. Rani Mondal M.A B.T., takes classes regularly in the Mission school, during her leisure time. Swasti Mondal also visits the Mission once a week to teach folk arts and graphics to the village women. Dipti Sarkar, Librarian of the Burdwan Women's College, holds classes in sewing and tailoring at the Centre.

Wherever the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission works, emphasis is laid on the spiritual side of men and women. That is the fountainhead of all the activities which seek to provide solace for the people in their many trials and tribulations. The readings from the scriptures are followed by discussions and are regularly attended by many women. A similar programme is also arranged by the Mission once a month in Durgapur and it is attended by a large number of women.

The Mohanpur School

Though a group of women at Mohanpur, in the Barrackpore subdivision of 24-Parganas, worked as a team, it was Monica Dey, a devotee of the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission,

who helped most by setting up a school in her own house. This non-formal Primary School for poor children, which is open to all castes and religions, is run by the headquarters of the Mission at Dakshineswar. The school has now one hundred and eleven students, with nine paid teachers and three honorary workers. Students are given light tiffin every day and, occasionally, clothing. Moreover, medical check-ups and free medicines are provided. Recently a scheme has been launched under which deserving students receive financial assistance.

Rural work would have been difficult in this interior village but for the services of honorary workers drawn to the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission's philanthropic activities. And this list would be incomplete without mention of the name of Dr. Basabi Sarvadhikary, M.B.B.S., D.C.H. (Calcutta), D.A.B.P., who each month, motors from her Calcutta residence to Mohanpur, a distance of thirty kms., to check the health of mothers and schoolchildren. A welfare fund has been created by the villagers, out of which nutritious food is provided to the patients.

Trilogy of Rural Work

As the adage goes, faith can move mountains. The progress of the rural work of education, medical care, and rural industries, amply manifest the faith of the people in the programmes initiated by the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission in the three villages of Thakurnagar, Shillya, and Mohanpur. It illustrates the heroic role of women, 'living images of Shaktri', working for the total development of their fellow beings. This trilogy of rural work in West Bengal also proves that the dedicated work of the Mission *sannyasinis*, backed by public support, moved a mountain of problems. The General Secretary, Pravrajika Muktiprana, is hopeful about the future and, in the course of discussion, unfolded a mammoth project that the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission has now launched.

A New Scheme and an Appeal

A new scheme is a welfare project for women and children of the economically backward communities located in the 24-Parganas (South), not far from the city of Calcutta. The project includes: (i) a primary school for poor children, (ii) a clinic for

women and children, (iii) a community hall for cultural activities, (iv) a workshop shed for vocational training for women, and, (v) residential quarters for monastic and lay workers. The total cost is estimated to be twenty-five lakhs of rupees. The General Secretary has made a special appeal for donations for immediate acquisition of the land and for its clearing and leveling, the construction of a culvert and a boundary wall, a tank, a tube-well and for improvements in sanitation. Already the Mission has received a very large donation of six lakhs of rupees from Ganga Somani of Calcutta which has been spent to purchase agricultural land. More land has to be acquired to stop the encroachment by new factories in the area.

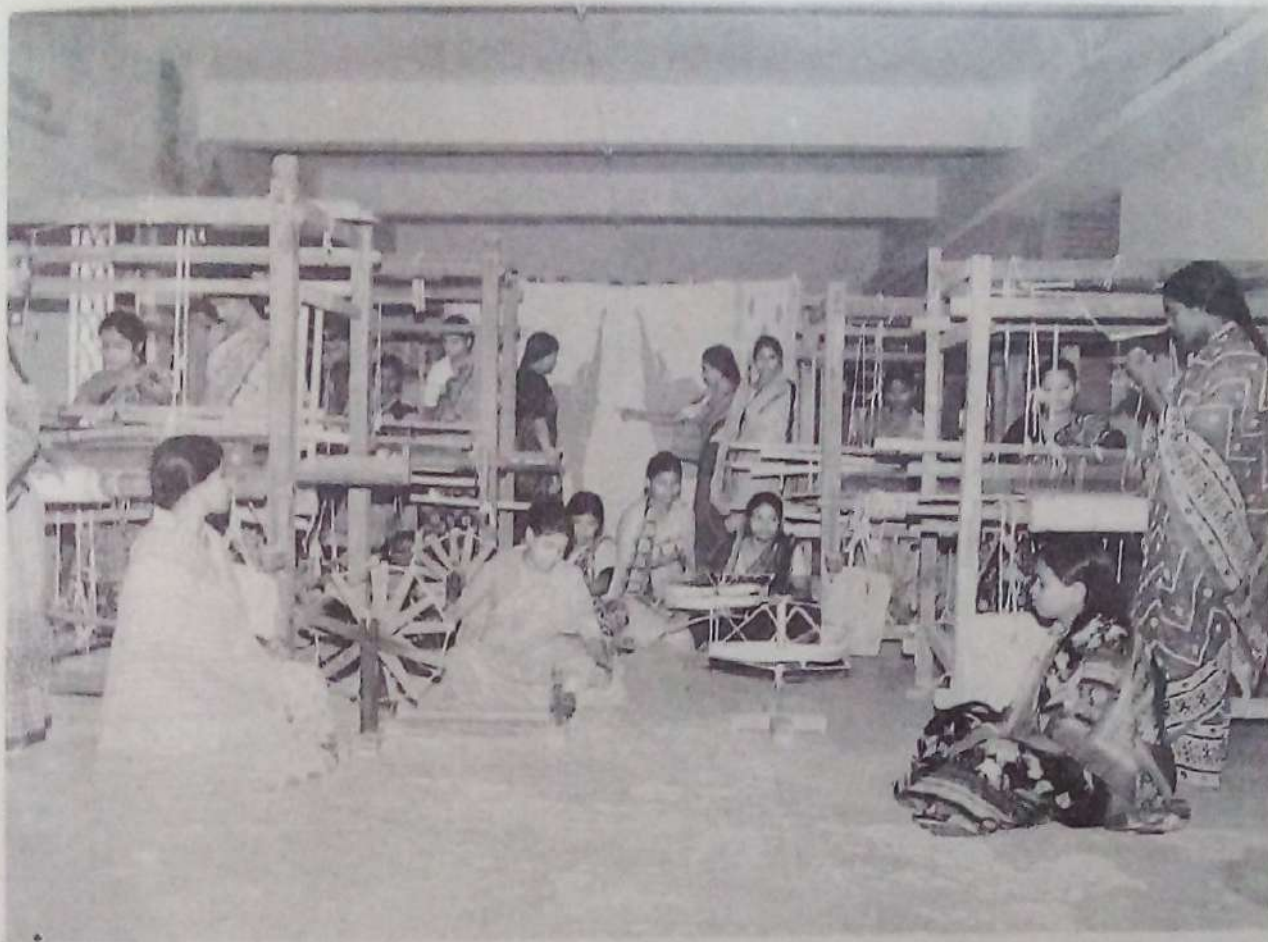
Should we not rise to the occasion?

Spreading Light in Surrounding Darkness

Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Girls' School,
Khonsa, in Arunachal Pradesh

PRAVRAJIKA SANTOSHPRANA

THE LAND of 'dawn-lit mountains', as Arunachal signifies, a sprawling mountainous territory covering 83,743 sq. kms with a population of 6.3 lakhs. To quote from a Government publication: 'A land of mighty rocks and luxuriant forests, gentle streams and raging torrents, Arunachal Pradesh presents a breath-taking spectacle of nature in all her glory, raw, unspoilt and untamed, in a wild profusion of flora and fauna, customs, languages and dress; benevolent and kind on occasions, awesome and cruel on others. . . . (A) diversity of religious beliefs has left a profound impress upon the temperament of the people, ranging from the deeply religious and restrained personality at the one end to the joyous and irresponsible one at the other.'



Thakurnagar, a weaving class



Shillya, a children's class



Mohanpur, a group of students and teachers



Khonsa, children with revered President Mataji

Tirap, one of the ten districts of Arunachal Pradesh, lying south of the Brahmaputra river, is situated in the Patkoi Range at the tail end of the great Himalayan mountains.

Development-conscious Tirap

Tirap is the homeland of colourful tribes: Noctes, Wanchos, Tangsas and Singphos. Their leaders are becoming increasingly conscious of the need for the all-round development and welfare of their people. It was mainly the gift of land and money of the Noctes which greatly helped the establishment of the Mission's school. Simple and God-fearing by nature, the tribals depend upon agriculture, and still follow the age-old practice of 'jhoom' or shifting cultivation. They are skilled craftsman in bamboo and cane work, and weaving is a hobby of their ever-active women. They are graceful dancers and have artistic tastes. Both men and women are fond of decorating themselves with ornaments of bronze, lead, shells, bamboo, feathers, and flowers. Modern dress is becoming popular now-a-days.

School—The Genesis

In 1972, the Arunachal administration, with K. A. A. Raja as its Chief Commissioner approached the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission with the request to open a school in Tirap to improve the status of the tribal women and children living there. It was a challenging job for the *sannyasinis* to work hundreds of miles away from the Mission Headquarters, and that too in a wild-animal infested corner of the country. However, considering the urgency and importance of the work, the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission authorities decided to open an English medium residential school, on the lines of the ancient Indian Gurukula system of education, at Khonsa, Tirap district. The Chiefs of Namsang and Borduria came forward with financial assistance from their Namsang-Borduria People's Fund. With this assistance, a Trust Fund was created in the name of the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, to open a school for the advancement of education among the women of the Namsang and Borduria group of villages in particular, and also for the material, intellectual and spiritual uplift of the women of other areas of the locality. The Khonsa Chief and his people simultaneously came

forward with a donation of 30.88 acres of their cultivable land to the Mission for the new school to be constructed. The management of the entire scheme was entrusted to a committee appointed by the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, Dakshineswar, Calcutta, which includes one member of the Arunachal Pradesh Administration and three tribal members of the Namsang-Borduria Development Committee with the Deputy Commissioner as the ex-officio President.

Inauguration—A Red Letter Day

The formal inauguration of the school was performed on 17 February, 1973 by Padmavati Raja, wife of the Chief Commissioner, at the newly constructed Government Lower-Primary School building, lent to the Mission by the Administration, to avoid delay and use it till its own new buildings were ready at the Mission's permanent site, a couple of kilometers away. On the same day, K. A. A. Raja, the motive-force behind the school, laid the foundation stone for the new school campus at its permanent site. The school was named the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission (Nocte) Girls' School. It has come to be known as 'Ramakrishna Sarada Mission School', Khonsa, since March 1975, when it was moved to its permanent site, at the top of a most picturesque hill, 3,500 ft. above sea level, just at the entrance of the Khonsa township.

The School Campus

The construction of the school complex was made easier with a capital grant from the Central Government. It was declared open by Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, on 19 November, 1976. A much-needed prayer hall was opened in May, 1975, the dedication ceremony of which was performed by Pravrajika Mokshaprana, the President of Sri Sarada Math. By March, 1977, additions to the school buildings, three hostel buildings, monastic quarters, a kitchen-cum-dining hall block, servants' quarters, teachers' quarters, and a game shed were constructed. By the early eighties, an additional building for monastic members, three more hostel buildings, the ground-floor of an additional hostel building, and housing for the Weaving Section were completed. The old game shed was

converted into a spacious and beautiful auditorium. A playground was also prepared near the school by levelling the hilly terrain.

Three laboratories for Physics, Chemistry and Life-sciences were fully furnished and equipped in 1978 by M/s Education Emporium, Calcutta. The foundation-stone of a new wing of the school building of the Higher Secondary Section was laid by Lt. Governor H. S. Dubey on 28 February, 1983.

The School Grows

The school started in 1973 with 58 residential children in three classes — Preparatory, Class I and Class II. It was upgraded into a full-fledged Higher Secondary School in 1983-84 and affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi, in the 10+2 pattern of education. Only humanities courses could be introduced in the Higher Secondary level, for the time being, owing to the non availability of good science teachers. The school has now 333 students of whom 288 are tribal students and 45 are local day-students. The school and the hostel are free, being financed mainly by the Namsang-Borduria Fund. The State Government is giving monthly grants as boarding charges for each student of Tirap district as follows: Rs. 135 for students up to Class X; Rs. 150 for Higher Secondary students; and Rs. 200 for students coming from other districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

All-round training is given to the students in addition to their educational curriculum. For example, they are taught how to clean their dormitories, school buildings, and garden; they learn to serve in the dining hall, and do their own washing and so on. The senior students have to look after the small children, though every hostel has one woman helper. The students attend both morning and evening prayers. The students learn to chant the *Bhagavad-Gita* besides music and Sanskrit hymns. Special attention is given to nurturing their natural talents in music, dancing, drawing, and handicrafts. Competitions are also organized to foster a spirit of sportsmanship, craftsmanship, and communal and personal fellow-feeling. With these objects in view, the school has been divided into four houses — Vivek Bhavan, Nivedita Bhavan, Mira Bhavan and Saraswati Bhavan. Competitions are organized by each house in essay

writing, music, dancing, dramatic performances, sports and games. An exhibition of work to show the students' natural artistic talents is organized during the celebrations of Independence Day, Republic Day, and the birthdays of Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak, Netaji Subhas Bose, and others, through paintings, pencil sketches, short essays, one-act plays, patriotic songs, and so on. The patriotic feelings and great love of the children for their Motherland and her noble sons and daughters are thus given expression and encouragement.

Problem of Drop-outs

As in other parts of the country, Arunachal Pradesh has school drop-outs at various stages of education due to different reasons. Since the opening of the School, 44 per cent left their studies in the primary classes, 38 per cent in the middle school stage, 3 per cent at the secondary school level and 15 per cent left after creditably passing the school final examination. The majority of the latter continued their studies elsewhere. The Higher Secondary Section of the School could only be opened much later, but only in the humanities stream. Three Nocte students, after completing their AISS (All India Secondary Secondary School Examination), were forced to leave their studies due to financial and family problems and are now working as teachers in the Primary Schools in their own villages. A Nocte girl, after passing Class IX, completed the Auxiliary Nursing Training Course at Pasighat and is now working as a nurse in the Kanubari Government Hospital in the Tirap District.

Achievements

To the great credit of the teachers and the taught, all the first four successive batches of students (1981-82 to 1984-85) appearing for the AISSE of the Central Board of Secondary Education from this school achieved a hundred per cent success. The school authorities strongly feel that the children's performances could be improved still further if the State had its own Board of Education and its own syllabus to suit local students, as in other States. Incidentally, in the district-level science seminars (1981-85) the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission School students secured first places, showing their interest in the

developments of modern sciences, and revealing their confidence in such seminars and competitions.

Welfare Work

A non-residential village Primary School for local girls, under the Arunachal Board of Education, situated at the entrance of the Khonsa village was started on 17 January, 1987. The tutorial classes conducted earlier, have thus been put on a stronger footing, with the elevation of the village school to a full-fledged primary school. The children, whose present strength is sixty-four, are given free education, with free textbooks, stationery, and school uniform. They are given a free meal every day.

Students of classes III, IV, and V are taken, once a week, to the local Bal Bhavan 'Mekhala Hum' built in memory of Mekhala Jha. Here children learn wood carving, cane work, knitting and so on, along with children of the main school and the other Government schools. Steps are also being taken to impart elementary education to young women at Kheti village, about twelve kms. from Khonsa. Interestingly, the older illiterate girls there approached the teachers to do something for their education. Twenty-nine girls are now taught reading and writing in English and Hindi.

Every Sunday a monastic sister with a teacher and a few students of higher classes of the Mission School go to Kheti and Kaimai villages to help the local school teachers to create the necessary atmosphere for the schooling of Basti (village) children and also to raise the standard of the school there. Model classes, with the help of small, hand-made visual aids, are conducted by the team. There is also story-telling, the recitation of nursery rhymes, and the singing of patriotic songs. Children of the village schools, from classes III to V, are also taken to the bigger Khonsa Ramakrishna Sarada Mission School once a month to boost up their curricular and extra-curricular performances.

Relief Work

Relief work is executed by the Mission for the poor and needy villagers. Food, clothing, steel trunks, aluminium utensils,

and lanterns were distributed to fifty-five distressed families of Kamai village and forty-four families of Kheti village when their houses were gutted in a devastating fire in 1979. In 1981-82, over five thousand rupees were spent for fire-victims of the Nainu, Chinhan, Dadam, and Bera villages. In 1984, about eight-hundred and thirty rupees were spent on utensils, clothing, and other necessities for the Thinsa villagers who suffered a similar fate. The Mission also helps poor and ailing villagers in various ways, such as providing medical care, or sending patients to the Assam Medical College Hospital at Dibrugarh for proper treatment.

Rapport with Ex-students

Within a short span of time, the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission School has turned out a number of students who are either pursuing higher studies or settled in useful professions. While ten ex-students have completed the B.A. degree examination successfully, thirteen others are at present pursuing B.A. and honours courses: six are in M.B.B.S. classes of whom three will finish their course this year; two are students in B.Sc. (Agriculture) classes and one in Polytechnic (Diploma) class; five are in General Nursing, and twenty-seven are in Higher Secondary classes, arts or science. A number of ex-students are employed as nurses, *gram-sevikas*, primary-school teachers, Upper and Lower Division clerks; one is a cashier in a State bank, and one was a SSB instructress. The total number of ex-students employed so far is forty-four.

An ex-students' reunion, attended by fifty-two students was held in the school for the first time, on 7 June, 1988. One important decision of the reunion was the formation of a fourteen member Old Students' Committee to help the school authorities in village welfare projects. It was also decided to hold the reunion each year in the month of June.

Human Resource Development

The Mission School is trying its best to bring about, as its activities indicate, a harmonization of the secular and spiritual development of the women and children of Arunachal Pradesh, the very same aims which the Mission had been called upon by

the Arunachal Administration to achieve. The Lt. Governor, H.S. Dubey epitomized the feelings of the people when he wrote in the Visitors' Book of the School: '... There is something deeply serene about the whole atmosphere—the radiant cherubic faces of the children, the strong sense of discipline, their neat attire and the latent genius finding expression in the works of art. The most sublime aspect of the school is the prayer hall where I found the little 'children of God' singing prayers, which to me appeared soul-stirring. It is a miracle how girls from far corners of Arunachal Pradesh, with varying backgrounds, dialects, customs, and rites undergo a sea-change in a matter of months and get fused into a cohesive mass. All this left me spellbound. I do not hesitate to say that this institution can be a torch-bearer for other schools and colleges of India in the matter of sound education based on character building and reinforcement of faith in human values.'

The former Director of Public Instruction, S. K. Gupta, wrote in the same vein: '... Group recitation and singing in the prayer hall reverberates in the environment, sending out a powerful faith that the future is secure to the people who build their present by their might. As the saying goes, "to teach a boy is to teach a man, but to teach a girl means to teach a family". Arunachal awaits impatiently to see the worthy girls coming out of this institution who will prove one day to be the proud mothers of their worthy sons. They, in turn, will contribute to the national character of our country with their physical mite and spiritual courage.'

The Ramakrishna Sarada Mission at Khonsa is working with the twin ideals of self-realization and service to humanity as visualized by Swami Vivekananda.

Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya of Sri Shankaracharya

M. R. YARDI

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The Embodied Self

IN THE article on the individual Self, we saw that according to the *sutrakara* the individual Self is sentient or intelligent and that agency is not his true nature and is due to his association with the body, senses, and the mind. The Vaisheshikas, however, hold that the sentient nature of the Self is adventitious, like the red colour of an earthen pot when it comes into contact with fire. Had he been sentient all the time, then he would be conscious even in the state of sleep or swoon, or when possessed by a spirit. When a person is asked whether he was conscious in any one of the above states, he says that he was not conscious of anything. They, therefore, argue that since the embodied Self is conscious only in the waking state and while dreaming and not in the state of deep sleep or swoon, sentience is not the true nature of the Self. This view is, however, contrary to the Upanishadic doctrine that the Self is ever conscious. In his commentary on *sutra* II.iii.18, Sri Shankara quotes the following scriptural passages: 'He (the Self), not Himself asleep, looks at the sleeping senses' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV.iii.2), 'He who becomes conscious that I am smelling this is the Self' (*Chhandogya Upanishad* VIII.xii.4), and 'There is no loss of consciousness in the intelligent Self (at any time)' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV.iii. 9). If it is objected that this nature of the Self would make the senses redundant, the reply is that the senses serve the purpose of determining the special object of each sense, such as the sense of smell.

In order to understand the real nature of the individual Self, we have to examine the different states which the embodied Self undergoes, namely the states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. The *sutrakara* discusses these states in the second

chapter of the third *Pada*. In the waking state the embodied Self is fully conscious of his surroundings and the working of his mind. In the first four *sutras*, therefore, the *sutrakara* considers the dream state which is intermediate between the waking state and deep sleep. *Sutra* III.ii.1 (सन्ध्ये सृष्टिराह हि) discusses the *prima facie* view that 'In the intermediate state there is real creation.' The third *sutra* rejects this view and states, 'But this (dreamworld) is mere appearance on account of the fact that its nature does not become manifest with the totality (of the attributes of the waking state)' (मायामात्र तु कात्स्न्येनानभिव्यक्तस्वरूपत्वात्). Sri Shankara explains that the totality of the attributes mentioned by the *sutrakara* refer to place, time, causation and non-contradiction. In a dream a person sees a chariot, when there is no room for a chariot within the limited confines of his mind. Even when he dreams that he has gone from one place to another, he wakes up at the former place. The conditions of time also are not properly observed. Although a person goes to sleep at night, he dreams that it is daytime. Sometimes within the dream itself there is self-contradiction. In a dream a chariot becomes a man, the man becomes a tree. The scripture states clearly that the chariots and so on, which appear in a dream do not really exist. 'There are no chariots, nor the yokes of chariots nor the paths' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV.iii 10). In his commentary on this *sutra*, Sri Shankara also concedes that the dreamworld is not real like the world seen in the waking state. The *sutrakara* adds further that though the dreams are illusory, their indications of future good or evil may be real. Thus *sutra* III.ii 4 (सूत्रकश्च हि श्रुतेराचक्षते च तद्विदः) states, '(Though the dream is unreal), yet according to the scripture it is indicative of the future; those who are versed (in the reading of dreams) also say so.' The embodied Self is thus conscious of what he dreams.

The scriptures tell us that in the state of deep sleep the embodied Self resides in the nerves (*nadis*), pericardium (*puritat*) and in Brahman. The question arises whether these statements are mutually exclusive or are correlated. If we take them as mutually exclusive, preferring one alternative to the others, the Vedic authority would be compromised. To avoid this the *sutrakara* says that they stand in mutual relation. He states in *sutra* III.ii.7 (तदभावो नाडीषु तच्छ्रुतेरात्मनि च), 'The absence of that (dream i.e. dreamless sleep) takes place in the *nadis* and in

Brahman, according to scripture.' If there are two statements to the effect that 'he sleeps in the palace', 'he sleeps on a bed', we have to combine the two and say that 'he sleeps on a bed in the palace'. Likewise here we should take the scriptural statements to mean that the embodied Self goes through the nerves to the region of the heart and there rests in Brahman. Thus Brahman is the place of rest of the individual Self in deep sleep.

The *sutrakara* states that the embodied Self remains conscious even in deep sleep. In *sutra* III.ii.8 (अतः प्रबोधोऽस्मात्) 'For the same reason, (the embodied Self) wakes up from Brahman.' In the next *sutra*, (स एव तु कर्मानुमृतिशब्दविधिभ्यः) he adds, '(The Self that wakes up) is the same on account of work, remembrance, scriptural authority and injunction.' When a person wakes up from deep sleep, he takes up the work left unfinished before falling into deep sleep and remembers the past events. There is also scriptural authority for this in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV.iii. 16 and *Chhandogya Upanishad* VI.ix. 3. If the person rising from deep sleep were different from the person who went into deep sleep, then all injunctions with regard to work or knowledge would become meaningless. Sri Shankara in his *bhashya* on *sutra* II.iii.18 observes, the apparent absence of consciousness in deep sleep is due to the absence of objects, even as light pervading space is not apparent owing to the absence of objects to be illuminated, not to the absence of its own nature.

The *sutrakara* then proceeds to explain the nature of a swoon in *sutra* III.ii.10 (मुग्धेऽर्धसम्पत्तिः परिशेषात्). He says that in the case of a senseless person (as in a swoon, and so on), there is partial attainment (of deep sleep), this being the remaining alternative,' A person in a swoon is not conscious of objects as is a waking person, nor is he dreaming. Let us say that he is in deep sleep, but this is impossible, on account of the different characteristics of the two states. A person in deep sleep is peaceful, he breathes regularly, his eyes are closed and his body does not tremble. On the other hand, a person in a swoon breathes irregularly, his body trembles, his face has a frightful expression and his eyes are staring and wide open. He is not dead, as he continues to breathe and rises to conscious life. He is, therefore, partially conscious in the swoon and when he recovers from the swoon he begins his

work which was interrupted by the swoon. Sri Ramanuja and Sri Nimbarka, however, take the swoon to be a half-death.

A Matter of Life and Death

The embodied Self thus inherits his spiritual nature from God, but he is also endowed with a body, senses and mind, which are the products of *prakriti*. The body consists of three elements, fire, water, and earth as their effects are observed in it, and as it contains three materials, wind, bile, and phlegm (*Bhashya*, III.i.2). As regards the senses, the *sutrakara* states in *sutra* II.iv.5 (मप्त गतेर्विशेषितत्वाच्च), the *prima facie* view that '(The organs are) seven, because it is so known and specified (in the scripture)'. There are Shruti texts such as the *Mundaka Upanishad* II.i.8, which clearly specify that there are seven sense organs. It is true that there are other texts which mention eight (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* III.ii.1), ten (*Taittiriya Samhita* V.iii.2, 3), eleven (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* III.ix.4), twelve (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* II.iv.2), and thirteen (*Prashna Upanishad* IV.8). The opponent argues that the organs are only seven, as the numbers greater than seven denote only their different modifications. The *sutrakara* rebuts this view and gives the reason in *sutra* II.iv.6. This *sutra* (हस्तादयस्तु स्थितेऽतो नैवम्) states, 'But there are also hands and so on; this being settled, it is not so.' The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* III.ii.8 mentions other organs such as the hand with which a person seizes a thing and performs actions. The organs are eleven in number, as mentioned in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* III.ix.4 and the *Bhagavad-Gita* XIII.5. They consist of the five organs of knowledge, five organs of action and the inner organ. Sometimes the organs are said to be twelve by adding *manas* and *buddhi* to the ten organs or thirteen by adding *ahamkara* also. But the mind, the intellect, and ego sense are taken as modification of the inner organ (एतत्सर्वं मन एव) (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* I.v.3). They are limited in size (अणवश्च), as mentioned in *sutra* II.iv.7, as well as function. They are not all-prevading, since we do not perceive through the senses what is happening beyond the range of sight and hearing.

The *sutrakara* does not describe the inner organ separately. He alludes to the mind in *sutra* II.iv.12 (पञ्चवृत्तिर्मनोवद्व्यपदिश्यते). This *sutra* states, 'It is taught that the Prana has five states like

the mind.' Here the reference, as explained by Sri Shankara, is not to the five organs of knowledge, as the mind is also said to possess desire, motive and so on. Here we have to take the five states of the mind as perception, error, misconception, sleep, and remembrance, as mentioned in the *Yoga-Sutra* I.i.6 by Patanjali. This is on the basis that a tenet of another school, which is not contrary to one's doctrine, is permitted, परमतमप्रतिषिद्धमनुमतं भवति इति न्यायात्. Thus in addition to the eleven organs, there is Prana with its five states, *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana* and *samana*. Here *prana* is breathing out, of the nature of exhalation, *apana* is breathing in, of the nature of inhalation, *vyana* is holding the breath in the joints of the body to give them strength, *udana* is breathing upwards at the time of death, *samana* is the breath which carries nutrition to all the limbs (See *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* I.v.3). The chief Prana is also subtle (*sutra* II.iv.13). Where it is said to be all-pervading (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* I iii.22), it refers to the Hiranyagarbha or its existence separately in all creatures. *Sutra* II.iv.14 states that the vital breaths and the organs are presided over by the deities such as Fire. We read in the *Aitareya Aranyaka* II.iv.2, 4 that Fire, having become speech, entered the mouth. The dieties, however, cannot become the enjoyers of their functions. Only the embodied Self, as the possessor of Prana (*sutra* II.iv.15) and in constant relation with the body (*sutra* II.iv.16) is the experiencer of the pleasure and pain arising from his good and bad actions.

It is mentioned in some Vedic texts that the Prana is not produced; for instance the *Shatapatha Brahmana* VI.i.1.1 states that Prana existed before the origin of things. In the first few *sutras* in Section II.xiv the *sutrakara* states that the Prana is also produced by Brahman. It is stated clearly in the *Mundaka Upanishad* II i.3, 'From Him originate the Prana, mind, all the senses, *akasha*, air, water, fire and earth.' In *sutra* II.iv.8 (श्रेष्ठञ्च) Prana is said to be the foremost creation of Brahman. It is the foremost because we would not be able to live without it. This Prana is not just air, which exists in the mouth, nor a function of the senses, as is mentioned separately (II iv.9) This is in contradiction to the *Samkhya Sutra* II.31 (सामान्यकरणवृत्तिः) which states that the vital breaths are the common functions of the organs. The Upanishads mention the vital breaths along with the sense organs, as they share common characteristics. In *sutra* II.iv.10 (चक्षुरादिवत्तु तत्सहशिष्ट्यादिभ्यः), it is stated that

'Prana is (subordinate to the Self) like the eye and so on, as it is taught along with them and for other reasons. The vital breaths are subordinate to the Self and serviceable to Him like the sense organs. The other reasons mentioned are that they are made up of parts and are insentient and so on. It may be objected that the vital breaths are not like the sense organs, as they are not instruments of the Self, *akaranatvaccha*, as they do not assist the Self with any specific forms of activity. The *sutrakara* replies that this is not a defect as the Vedic text points out (*sutra* II.iv.11). The *Chhandogya Upanishad* V.i.6 ff. points out that with the loss of sense the body continues its activities, while with the loss of Prana the body ceases to function. The vital breaths, therefore, serve the Self by maintaining the body and by giving strength and vitality to the sense organs.

The organs of sense are sometimes designated as *pranas* and are stated in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* I.v.21 to have assumed the form of the vital breath. A doubt, therefore, arises whether the senses are also the modes of Prana like the five vital breaths. The *sutra* II.iv.17 (त इन्द्रियाणि तद्व्यपदेशादन्यत्र श्रेष्ठात्) clears this doubt. It states, 'The senses are separate from the chief (Prana), as they are designated thus'. The vital breaths are not designated as senses either in the scriptures or in the Smritis. The next *sutra* states that the scripture points to this difference. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, for instance, the organs are dealt with in one section (I.iii) and the vital breaths in another (I.v). The *sutra* II.iv.19 (वैलक्षण्याच्च) further states, 'And because of characteristic differences'. While the organs do not function in deep sleep, Prana alone keeps awake. The organs become fatigued, but not Prana. The continuance of the body is dependent on the continuance of Prana. The loss of organs does not affect life, but the departure of Prana results in death. A sense organ is the cause of the perception of its object, but it is not so with Prana. There are many such differences distinguishing Prana from the sense organs. From this it is evident that they do not belong to the same class.

As a result of this double inheritance, the Self is usually confused with the body, the sense organs, and the internal organ *Sutra* II.iii.16 (चराचरव्यपदेशस्तु स्यात्तद्व्यपदेशो भाक्तस्तद्भावभावित्वात्) states, 'The mention of (birth and death) which belong to (the bodies of) moving and non-moving beings is ascribed to the Self in a secondary (figurative) sense, as the

embodied Self depends on the existence of the body.' In ordinary usage we say that so and so is born or dead, and certain ceremonies are also prescribed at the birth and death of a person. There is, therefore, a doubt whether birth and death belong to the Self or the body. The *sutra* says that they belong to the body and not to the Self, who abides in the body. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, IV.iii 8, says that the Self is said to be born when he becomes endowed with the body and dead when he passes out of the body. Although the *sutrakara* does not mention the word *upadhi* or *adhyasa*, this *sutra* seem to have provided the germinal idea for the later developments of these two concepts.

The doctrine of *upadhis* appears to have originated from the *vrittikara* Bodhayana, whom Sri Shankara mentions in his commentary. He says in *sutra* I.i.31 that the *vrittikara* gives a different interpretation of उपासा-त्रैविद्यात्. According to the *vrittikara* there are three kinds of meditations of Brahman, in Itself and in the form of Its two limiting adjuncts, *jiva* and *Prana*. In his *Bhashya* on *sutra* I.iii.19, Sri Shankara clarifies the meaning of the term *upadhi* by the simile of the crystal. The crystal is white and transparent, but when it comes in contact with a red flower, it is not discerned to be different from the red colour. Sri Jnaneshwara gives the beautiful simile of the crystal which appears divided when placed over a strand of hair (*Jnaneshwari*, VIII.41-44). The moment discrimination arises, the crystal appears in its true form. So before the rise of discriminating knowledge, the Self appears to be of the nature of the material adjuncts. Although the Self is pure consciousness, non active and infinite, he identifies himself with the body, senses, and the internal organ, and appears as if limited in knowledge and power. As a result he thinks himself to be the agent and enjoyer, burdens himself with merit and demerit and suffers a series of future embodied existences according to his former actions. This cycle of births and deaths continues so long as non-discrimination between the Self and the material adjuncts lasts. Discriminating knowledge between the two is, therefore, essential for salvation. This is the view of those who hold the doctrine (*bheda-abheda-vada*) that both Brahman and Its *upadhis* are real and non-different. They accordingly hold that karma is an essential means to knowledge and that salvation results from ज्ञानकर्मसमुच्चय, i.e., a combination of action and knowledge.

On the basis of this distinction between the Self and not-Self consisting of the limiting adjuncts, Sri Shankara developed his novel doctrine of *adhyasa*. *Adhyasa* means literally superimposition, but Sri Shankara takes it in the sense of 'the mistaken imputation to a thing of the nature and attributes which belong to another', अध्यासो नाम अतस्मिंस्तद्बुद्धिः. This definition also agrees with the popular view when we say, 'The mother of pearl appears like silver', 'the moon, though one, appears as if double'. To this one may raise the objection as to how anyone can ascribe the nature and attributes of a material object to the Self, which is not an object of perception. This objection is not valid, as non-discerning persons superimpose blue colour on *akasha*. This *adhyasa* arises from the fact that man, in ignorance of his true Self, ascribes to himself the nature and attributes of his material adjuncts. He ascribes to himself the attributes of the body, when, he says, 'I am stout or lean, fair or dark, standing or walking.' He imputes to himself the attributes of the senses when he thinks, 'I am dumb or deaf, one-eyed or blind'. He ascribes to himself the attributes of the internal organ, when he considers himself subject to desire, intention, doubt, resolve and so on. He superimposes the actions and experiences of his ego-sense on the Self, who is only the witness of the modifications of his internal organ, (See *Shankara Bhashya*, Introduction). This erroneous notion, by which man identifies himself with the aggregate consisting of the body, senses, and the internal organ is *avidya* or ignorance (*Shankara Bhashya* II.iii.48). Distinct from this is the determination of the nature of reality, which is *vidya* or knowledge. So long as man is under the influence of *avidya*, he makes the wrong choices in life, prefers the pleasurable things (*preyas*) to things conducive to liberation (*shreyas*), performs good and evil deeds, and is caught in the cycle of transmigration. However it is doubtful whether the *sutrakara* would have agreed with Sri Shankara that the adjuncts are unreal cognitions, *mithyapratyaya*. As we saw, he uses the word *Maya* to describe the dreamworld and thereby implies that the world of our everyday perception is real. Although the *sutrakara* does not use the word *avidya*, one can take it to be implied in his *sutra* II.iii.16. Without the concept of *avidya* as the cause of *samsara*, one cannot explain how knowledge or *vidya* can lead to liberation. According to Sri Shankara, knowledge of Brahman preceded by renunciation brings about

liberation. But he also admits that action is useful for the purification of the mind, which is essential for the attainment of knowledge. In the next article, we shall discuss the question whether in the *sutrakara's* view, the highest end of man is attained through knowledge or action or both.

Predestiny and Evil in Hindu Myth—IV

JEANINE MILLER

In this last part of the story of Vena and Prithu, Jeanine Miller shows man's need, in his suffering to overcome evil, to accept his condition and depend upon the grace of God.

THE EARTH COW, as a mythological entity, seems to be a culmination of a long process wherein several originally differing although allied elements became fused and somewhat transformed, ending the conception of the Cow of plenty which, in the Puranas, is symbolized by Prithivi, which may not necessarily represent our planet Earth, but simply *matter*, the *matrix* of all existences, or Nature, the formative, nourishing aspect of the cosmos.

Psychologically, the Earth-cow obviously represents the unconscious, that is, that from which the conscious feeds. The fact that Prithu is able to conquer that which alone can feed all aspects of being, shows him as personifying the 'complex of egoic self-consciousness' that is capable of coming to terms with the 'feminine unconscious' and therefore of receiving from her the essential energies that bring back life to the main fragments of the personality that until now had not only been in a state of chaos but also in one of starvation from want of inner sustenance.

From the psychological viewpoint, as Ronald Huntington tells us:

'The legend of Prithu relates to that critical phase in the life of the individual which Carl Jung has so often characterized

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as the time of supreme psychological importance—the individuation process. . . . In terms of the microcosm of the psyche, Prithu represents the conscious ego-complex capable of the arduous and dangerous dual process of integration—differentiation which is essential to psychic wholeness, i.e. ultimate realization of the self.¹

The pursuit of the cow from world to world would imply the deliberate penetration into the various levels of the unconscious, the lowest and the highest—since the Brahma-world is referred to—on the part of the conscious ego complex which leads to the conquest of the unconscious in the sense of control over it and the capacity to release from it specific energies till then pent up in it. The episode of the pursuit with the arrow poised is another symbolic way of expressing the fertilization of the feminine unconscious by the masculine conscious which takes place once the masculine has been freed. The arrow may also be taken in the sense used in the Upanishads, as the one-pointed concentration that allows the mind to go straight to its target.²

So Prithu's encounter with the Earth-cow ends successfully. The last episode of the story which concerns Prithu's relationship to Indra and does not appear in the *Vishnu* or *Vayu Puranas*, shows Prithu consecrating himself by means of the performance of the one-hundred horse sacrifices (*ashvamedhas*) as a token of his conquest of chaos and his restoration of prosperity to his kingdom. This ambitious enough project, psychologically, hints at an insidious danger, psychic inflation, i.e. the attribution of success to one's own unaided cleverness, the boosting up of the ego such as has already been seen in Vena's case with its disastrous results. But now the problem is more subtle for Prithu is at least half-god. Nevertheless, his godhood is lost sight of as the story proceeds further and his manhood becomes more and more apparent with its inherent weaknesses.

Prithu has successfully related himself to the Earth or Nature and the unconscious, but his task is not over; he has now to relate to that complementary part of himself of which Indra, the ruler of the senses, the conscious mental power, is the symbol.

What do the gods represent is a constant question that the rational mind finds hard to solve. As Dr. Panikkar says with respect to the legend of Shunahashepa. 'The human condition is not complete if it does not include the mysterious forces that envelop human life.'³ They are those mysterious forces that manifest as fate, talent, power and Nature's intelligence, which the Ancients described as the 'gods' and which they projected upon the screen of the cosmos as heroes and then anthropomorphized more and more until they degraded them to our own petty human level.

Challenge and Reconciliation

The performance of the hundred horse-sacrifices would imply on Prithu's part an unconscious wish to elevate himself to the status of Indra, the king of the gods for whom the hundred *ashvamedhas* was the exclusive prerogative. Did Prithu have the right to perform the sacrifices? As a result, we are treated to the most baffling and somewhat absurd and infantile behaviour of Indra whose jealousy is aroused when he realizes that Prithu has undertaken to perform that mighty sacrifice which belongs to him by right. Twice he intervenes at the final sacrifice and steals the horse. Twice Prithu's son, prodded by Atri, pursues him, snatches the animal but fails to catch Indra, who first transforms himself into a mendicant covered with ashes, thereby taking the garb of a liberated (*mukta*) *sannyasin* and making himself an impostor, and then brandishes a skull and Shiva's club to the discomfiture of Prithu's son. Each time Indra disappears in his heaven at the crucial moment, thereby playing hide and seek and behaving as a complete trickster sent out to try out Prithu through his son who obviously represents an immature aspect of himself.

Indra is quite a complex character when one considers his evolution from the *Rig Veda* to his complete degradation in the Puranas. Three aspects of his character are as follows:

- 1) In the *Rig Veda* he is the conqueror of that obstacle that prevents the waters of life from flowing freely and the sun of enlightenment from being raised on high for all to see. This is no mean achievement which, psychologically, implies the conscious mind battling and asserting itself against the forces of chaos and darkness, or the unconscious. He makes cosmos

out of chaos; with the aid of the sun he makes pathways where before was darkness (*Rig Veda* VI.xxi 3a,b); he separates earth from heaven and makes wider the midregion between these; hence creates order, a world with definite demarcations; he gives freedom (literally *space*) to the gods (*Rig Veda* III.xxxiv.7) and for man he finds the 'way to fulfillment through conflict' (*Rig Veda* X.xlix.9). He is the *space-maker*, a multilevelled, meaningful expression. All these things are the work of the mind, the liberating consciousness as it issues from the darkness of the unconscious, asserts itself, claims its freedom of action and creates its own universe.⁴

2) In the myth recounted in the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, where Indra and Virochana resort to Prajapati to find out the meaning of the Self (VIII.vii.12ff) Indra is the genuine seeker of truth, the enquiring mind bent on the quest for enlightenment, the assiduous pupil unafraid to ply his teacher with pertinent questions, showing shrewd insight, discrimination, sincerity, ready to take the leap into the higher realms of pure consciousness and therefore of finding the truth about the Self.

3) In the Shunahashepa legend, Indra represents the extreme of individualism, the individual bent on liberating himself by his own efforts. As Dr. Panikkar says, 'Indra is always a god who strikes'⁵—not necessarily with his thunderbolt! But as in the Prithu and Shunahashepa legends, by his unexpected intervention. Everywhere, he is the strong, brave fighter for freedom. As Ronald Huntington put it: 'He represents all those qualities which are traditionally most prized in man—physical strength, bravery, self-reliance, ambition developed to their symbolic utmost.'⁶

As the ruler of the senses, he may emphasize, in the Puranas, the sensory and the thinking aspects of human nature (to use Jung's division of types—sensation-thinking and feeling-intuition) at the expense of the feeling-intuition which in him is completely repressed, hence the rather colourless quality of his consort Sachi; hence also the sudden irruption of the repressed side. The whole episode of his intrusion at Prithu's sacrifice is such an irrational outburst. But it shows up, in a personality that has not yet achieved integration, the fragility of the conscious mind that can still be at the mercy of such disruptive factors as the repressed side of human nature is often responsible for, and that stands powerless against these.

Prithu's son fails to get rid of Indra, but Prithu, by now aware of what had been going on, seizes his bow and arrow in extreme anger in order to slay Indra. Then Brahma appears and gives all to understand that this action can lead but to self-destruction. Brahma explains that the sacrifice being an expression of Indra, to injure Indra is to bring disaster upon one's self for the sacrifice is also an expression of one's self. (*Rig Veda* IV. ixx. 30). That which is thwarted by the gods (in this case Indra prevents the completion of the last sacrifice) or by providence, had better be left alone (*ibid* 34). Psychologically, Indra represents Prithu's own conscious personality still precariously balanced but nevertheless vital for his self-direction and wholeness. A reconciliation is brought about between Prithu and Indra on the initiative of the former who shows humility and magnanimity, the latter being a quality which belongs to Indra as well, who is thereby deeply touched and who apologizes to Prithu there and then.

The uncompleted last sacrifice stands as a mute witness to human imperfection. Once again man cannot arrogate to himself the status of the gods, but Prithu, unlike Vena, is human and intelligent enough to realize this and accept the human condition. In due course of time, he gives over the reins of the kingdom to his descendant and goes wandering into the forest, taking to the life of a *sannyasin*, the fourth stage of life, in typical Hindu tradition, and practising all sorts of extreme austerities (*Bhagavata Purana* IV.xxiii.1ff).

Conclusion

So we have two parallel situations that from the psychological standpoint, if not from any other point of view, show considerable improvement: In the first view: Vena, there was incapacity through wrong conditioning to come to terms with the human predicament by one who was its very embodiment; hence evil begetting evil, the endless causation of which being stopped only through the 'grace' of God. In the second view: Prithu, the human predicament is accepted by one, who, although a part-expression of God (Vishnu), is yet human enough to have fallen into the temptation of challenging the gods' superiority or prerogative, but is godly enough to desist in his attempt at the last moment, and to make his peace with the gods and remain

human. This would imply that the human cannot rely totally upon himself but that the intervention or the grace of 'God' is needed for the human to achieve integration, i.e. pure *manhood*. But as Dr. Panikkar writes:

'There must be something cutting very deep into Man and the World if perfection, destiny, joy, plenitude, divinization (small matter what name we prefer) can be attained solely on a path of suffering, by a way of the cross'.⁷

It is in this particular case, what was needed was an attitude full of acceptance of human dependence, limitation and predicament.

References

1. 'The Legend of Prithu, a Study in the Process of Individuation' in *Purana*, 2, No. 1-2, July 1960, p. 200.
2. Cf. *Mundaka Upanishad*. II.ii.3,4.
3. *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New Jersey 1979), 147.
4. For a summary of Indra's function see J. Miller, *The Vision of Cosmic Order*, (1985), 93-6. For a fuller investigation of Indra and oppositional forces, good and evil, right and wrong, etc see W. O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*, (1976), 102-24; 321-69.
5. Op. cit., 148.
6. Op. cit., 207.
7. Op. cit., 61.