

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



May 2020

Vol. 125, No. 5

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THE ROAD TO WISDOM

Swami Vivekananda on Steps to Enlightenment

The task before us is vast; and first and foremost, we must seek to control the vast mass of sunken thoughts which have become automatic with us. The evil deed is, no doubt, on the conscious plane; but the cause which produced the evil deed was far beyond in the realms of the unconscious, unseen, and therefore more potent. Practical psychology directs first of all its energies in controlling the unconscious, and we know that we can do it. Why? Because we know the cause of the unconscious is the conscious; the unconscious thoughts are the submerged millions of our old conscious thoughts, old conscious actions become petrified—we do not look at them, do not know them, have forgotten them. But mind you, if the power of evil is in the unconscious, so also is the power of good. We have many things stored in us as in a pocket. We have forgotten them, do not even think of them, and there are many of them, rotting, becoming positively dangerous; they come forth, the unconscious causes which kill humanity. True psychology would, therefore, try to bring them under the control of the conscious. The great task is to revive the whole man, as it were, in order to make him the complete master of himself. Even what we call the automatic action of the organs within our bodies, such as the liver etc., can be made to obey our commands. This is the first part of the study, the control of the unconscious. The next is to go beyond the



conscious. Just as unconscious work is beneath consciousness, so there is another work which is above consciousness. When this superconscious state is reached, man becomes free and divine; death becomes immortality, weakness becomes infinite power, and iron bondage becomes liberty. That is the goal, the infinite realm of the superconscious. So, therefore, we see now that there must be a twofold work. First, by the proper working of the Ida and the Pingala, which are the two existing ordinary currents, to control the subconscious action; and secondly, to go beyond even consciousness. The books say that he alone is the Yogi who, after long practice in self-concentration, has attained to this truth. The Sushumna now opens and a current which never before entered into this new passage will find its way into it, and gradually ascend to (what we call in figurative language) the different lotus centres, till at last it reaches the brain. Then the Yogi becomes conscious of what he really is, God Himself.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,
(Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 2.34-5.

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Circulation
Indrajit Sinha
Tapas Jana

EDITORIAL OFFICE
Prabuddha Bharata
Advaita Ashrama
PO Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt Champawat · 262 524
Uttarakhand, India
Tel: 91 · 96909 98179
prabuddhabharata@gmail.com
pb@advaitaashrama.org

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West Bengal, India
Tel: 91 · 33 · 2289 0898 / 2286 6450
mail@advaitaashrama.org

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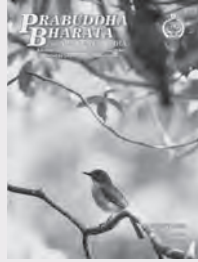
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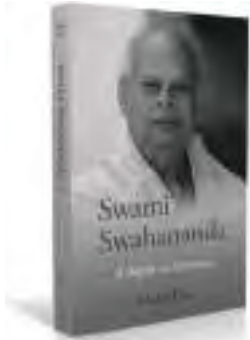
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SWAMI SWAHANANDA *A Profile in Greatness*

by Dr. Malay Das

The spiritual head of the Vedanta Society of Southern California for thirty-six years, Swami Swahananda, a direct disciple of Swami Vijnanananda, worked ceaselessly to spread Sri Ramakrishna's message. He established seventeen centers and sub-centers throughout the United States and has left the Ramakrishna movement in the West a rich legacy.

In this intimate, loving portrait, Dr. Malay Das presents Swami Swahananda as he knew him during the last seventeen years of the swami's life. We witness the guru's compassionate care for devotees and disciples, his ability to love with detachment, and his dignity and grace during his final illness.

Written in a simple, lucid and entertaining style, this spiritual biography will inspire sincere spiritual seekers from all traditions and offer them a glimpse into the wonderful life and work of this great monk and spiritual leader.



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Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

May 2020
Vol. 125, No. 5

Maitrayaniya Upanishad

मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

अथ वाक्षोत्रं चक्षुर्मनः प्राण इत्येके । अथ बुद्धिर्धृतिः स्मृतिः प्रज्ञा तदित्येके । अथ ते एतस्यैवं यथैवेह
बीजस्याङ्कुरावाथ धूमार्चिर्विष्फुलिङ्गा इवाग्नेश्चेति अत्रोदाहरन्तिः
वहेश्च यद्वत्खलु विष्फुलिङ्गाः सूर्यान्मयूखाश्च तथैव तस्य ।
प्राणादयो वै पुनरेव तस्मादभ्युच्चरन्तीह यथाक्रमेण ॥

॥ ६.३१ ॥

Atha vak-shrotram chakshur-manah prana ity-eke. Atha buddhir-dbiritih smritih prajna tad-ity-eke. Atha te etasyaivam yathaveha bijasyankuravatha dhumarchir-vishphulinga ivagnesh-cheti atrodaharanti:

Vahneshcha yadvat-khalu vishphulingah suryan-mayukhash-cha tathaiva tasya.

Pranadayo vai punareva tasmad-abhyuchcharantiba yathakramena.

(6.31)

Others say that it is speech, hearing, sight, mind, breath; others say that it is understanding, steadfastness, memory, wisdom. Now, indeed, these are the marks of the supreme Self even as the sprouts here are the mark of a seed, as smoke, light, and sparks are the marks of a fire. On this point they quote: 'As indeed the sparks from fire, and likewise as the rays from the sun, living creatures and the rest in proper order again and again proceed from the Self here on earth.'

(6.31)

THIS MONTH

TESTING TIMES ARE GOD'S ways of testing our faith. These are times when we need to remember who we truly are, reflections of the Divine, beyond the apparent. The best way to face difficult times is to remain **Rooted in the Truth.**

During the summer of 1894 Swami Vivekananda spent three weeks at the Green Acre Conference on the Piscataqua River that forms the southern border of the state of Maine. There he held outdoor classes that proved quite popular. Many of the people he met at Green Acre were from Boston and Swamiji's innovative summer seminars resulted in a score of invitations to continue his informal talks back in the city. By September 1894 he was living at the Hotel Bellevue and speaking to small groups around Boston. One afternoon, he spoke on 'the mysteries of the will and the superconsciousness'. Diane Marshall, graphic artist and art historian, Missouri, USA describes this incident in **An Afternoon with Artists on Copley Square.**

Steven F Walker, Professor of Comparative Literature, Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA writes on **The Pot is God: Sri Ramakrishna's Vijnana Vedanta and the Art of Paul Cézanne.**

Swami Pavitrananda (d. 1977), a former minister-in-charge of the Vedanta Society of New York and a former editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* talks about **Religion and Worldly Duties.** This is an edited transcript of a talk he delivered at the Vedanta Society of New York on 5 March 1961.

Swami Narasimhananda, editor, *Prabuddha Bharata*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati,

Uttarakhand, talks about different techniques of controlling the mind in the second instalment of **The Psychology of the Gita.**

Swami Satyapriyananda, a former editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, explains the philosophies of Nimbarka, Vallabha, Acharya Madhva, and Chaitanya in the fifth instalment of **Advaita Vedanta: Swami Vivekananda and the Global Context.**

The young have wonderful insights on various issues. In *Young Eyes*, such insights are brought to the readers every month. This month Suravi Chattopadhyay, who is studying in ninth class at Raghunathpur Girls' High School, Purulia asks us to **Please Stop Being Mobile on Mobile Always.**

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Papa.** Understanding this popular word is necessary to understand its meaning.

Even curses of great people can end up being boons in disguise. This is shown in the story **The Floating Stone.** This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Anmika Kathaigal.*

Brian Thomas Swimme, a professor at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco and Mary Evelyn Tucker, a senior lecturer and research scholar at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and Yale Divinity School have written the book **Journey of the Universe.** From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana.*

EDITORIAL

Rooted in the Truth

THESE ARE TESTING TIMES. Everything around us has suddenly become uncertain. The certainty of human fatality has never been more palpable. The only thing certain in our lives is that we have an expiry date as human bodies and that is being reminded to us in all its unpleasant starkness. Panic is eating into our comfortable lives. A virus, the Corona Covid-19 virus, which is an infinitesimally less complex and fine organism than the human being, has become the cause of disease, distress, and death. This virus has compelled us to question our aims and priorities in life. It is high time and an opportune moment for serious soul-searching.

A clear understanding of who we are and what we want helps us to face times of adversity like the present one. Are we mere structures of flesh, bone, blood, and filth? Or are we something beyond these perishable contraptions? Reminding ourselves who we really are is the best antidote to any episode of stress or panic. When Arjuna was afraid and deluded upon seeing his kith and kin in the enemy army of the Kauravas in the battlefield of Kurukshetra in the Mahabharata War and when he gave up his arms and desisted from fighting the war, the first thing Sri Krishna did was to remind Arjuna that he was not the body, but he was the Atman that cannot be killed by sword, burnt by fire, or dried by wind. This is how Sri Krishna's instruction starts in the Bhagavadgita. When Swami Vivekananda saw India bound in foreign slavery having forgotten her glorious past and slumbering in unquestioning submission to all alien traditions and

customs, he gave the clarion call culled from the *Katha Upanishad*: 'Arise, Awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!' Swamiji emphasised the invincible nature of the Atman, which is the true nature of all of us, and Indians, who pondered upon his words were instrumental in reviving India's glory and finding her freedom.

The certainty of human fatality has never been more palpable.

Reminding our true nature is exactly what we need to do now to fight the Corona Virus. We are not mere bodies or mere minds even. We are the Atman, a reading of the ultimate truth, the Brahman. We exist eternally, we have infinite bliss, and unlimited consciousness. The history of humankind is nothing but a microscopic dot in the eternity of Atman. Every human being has seen thousands of lifetimes, has incarnated over and again as lowly life-forms to intelligent birds and animals. The present birth is only a passing station in our journey to the destination of understanding that we are Brahman.

When Arjuna asks Sri Krishna what are the qualities of a person who has realised one's true nature, Sri Krishna's answers have one cardinal aspect—the external circumstances do not affect one who knows one's true nature of being the Atman. But what about those who are not aware of one's true nature? That which is the sign or quality of a person established in Brahman is the practice for an aspirant wanting to be established in Brahman. Knowing full well

that we are eternal in our true nature, we should be calm and composed in responding to the external circumstances. To fight the virus outside, we have to first be aware of the virus of ignorance of our true nature that we carry with us every time.


One has to diligently follow the guidelines for protecting one's body and preventing the spread of the Corona Virus. All this we have to do without panicking and also without making fun of the situation. We have to be empathetic to the suffering caused by the virus but also aware of the eventual impermanence of this universe. We have to follow the science to manage the spread of the virus, but we have to be always aware of our spiritual reality. All massive human suffering has made us think deep about the human condition. World War II gave birth to many thought systems that analyse human life and its relation to the universe.

The Corona Virus has reminded all human beings that they are united by their being susceptible to all human failings. It has reminded us that death unites us. The virus does not discriminate and thus brings home the message of the intrinsic equality of all human beings. It has reminded us of the inevitability of the impermanent. The perishable will perish. That is why it is called the perishable. Our bodies are perishable. This should not come as a surprise to us.

Swamiji said that the apparent in this universe, also called *maya*, is nothing but a statement of facts. The factual has to be accepted. There is nothing much we can do about facts. We might record them, write commentaries on them, or draw inferences from them, but facts cannot be changed. However, what is factual today becomes history tomorrow. Today's fact takes the place of yesterday's fact. Facts are like the fitting images on a movie screen. That is why they are true representations of *maya*. One

cannot deny facts but they are not real because they keep on changing. One cannot deny *maya* but it is not real because it keeps on changing. The Corona Virus is a statement of fact but it does not define who we are. We need not panic because this virus is not greater than our nature. We need to manage it and follow all instructions for its management in letter and spirit because we need bodies to function and these instructions are needed to keep the bodies alive and healthy.

It is quite important in these uncertain times for us to be rooted in the truth that we are not bodies or minds, but the eternal Brahman. This rootedness will give us tremendous courage and wisdom to be calm and collected in this time of crisis. We have to constantly remember that such times are opportunities to examine ourselves to see how much we have imbibed the teachings of the Upanishads that we are not bodies and minds. These are times when God tests our faith. It is in times of crises that we find out the extent of our faith and dependence on God. The wisdom that God or Brahman alone is real and all the names and forms of this universe are unreal will help us sail smoothly through this test of faith.

When our bodies and minds are not permanent or eternal, how can a virus that endangers the body be permanent? This is only a passing phase. If the body has to perish because of a virus, it will. If the body has to conquer the onslaughts of this virus, it will. Neither the defeat or the conquest of the body will remain. What will remain in the next lifetime is the knowledge that our true nature is beyond defeats and conquests, that it is beyond the lifecycle of a virus, however great or dangerous the virus might be. Let us all remind ourselves of our true nature of being the children of God, of being of the nature of Brahman and transcend this virus. 

An Afternoon with Artists on Copley Square

Diane Marshall

DURING THE SUMMER of 1894 Swami Vivekananda spent three weeks at the Green Acre Conference on the Piscataqua River that forms the southern border of the state of Maine. There he held outdoor classes that proved quite popular. Many of the people he met at Green Acre were from Boston and Swamiji's innovative summer seminars resulted in a score of invitations to continue his informal talks back in the city. By September he was living at the Hotel Bellevue and speaking to small groups around Boston.

He wrote to Ellen Isabelle Hale in Chicago on the thirteenth: 'Dear Mother, ... I am going to lecture in New York in autumn, but I like teaching small circles better, and there will be enough of that in Boston.'¹ He also wrote to Sara Bull on the nineteenth: 'Dear Mother Sara, ... I am at present lecturing in several places in Boston' (6.267–8). The 'several places' Swamiji mentioned remained unidentified until Asim Chaudhuri found an anecdote from one of them in the 14 September *Boston Evening Transcript*. The journalist caught Swamiji's wit so perfectly that it bears repeating:²

Swami Vivekananda told a little story yesterday, apropos of the acquirement of wisdom, at Mr. A. M. Crane's. He said that once when he was a boy in Hindoostan he went with his family and several other people for a long journey across country in bullock carts. His father kept him busy, studying his Sanskrit book between times, not to lose his habit of application.



Boston Public Library

With the party travelled an old man who was very fond of interlarding his speech with Sanskrit quotations. 'In India people quote Sanskrit when they wish to appear learned, just as they quote Latin in this country, whether they know it or not', said Vivekananda. 'And this old man would make forty mistakes in three words. But it is our custom to treat the aged with respect, therefore nobody corrected him. But as I was a naughty little boy I would say, "What wonderful learning you have!" "How beautifully you recite the Sanskrit!" and so on. At last one day he called me to him and told me he was fond of me: and he would share a secret with me: "There is no use for you to study so hard", he said, "your father should not keep you so closely to your book. It does no good while you are young. Sanskrit and all these things *come with age!*"'³

Marie Louise Burke, Swamiji's eminent historian, admired the journalistic style of the *Boston Evening Transcript*. Setting Swamiji's punchline in italics adroitly testifies to his rapport with his



S S Pierce Building, Copley Square, Boston

audience. Both he and they knew well that there were more than a few know-it-all intellectuals in Boston whose egos needed a poke. Swamiji made that point with oblique and gentle humour. The article demonstrates that Swamiji had found a niche in Boston giving parlour talks.

Now, two more of Swamiji's speaking engagements from September 1894 have come to light.⁴ One was found in the 22 September Chicago *Inter-Ocean*. Lilian Whiting (1847–1942), a newspaper editor based in Boston, wrote a regular column for the *Inter-Ocean* called 'Life in Boston.'⁵ She wrote about Swamiji several times. On this particular date she opened with Swamiji's lecture, but the remainder of her column was devoted to the theosophist, Constance Wachtmeister; the politics of Francis Adams; the legacy of James Freeman Clark; and others. The only information about Swamiji's talk is contained in one sentence: 'In the spacious and picturesque studio of the Misses Durgin, Swami Vivekananda discoursed in the afternoon on the mysteries of the will and the superconsciousness.'⁶ Still, being a good journalist, she delivered the essential who-what-when-where facts.

LIFE IN BOSTON.

The Modern Athenians Enjoy an Occult Field Day.

COUNTESS WACHTMEISTER

James Freeman Clarke and His Group of Friends.

Vivekananda in Boston—Theosophy Expounded—Mme. Wachtmeister's Personality—Notes.

BOSTON, Mass., Sept. 19.—Special Correspondence.—Yesterday might be described as a field day for Boston occultism. In the spacious and picturesque studio of the Misses Durgin Swami Vivekananda discoursed in the afternoon on the mysteries of the will and the superconsciousness.

Inter-Ocean, 22 September 1894

At least the 'where' fact of Whiting's report can be expanded a bit. The location of Swamiji's afternoon talk on the eighteenth was in Suite 59 of the S S Pierce Building at the vertex of Dartmouth Street and Huntington Avenue, across the avenue from the original 1876 Museum of Art in Copley Square.

Copley Square has changed a bit since 1894, although the Public Library, Trinity Church, and Old South Church remain distinctive landmarks. In Swamiji's day, Huntington Avenue bisected the Square lawn into two triangles. The Fairmont Hotel now stands on the site of the Museum of Art; and the Westin Hotel now stands on the site of the Pierce building. On its other side, the Pierce Building stood across from the Public Library which was under construction in 1894. The art-conscious people that



Swamiji met may have told him about the prestigious art commissions for paintings and sculpture in the new library. The Art Club Building at the corner of Dartmouth and Newbury was nearby, so proximity made the Pierce Building a good place to rent an art studio.

Swamiji's hosts, the occupants of the 'spacious and picturesque studio' described by Whiting, were both artists. Harriet Thayer Durgin (1843–1912) and her younger sister, Mary Lyle Durgin (1845–1904) were originally from Wilmington, Massachusetts. They descended from a very old, distinguished New England family, and were daughters of Reverend John Milton Durgin, a Baptist minister and a fiery abolitionist who fought in the Civil War. In 1893 both Harriet and Lyle Durgin had their careers printed in *Woman of the Century, Fourteen Hundred-Seventy Biographical Sketches*, a giant 'Who's Who' compiled by Frances Willard and Mary Livermore.

Swamiji met Miss Willard at Sara Bull's house in Cambridge.

The Durgin sisters were well-known as independent artists in the Boston area. An item in the 14 January 1894 *Boston Globe* states: 'The Misses Harriet and Lyle Durgin have a studio home in the Pierce building on Copley sq. which they close in the summer for a trip across the water or to the south shore or wherever the spirit of the times wafts them. They are active in the Unity art club, and often throw open their studio to entertain fellow and sister members, or their own personal friends.'⁷

The 1894 inaugural conference at Green Acre had been very much 'in the spirit of the times', but if Swamiji did not meet the Durgin sisters there, then he may have made their acquaintance at Plymouth, since the *Boston Globe* stated that in summer they often went to the 'south shore'—meaning the coast of Massachusetts below Cape



Mary Lyle Durgin

Ann. Equally, Swamiji may have met them in Annisquam, since that part of the North Shore was earning a reputation as an artists' colony.

Harriet and Lyle studied painting in Paris between 1879 and 1886. Harriet studied with Delphine de Cool-Fortin and François Rivoire. Lyle was a student of Leon Bonnat and Bastien Lepage and later the Académie Julien. Together they went on sketching tours of Europe and exhibited at various salons.

Back in the States, the sisters scored an article in *The Illustrated American*, asserting: 'Their picture exhibitions never fail to draw large and appreciative companies, and at their *musicales* one is quite sure to meet delightful folk, whether professors or merely lovers of the art.'⁸ Lyle illustrated *Happenings*, a book of poetry by Caroline W D Rich.⁹ She also won an important commission in 1890 to paint four New Testament evangelists for the First Congregational Church in Detroit, one mile further north on Woodward Avenue from the First Unitarian church where Swamiji spoke.¹⁰ Swamiji delivered five lectures at this church in February and March 1894 resulting in a storm of letters to the editors

of Detroit papers. Sadly, the First Unitarian church was destroyed in May 2014. Its beautiful La Farge windows are stored at the Detroit Institute of Arts.¹¹ Second-best, as a link to someone who met Swamiji, Lyle's paintings are still in situ at 33 East Forest Avenue.

While Lyle painted portraits for the most part, Harriet became known for her landscapes, her floral still lifes and her teaching ability. The Durgin sisters felt that their call to make art was sacred. In 1897 Harriet told Frances Willard: 'Fra Angelico painted on his knees. With all sincere workers the spiritual attitude must be the same.'¹² Willard concluded: 'Thus declares Harriet Thayer Durgin, in whose studio, on Copley Square, Boston, one feels like removing his shoes, knowing that ground consecrated by high thoughts, constantly sustained, and soul endeavors continually maintained, must needs be holy ground' (ibid.).

Indeed if the Pierce Building were still standing, persons might want to remove their shoes in Suite 59, permeated as it was by Swamiji's blessed presence.

The Durgin sisters and Lilian Whiting were unmarried, dedicated, career women. They were called 'bachelor women' in Boston, and they lived independently and respectably in their own 'bachelor apartments'. Swamiji met quite a few of these determined souls during his years in America. Whiting was born in Niagara Falls and raised in Illinois. She started out, as so many women of that era did, as a schoolteacher, and soon raised her ambitions to journalism. She got her on-the-job training at the *Cincinnati Commercial* and then ventured to Boston, a literary mecca, where, as Helen Maria Winslow put it, she 'had no friends at court'.¹³ When she applied to the Boston *Traveller*, she was told they did not want a woman, but she 'was equally sure that they did want a woman there, only they didn't

recognize the want. It was for her to convince them' (ibid.). She offered to work for no pay. In two weeks she made good as a paid employee. In two years she was a full editor. When she met Swamiji, she was editor-in-chief of the *Boston Budget* and had been the Boston correspondent for the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* and *New Orleans Times-Democrat* for over a decade.

The 12 April 1896 *Boston Globe* reported that Whiting had told Chicago that Copley Square was Boston's 'semi-bohemian' Latin Quarter and the centre of its artistic, intellectual, and psychological life. The Ludlow Hotel on St James Street, where Whiting lived, was part of the block of grey stone buildings behind Trinity Church in Copley Square.¹⁴

Whiting met Swamiji at the home of Lydia Avery Coonley in Chicago possibly in September 1893, and she recalled that event when she wrote to Radcliffe on 8 May 1894 about Swamiji's address:¹⁵

The picturesque Hindoo monk captured Cambridge as he captured Chicago, and my memory went back to a wonderful moonlight night, on the Lake Shore drive, when in the hospitable drawing-room of Mrs. Coonley, that most accomplished and lovely of hostesses, a little party of us sat up so late on Saturday night that the Saturday was far gone, listening to the magnetic and interesting conversation of Mr. Vive-Kananda, as Mrs. Coonley's intelligent questioning and sympathetic responsiveness stimulated her picturesque guest to tell us all so much that we longed to know of the religious beliefs and ideas of his country. He wore his picturesque gown and turban yesterday and spoke on the religion of the Brahmans, whose sole object in life, he said, is to glorify God.¹⁶

Unfortunately Whiting's report left much to be desired as to the content of Swamiji's Boston discourse 'on the mysteries of the will and the superconsciousness'. Her Chicago readers would

have liked more news about their dear friend and spiritual mentor.



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3. *Boston Evening Transcript*, 14 September 1894, 4.
4. A talk by Swami Vivekananda on 16 September 1894 to be covered in a later article.
5. Lilian's first name appeared in print spelled either with two Ls or with a single L.
6. Lilian Whiting, 'Life in Boston', *Inter-Ocean*, 22 September 1894.
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9. See Caroline W D Rich, *Happenings* (Auburn, Maine: Lakeside, 1888).
10. See Marla O Collum, Barbara E Krueger, and Dorothy Kostuch, *Detroit's Historic Places of Worship* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2012), 91.
11. John La Farge, 'Group of Stained Glass Windows formerly installed at First Unitarian Church, Detroit, Michigan, 1890', *Detroit Institute of Arts*, V2014.11.
12. Frances E Willard, Helen M Winslow, and Sallie Joy White, *Occupations for Women* (New York: The Success, 1897), 424.
13. Helen M Winslow, *Literary Boston of To-day* (Boston: L C Page, 1902), 358.
14. 'Boston Bachelor Women', *Boston Sunday Globe*, 14 January 1894, 29.
15. Swamiji had written to Mrs Coonley on 2 November 1893 that he would be glad to accept her invitation for Sunday, 5 November (Letter in Special Collections, University of Virginia, Accession No. 5672A, Box 2). The *Chicago Inter Ocean* 11 November 1893 confirmed that he had been her guest. However, Lilian Whiting specified that she had met him at Mrs Coonley's on a Saturday evening. This indicates two separate occasions.
16. Lilian Whiting, 'Life in Boston', *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, 12 May 1894, 16.

The Pot is God: Sri Ramakrishna's Vijnana Vedanta and the Art of Paul Cézanne

Steven F Walker

CONCERNING HIS EXPERIENCE of *nirvikalpa* samadhi according to Advaita Vedanta, Sri Ramakrishna insisted that such an experience was beyond thought and speech, and that, consequently, much as he wanted to, he could say little about the experience to his disciples. Brahman alone is real, the world is false, and about the ultimate experience of Brahman nothing can be said. Sri Ramakrishna, of course, taught and authenticated through his own experiences many other spiritual teachings drawn from the treasure house of Hindu and non-Hindu traditions. But he had also another teaching: that Brahman is identical with Shakti, and that all is Consciousness.

Ayon Maharaj, now Swami Medhananda, has highlighted this teaching in his recent book *Infinite Paths to Infinite Reality: Sri Ramakrishna and Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion*.¹ Unlike other philosophical teachings derived from various Hindu traditions, Sri Ramakrishna termed *this* teaching as being 'of this place',² that is, his *own* particular teaching. Furthermore, Sri Ramakrishna could not only define this teaching *philosophically* but could also describe the identity of Brahman and Shakti in *visual* terms.

This essay proposes that it was this special and personal teaching of Sri Ramakrishna's, named *Vijnana Vedanta* by Ayon Maharaj, to which the French artist Paul Cézanne gave visual expression in some of his greatest paintings. But, although Sri Ramakrishna (1836–86) and Cézanne (1839–1906) were near contemporaries, there is

no evidence of any direct influence of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings on Cézanne's paintings; in fact, neither one seems to have known anything of the other. So how this startling cross-cultural confluence of Hindu metaphysical vision and French art could have occurred is more than a bit of a mystery. In each case, however, both the teaching and the art rejected the contemporary materialist view of 'dead' matter, and emphasised the living divinity of the material world. This is the possible affinity between the mystic and the artist that deserves our careful attention.

Of course, mysticism and art are not equivalent. But, even though Paul Cézanne may not have been a saint, he could certainly be called a *sadhaka*—one who struggled vigorously all his life to represent an artistic version, in paintings of great originality, of what he did not realise was Sri Ramakrishna's new and highly spiritual idea of the identity of Brahman and Shakti. The idea possessed and obsessed him without his knowing where it came from. All of the entities of the created universe were, without exception, of the same being as Brahman. For Cézanne, who frequently painted still lifes, focusing on pots and other ordinary kitchen objects as well as scenes from nature, this divine dimension was made visible on the canvas by a special vibrancy and pulsating quality of colours. One could thus say that, for both artist and mystic, even 'the water-pot is God.'³

The very different truth of traditional Advaita Vedanta's assertion that, beyond the possibility of all visualisation and representation, '*Brahma*

satyam jagat mithya; Brahman alone is true and the world is false' had been tested and experienced by Sri Ramakrishna under the guidance of his guru Tota Puri. Yet, as Swami Bhuteshananda has pointed out: 'Advaitic teachings are rare in the *Gospel*. The Master has on a few occasions discussed Advaita, but he has done it only theoretically. He does not advise people to practise it.'⁴ But Sri Ramakrishna frequently asserted the opposite position, that Brahman and Shakti are *identical*, and, as Swami Bhuteshananda has written: 'The Master stressed the positive aspect of accepting both principles. The Master's statement appears to have started a new trend in the Vedānta philosophy. Strictly speaking it cannot be claimed to be new, but one can say that the Master certainly laid greater emphasis on Śakti, whose relative existence was merely acknowledged in the Vedānta philosophy' (I.117–8).

This core teaching of the identity of Brahman and Shakti that Ayon Maharaj has called Sri Ramakrishna's 'Vijnana Yoga' may thus be called a major constituent of a new variety of Vedantic non-dualism, taught to Sri Ramakrishna, not by a human guru, but rather by the Divine Mother herself. In a visionary experience that Sri Ramakrishna described later as follows, it is clear how precise visual detail and metaphysical insight reinforce one another:

The Divine Mother revealed to me in the Kali temple that it was She who had become everything. She showed me that everything was full of Consciousness. The Image was Consciousness, the altar was Consciousness, the water-vessels were Consciousness, the door-sill was Consciousness, the marble floor was Consciousness—all was Consciousness. I found everything inside the room soaked, as it were, in Bliss—the Bliss of Satchidananda. I saw a wicked man in front of the Kali temple; but in him also I saw the power of the Divine Mother *vibrating*. That was why I fed a cat with the food

that was to be offered to the Divine Mother. I clearly perceived that the Divine Mother Herself had become everything—even the cat.⁵



One day, Narendranath, who was an enthusiastic member of the Brahma Samaj and had espoused its dualist teachings, was in the company of Hazra and was ridiculing Sri Ramakrishna's particular teaching concerning the identity of Brahman and Shakti. Swami Saradananda described the scene as follows:

One day the Master told Narendra various things regarding the oneness of jiva and Brahman according to non-dualistic philosophy. Although he listened attentively, Narendra did not understand. When the Master finished speaking, Narendra went to see Hazra. While smoking and discussing the topic again, Narendra said, 'Can it ever be possible that the water pot is God, that the cup is God, that everything we see and all of us are God?' Hazra joined Narendra in ridiculing the idea, and they both burst into laughter. The Master was in an ecstatic mood, and when he heard Narendra laughing he came out of his room, holding his cloth under his arm like a boy. 'What are you talking about?' he asked them. Smiling, he touched Narendra and went into Samadhi.

Narendra later related this to us: 'That day my mind underwent a complete revolution at the marvellous touch of the Master. I was aghast to realize that there really was nothing whatsoever in the entire universe but God. I remained silent, wondering how long this state of mind would continue. It didn't pass away all day. I got back home, and I felt just the same there: Everything I saw was God. I sat down to eat, and I saw that everything—the plate, the food, my mother who was serving it, and I myself—everything was God and nothing but God.'⁶



Paul Cézanne

Thus it was that Sri Ramakrishna's original visionary experience was passed on to Narendranath in such a dramatic fashion, perhaps in order to check and counter the influence of the dualist dimensions of the teachings of the Brahmo Samaj on the young man who was to become Sri Ramakrishna's chief disciple. Later, Narendranath as Swami

Vivekananda would lecture on the many spiritual perspectives he learned from Sri Ramakrishna. We find him, for example, in 1896 giving a lecture in London entitled 'God in Everything,' in which he reprises much of what he learned from the dramatic lesson that Sri Ramakrishna gave him years before concerning 'the deification of the world.'⁷

But what does this have to do with the paintings of Paul Cézanne? Cézanne knew nothing of Sri Ramakrishna or even of Swamiji, so direct influence or inspiration was not possible. Whatever influence there might have been must have been through unconscious spiritual channels. Some art critics have sensed an intriguing if hard-to-define depth of meaning in Cézanne's paintings, especially in the case of his apparently simple still lifes. For instance, Roger Fry concludes his classic essay *Cézanne: A Study of His Development* (1927) this way:

In this essay I have tried to press as far as I could the analysis of some typical works of Cézanne. But it must always be kept in mind that such analysis halts before the ultimate concrete reality of the work of art, and perhaps in proportion to the greatness of the work it must leave untouched a greater part of its objective. For Cézanne, this inadequacy is particularly sensible and in the last resort we cannot in the least explain why the smallest product of his hand arouses the impression of being a revelation of the highest importance, or what exactly it is that gives it its grave authority.⁸

As regards the technical means that produced this sensation of an unusual depth of meaning, Fry attempts to characterise the sheer magical quality of the pigment of Cézanne's later oil painting as follows: 'The substance of the pigment ... becomes of an extreme richness and density. The paste under his hands grows to the quality of a sort of lacquer, saturated with colour and of an almost vitreous hardness' (43). He later adds: 'The colours here "sing" with a ravishing intensity and purity' (52). What Fry praises here—and what has produced in others, including myself, an *aesthetic shock* when first discovered—is an extraordinary effect which is not readily communicable even in very good reproductions, and can be easily experienced only by direct viewing of the original paintings.

Among other critics, Richard Verdi has attempted to put into words the visual shock of Cézanne's magical use of pigment: the effect, he writes, is 'a reminder of the ceaseless animation of the visual world. Life abounds, in an image which combines the everlasting with the ever-changing, as though seeking to encompass the totality of experience.'⁹ He has written of 'pulsing colour' (ibid.) and 'pulsing life' (121). The adjective 'pulsing' can remind one of how Sri Ramakrishna described the 'evil man' in his vision, in whom he saw 'the power of the Divine Mother *vibrating*'. And in the same vision he described how even ordinary things like the water-vessels, the marble floor, the cat, and so on were 'full of Consciousness'.

And Swamiji later described how, after Sri Ramakrishna's touch, he saw that 'everything ... was God', even the plate and the food. But how could such ordinary objects be represented as divine? For anyone who has fallen under the spell of the still lifes of Paul Cézanne, with their plates, pots, and fruit and other ordinary

objects, the answer might not be far to seek. The year 1896 was the year of his lecture in London in which Swamiji preached 'the deification of the world'. It was also the year during which Cézanne was continuing in France his lifelong project of representing a glimpse of the divine in nature through his paintings. Both Swamiji and Cézanne were insisting, in different media—lectures and painting—that it is not ridiculous, as Swamiji first thought, to envisage 'that the water-pot is God, that the cup is God, that everything we see and all of us are God'.

Paul Cézanne lived a rather austere life in relative solitude, and dedicated almost all his days to his painting. His method of painting was unusually slow and highly intense: an hour could go by before he placed on the canvas, after careful and lengthy visual concentration, one highly pondered brushstroke; months and even years would pass before he considered a painting finished. He attained practically no professional or financial success until he was about sixty, but laboured on with relative indifference to worldly success. In his disinterested dedication to his work, he was almost a karma-yogi.

I hope in this essay to have demonstrated the possibility of the existence of this marvellous cross-cultural phenomenon: that a great French painter, a contemporary of Sri Ramakrishna, was able to illustrate, after his own fashion, the Master's new teaching of the identity of Brahman and Shakti. But to explain the possible origin of this paradoxical coincidence is a different matter. One might look at the problem in two different ways. Sri Ramakrishna's advent brought into the nineteenth century world—and not just to India—a powerful, new idea: that the so called material world is actually identical with the Divine. It is possible that Cézanne was somehow unconsciously caught and captured by the power of

this new idea, and made it the artistic task of his life to give it visual expression. This would have been facilitated by the role it could have played especially as an artistic antidote to the dominant cultural context of French materialism.

As Swamiji wrote to Swami Turiyananda on 1 September 1900: 'The people of France are mere intellectualists. They run after worldly things and firmly believe God and souls to be mere superstitions; they are extremely loath to talk on such subjects. This is truly a materialistic country.'¹⁰ For a nation of materialists which was at that time the leader in the European art world, Cézanne's paintings could have constituted, in the words of Roger Fry, 'a revelation of the highest importance'.



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Religion and Worldly Duties

Swami Pavitrananda

REAL RELIGION MEANS the attempt or the yearning to develop one's inner or spiritual life. In that respect we find that saints and sages have instructed us to do things which go quite contrary to the advice given by the wise men of the world. The wise men—not in the Biblical sense—but worldly wise men. What saints instruct us to do is altogether the opposite of what a worldly-wise man will advise us to do if we want worldly success.

For instance, a man of God will say: 'Return love for hatred.' Not only do all saints say this, but their lives are literal illustrations of this precept. For their adherence to this ideal some of them have suffered and died. Still this precept has been and is repeated by one saint after another. But the man of the world will say: 'You cannot do that. If you are to get on in the world, you have to give blow for blow, if not tit for tat. You should have an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. By returning love for hatred you cannot get on. You will be trampled under foot. You will be crushed in the world.' A man of God says that you must be humble if you want to develop your spiritual life. The man of the world will say: 'You must assert yourself if you want to have personal success, prestige, or power. It is certain that the world will not come to you, will not listen to you.' Not only that, to the worldly, a little publicity is not unwelcome in order to project a favourable 'image' and expound a few virtues. The ordinary man does not believe that it is true that one can be humble and have success in the world.

We see in election campaigns all over the

world, how often politicians speak in terms of 'I, I, I.' 'I have done this, I will do that!' But a man of God will feel pained if by mistake he speaks in terms of 'I.' He knows himself literally to be zero in the eyes of God and in his inner feelings. He is a perfect instrument in the hands of God. He will say: 'God works through me.' A real man of God will find it impossible to speak in terms of 'I.' This is just the opposite of what is necessary, say the worldly-wise, to succeed in this world.

A man of God will say: 'Be uncompromising in your practice of truth.' But the man of the world will say: 'You cannot be uncompromising with truth. If you are always truthful, you cannot get on in the world. You cannot succeed. You have to compromise with truth.' But the scriptures say: 'Know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'¹ Follow truth wherever it leads you. The Upanishads say that the highest Truth or Brahman, your Inner Reality can be realised by the practice of truth. Sri Ramakrishna said that in this age the practice of truth is the greatest help to realise one's inner Self or God. But a man of the world will find it impossible to believe.

And so it goes in the world, compromise after compromise, until nothing is left of truth but the outer shell. All distortion of truth is done in the name of truth. Bishop James A Pike of California recently wrote a few articles which created quite a sensation in ecclesiastical circles. In one of these articles he said that cheating, compromise, slapwork, white-collar theft and graft, were considered some years back to be wrong and that now they have become an

accepted practice.² He was bold enough to speak bluntly. I would agree that these practices are not beneath the average run of persons who want worldly success. And when someone succeeds in life by following these methods, which we in our calmer moments consider to be horrible, he becomes the idol of society, an ideal for others. In this state of affairs, if a person wants to live a spiritual life seriously, he is in difficulty. He will say: 'How can I live differently from others? How can I go counter to the influence of the environment?' He finds himself in a dilemma, in a conflict with his moral and ethical principles, and he suffers from that. Psychologists then come forward to tell him that this conflict is a kind of disease. 'Compromise. Adjust yourself.' They will say. I do not agree with that advice. It is not for a man of principle to adjust himself to society. It is for society to adjust itself to him! If a man is powerful, it does. A real man of God does not compromise with society. Society obeys him.

By following the worldly ways, does a man get peace and real happiness? No. He may get some praise and even a testimonial dinner, but not true peace. Religious leaders are not immune from the influence of the present-day world. Statistics have just been released based on a study of mental illness among the clergy in a certain area. It is found that mental disorder in the pulpit is sixty times more prevalent than in the pews. I can only say that I wish the facts were otherwise. But no one is safe from difficulties if he follows a wrong path. Truth is not a respecter of priests or parishioners, ministers or laity. Whoever will not follow the right, will suffer. The question then is, why did this appalling situation arise, why do such an alarming percentage of ministers suffer from mental disorders? One thing the survey points out specifically is that from the outset they are faced with an enormous task with which they cannot cope. There is too much work, too



Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948)

many problems to solve and they are swept off their feet. There are varied problems of their parishioners which they must share and these are sources of worry and anxiety. Then comes ambition for success, and with that, jealousy. They forget that they are not gods; they are simply instruments in the hands of God.

These are common difficulties in the life of the world. But on the other side, we find that if a person follows truth, or spiritual laws, he might not have immediate success, but he will have great success in the long run. There are many illustrations of that but let us consider one from recent history.

Mahatma Gandhi rose against the British Government in India. It was a crime. At that time, it was believed when a powerful nation exploited a weaker nation, it was not very wrong.



Queen Elizabeth II Visits India during January-March, 1961

It was accepted practice. On the contrary, if the oppressed nation rose against exploitation it was considered to be wrong. It was a crime to rise against the powers that be—against the exploiters. That was the law. So he was put into jail several times. But Gandhi followed spiritual law. He would never compromise truth, even in politics. He would say that he hated the sin, not the sinner. He had no quarrel with the British people as human beings, but he did have strong objection to their Satanic government. He said that such a government could not continue. He said that if it be a crime to object, then he had to be punished to the fullest extent of British law! Gandhi was ready to be and he was jailed for six years for challenging that law. I was told by

one who was an eyewitness that the judge who served on the case was a ‘hard-boiled’ man but during the trial even he was very much moved and made some remarks in favour of the Mahatma. He said he convicted Mahatma Gandhi because the law required it. But he hoped and wished that there might be a way out of it.³ For this he was criticised by the English press who wanted to know what business he had to make any remarks in addition to the legal judgement. Gandhi was put into jail several times. In fact, the jail provided to him a place of rest and the study of the Bhagavadgita. He said that his life outside of prison was so terribly busy, and the prison afforded him a great opportunity to study the Gita. He would repeat the whole of the Gita every day. In 1947 he got the independence of India on the strength of spiritual force. And fourteen years later, the Queen of England, on a visit to India, visited the cremation ground of Mahatma Gandhi and with reverence placed there a wreath of five-hundred flowers. When I read of this I thought, ‘What an irony of fate!’

During the struggle for Indian independence the British Prime Minister once said, in scurrilous and arrogant language about Gandhi that he would liquidate the British Empire for the sake of that naked fakir.⁴ But even in his lifetime he witnessed the separation of India from the British Empire, and the above mentioned visit of its Queen. That is the effect of applied spiritual power. It may seem strange but today there is no bitter feeling between India and England. Some English people say: ‘We are happier in India nowadays than we were under the English rule.’ At that time there was tension, but now there is no tension at all. And more capital is flowing to India today than ever before.

So you see in the long run spiritual principles work; they do succeed even in the world. Only we become impatient. We want to get results immediately. But if we have patience—at least, history indicates—we will succeed. But the man of the world will say: ‘I have so many duties and responsibilities. How can I manage my affairs without compromising truth?’ In answer I would ask: ‘What is your duty?’ A poet has said that duty is the ‘Stern Daughter of the Voice of God.’⁵ Real duty is to serve truth, not compromise truth! Real duty is to awaken our conscience, the voice of God, and to *keep it alive* and not to deaden it. To do that we will have always to make a choice between the easy way—a compromise, and the hard way of obeying the still small voice within us. This means struggle, and this is our spiritual exercise. This struggle makes for spiritual growth. We have to pass through that struggle. We must always make the right choice between the two.

Why do some people talk so glibly in terms of duties and responsibilities, to justify their compromising truth? Because they think that human power is the only power in the world, and with that power they can do whatever they like; can exercise whatever impulse or momentary desire they care to, with impunity. The understanding that this is not quite so too often comes as a result of much frustration and experience and therefore late in life. I believe everyone thinks more or less that we are not the only power in the world, that there is some power which we cannot define, cannot know. We find out to our cost too late in life that there *is* another power. And if we believe in that power—even not fully knowing what it is—that power which goes by the name of God, then we shall think that duty is a privilege, not a source of pride. We will not think that we are doing the work. We will be humble enough to know that God does not need

our help. It is simply our privilege to work—privilege in the sense we are given an opportunity to serve others. If we know that it is a privilege, our pride will be humbled and we shall not compromise with truth. Even when we work for our relations—where personal emotion is involved—such duty also is a privilege because by it we develop unselfishness. Work done for the benefit of our immediate family constitutes the first step along this road. It is easy to do our duty, to work for those we love. Thereby we are enabled to begin to overcome self. Usually what men call duty is simply a smokescreen for personal attachment, selfish, lurking ambition, or hidden desires. But I would say, even in work which is done to a certain extent dictated by personal interest, there is a spark of spirituality because of this beginning—this preliminary training in unselfishness. Later we should widen the horizon, the sphere of duty. For that we have to think about and judge what we are doing. We have to awaken our consciences.

For instance, it is quite natural for parents to love their children and to do the best they can for them. But if they think a little, if their conscience awakens, they will feel, ‘Why should we not do the same for another child as I do for my own?’ These feelings come to those who think, whose conscience is awakened a little. I remember reading of a beautiful incident in the life of Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore started a school for children. One day his son who was a child in that school was playing with other boys when his wife came to the school on a visit. The boy ran to his mother, closely followed by another child who was a friend. Tagore’s wife took the friend instead of her son into her lap and carried the child to her home. That child, when he grew, wrote with fondness about this experience which made an unforgettable impression in his heart.



Rabindranath Tagore with Students at Shantiniketan

In this connection let us consider a hypothetical situation. Suppose a judge has to pronounce a sentence of capital punishment on a criminal. He will make the pronouncement perhaps with the thought, 'I am discharging my duty to the best of my understanding'. But let us suppose that the criminal is his own son. What will he do? How will he discharge his duty?


So we should try to widen the sphere of our duties to others for in that way we grow spiritually. We cannot rush along in our life and act wisely or correctly. We require time for introspection—periods of reflection and quiet thinking, to examine ourselves and our activities objectively—to see how foolish we sometimes are in our daily duties. Even a very busy man involved in many activities can find some time for this practice. In the language of religion

duty means service or dedicated work, and quiet thinking means prayer or meditation. But we cannot attain either all of a sudden. But this is the trinity which we should follow whether we choose to call it conscience, duty and quiet thinking, or discrimination, dedication, and prayer or meditation.

Every moment we have to discriminate if we want to develop our spiritual life—between the right and the wrong. We have to try to practice, to follow the right. In the beginning we shall fail many times, so we must remember that this is the nature of life, the nature of spiritual struggle. We have to awaken our consciences until they become more and more sensitive. And for that we require some amount of prayer and meditation. Both are necessary. If we try to live life always following the right, we will find we often

compromise and make mistakes. So then we are forced to pray to God, to a higher power for help. We find that prayer or meditation is absolutely necessary. In the present-day world many will say: 'We have no time for prayer and meditation.' Yet we have time for everything else. The truth of the matter is not that we do not have the time, but rather we think that spiritual success will come all of a sudden from the sky. An Indian writer, who in youth was agnostic but who late in life developed spiritual faith, said he used to think that to realise God would not take as much effort as learning how to play cards! Many persons think that way. As soon as they embark on the pursuit of the religious ideal—which is a hard and protracted task—they begin to ask dejectedly, 'When will it come?'—as if spiritual growth can be purchased easily like things in a department store.

If we are to develop our inner life, we have to struggle and work hard, painstakingly and patiently. Nothing will be achieved by saying we have no time to pray or meditate. It is absolutely essential for our spiritual health and growth. There is no other way. If we do not do that, what is the alternative? For the answer to that we need only to look at the sorry state of the world today. All who have found real peace, have followed this path of struggle for spiritual growth. Don't forget that. They paid the full price and their efforts were crowned with success. The full price means that you will not all at once or easily achieve success. One has to be prepared to go slowly and steadily. Nothing worthwhile can be obtained without giving a price for it. Cheap things are dear in the long run. But if one persists steadily and patiently in spiritual practice, one's conscience awakens until one finds that the truth is one's God and the whole universe is one's home. One's dedicated spirit—spirit of unselfishness—has grown so much, one

embraces the whole world with love. Then truth is no longer a task. Truth is as spontaneous as the breath of one's life. That is called the highest state of realisation. 

Notes and References

1. John 8:32.
2. See Bishop A Pike, 'Christianity is in Retreat', *Look*, 20 December 1960.
3. The author is referring to the famous trial of Mahatma Gandhi on 18 March 1922 before C N Broomfield, District and Sessions Judge, Ahmedabad. Gandhi was tried on charges of sedition for writing the articles 'Tampering with Loyalty', *Young India*, 29 September 1921, 309–10; 'A Puzzle and Its Solution', *Young India*, 15 December 1921, 418; and 'Shaking the Manes', *Young India*, 23 February 1922, 119. For a fuller account of the trial see 'The Great Trial', Mahatma Gandhi, *The Law and the Lawyers*, comp. and ed. S B Kher (Ahmedabad: Navjivan, 1962) <https://www.mkgandhi.org/law_lawyers/25great_trial.htm> accessed 23 March 2020.
4. These statements were separately made by the then Prime Minister of Britain, Sir Winston Churchill. The first statement did not have the exact phrase 'half-naked fakir', though both words were in the same sentence, which led to the popular construction of the phrase: 'It is ... alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious middle temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the Vice-regal palace, while he is still organizing and conducting a defiant campaign of civil disobedience, to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor.' (*Winston S Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897-1963*, 8 vols, ed. R R James (New York: Chelsea House, 1974), 5.4985). The statement about the liquidation of the British Empire was made on 10 November 1942 at the Lord Mayor's Luncheon in the Mansion House: 'I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.' (Winston Churchill, 'The End of the Beginning' (London: The Churchill Society) <<http://www.churchill-society-london.org.uk/EndoBegn.html>> accessed 23 March 2020).
5. William Wordsworth, *Ode to Duty*.

The Psychology of the Gita

Swami Narasimhananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

WE GENERALLY HAVE peculiar notions about austerities and their role in spiritual life. Swami Vivekananda asked: 'Should Rishis come flying through the air; because you have blown three times through the nose? Is it a joke?'¹ However, many people think that if they blow their nose, gods would indeed appear before them.

Having these strange notions about spiritual life, we do not use even the ordinary things that are available to us. If we possess things, we should also use them. Else, we should refrain from possessing things. Possessing things and yet not using them shows a limited or wrong idea of spiritual life. For instance, some people have qualms about using the Internet or other forms of technology. Why do not they use technology?

Technology is meant to be used. One should be careful, however, to not get used by them. One must have a strict discipline of the mind. One should tell the mind: 'O mind, this is what you should do.' Sri Krishna was the most glorious driver ever. Imagine being driven by none less than God! Arjuna has God as his charioteer. A glorious charioteer. Yet, Arjuna's mind gets clouded.

There is a popular story about Sri Krishna and Arjuna. It is a convention of chariot-riding that the charioteer would first get down and give a hand to the person riding the chariot to get down. Similarly, it is a convention that the charioteer would first get up the chariot and then give a hand to the person riding the chariot to alight the chariot.

However, at the end of the last day of the Mahabharata War, Sri Krishna asked Arjuna to first get down the chariot. This disturbed Arjuna though he knew very well that Sri Krishna, the Lord, was his charioteer. Arjuna felt that he was not being given the proper respect. That is how delusion sets in. We know that it is not right, yet we want something that is not right.

Here, Arjuna felt that he should be given the respect that he deserved. Particularly, at the end of the war, he had the proud behaviour of a victorious person. Arjuna forgot that he had severe underperformance issues at the beginning of the war and that it was Sri Krishna, his charioteer, who had persuaded him to fight the war.

Forgetting all that, Arjuna became angry. He felt that Sri Krishna was insulting him and said to Sri Krishna: 'O Krishna, get down!' Sri Krishna smiled. He had a wonderful smile. Sri Krishna told Arjuna: 'You get down.' This conversation, back and forth, went on for some time. However, though Arjuna was great, he was not the Lord, and he did not have the magical and powerful weapon, the disc named Sudarshana Chakra. Arjuna was afraid of Sri Krishna and was helpless in front of Sri Krishna, and he got down the chariot.

After Arjuna, Sri Krishna also got down the chariot, and immediately, the chariot burst into smithereens and became powder. Arjuna was shocked and asked Sri Krishna the reason for this blast. Sri Krishna then told him that all the weapons and missiles that were hitting the

chariot throughout the war failed to have any effect due to Sri Krishna's power and since the war had ended, Sri Krishna had removed his protection, and that is why he asked Arjuna to get down first and did not want to insult Arjuna.

This is how our mind works. We know the facts and try to do everything properly. However, while doing things, we get this idea that we have somehow become somebody in life, we have attained some position, and the ego of this false understanding leads us to think great of ourselves.

The Bhagavadgita gives us the example of the leaf of a lotus plant. This is an oft-quoted example from the Indian scriptures. If you take a lotus leaf and put some water on it, the water drop does not get absorbed or stuck to the leaf but rolls down the leaf. The water drop is unattached to the lotus leaf. That is how we should be in our lives. That is what we should aspire to become in our lives, completely unattached.

The State of an Uncontrolled Mind

The Gita says: 'For, the mind which follows in the wake of the wandering senses, carries away one's wisdom like the wind diverting a boat on the waters.'²

It is not easy to be completely unattached. Now, one might say, 'I do not care. What would happen if I do not follow all these instructions on controlling the mind? It is easy to give a lecture and somehow I can listen to a lecture, but that does not mean that I have to follow in toto all that has been said.' Fine, one might take that kind of position. One might not follow these instructions on controlling the mind.

But, what would you do then? You would do exactly what your senses tell you to do. Wherever your senses take you, you would go and whatever your senses would show, you would see. A person who blindly follows one's senses loses one's intellect and wisdom. What would be the condition

of such a person? It would be exactly like the condition of the famous ship *Titanic* that was shipwrecked and sunk into the ocean. People thought that the *Titanic* was the ultimate ship and that it was a ship that will never sink but it sank all the same.

Ways to Control the Mind

Similarly, a person who blindly follows one's senses, without having any checking mechanism, any restraint, would sink and be destroyed. Without a patrolling of the mind one would have to face the consequences of the free run of the mind. Then, what should one do? The Gita offers the solution: 'Therefore, O mighty-armed, one whose senses are withdrawn from their objects in all their varieties becomes established in steady intelligence' (2.68).

According to Sri Krishna, if a person shows one's mastery over the senses that person gets steady wisdom. There are many events in the Olympics. One of them is an event involving a horse, where the rider and the horse have to be in perfect synchronisation. It is called the equestrian event. It is great to watch because it shows the perfect mastery of the relationship between the human being and an animal. This event is almost on a par with gymnastics. There is music and dance and there is perfect coordination of movements.

We too need such synchronisation of the intellect, the mind, and the senses. We need to note that the mind in Indian philosophy is not the same as the brain. The intellect or *buddhi* in Indian philosophy is not the same as the brain. We need to practise and remember whatever we have been taught since our childhood. Whatever we need to know for having a good behaviour and leading an ideal life has been taught to us in the primary school and one needs to just follow them. But, whether you will follow this advice



or not is the real task ahead of you, that is the real challenge.

What we should do is very clear before us. All of us know what is right, but we are perplexed while trying to do that.

How one follows the right path, the challenges in following the right path, and how one copes with those challenges are the real crises. One has to have mastery over one's senses, much like the riders in the equestrian events of Olympics, who actually ask their horses to lift the toe a little or to walk, to trot diagonally, to dance with the music, and so on. Similarly, we should have that kind of control over our mind.

Should we not enjoy music? Of course, we should enjoy music. Should we not watch movies? Of course, we should watch movies. But, we should also know when to stop. We should have a policing mechanism in our mind. The Gita says: 'One, who after rejecting all desires, moves about free from hankering, without the idea of "me" and "mine", and devoid of pride, attains peace' (2.71).

Here, the Gita is talking about giving up desires. Some people think that to desire is to sin. Swamiji said that there is no sin, there is only progress 'from lower truth to higher truth.'³ So, there is no error or sin, there is only lower truth and higher truth. When people waver from their ideal, they think they have committed a great error, a great sin. It is just that they have wavered from the path to their ideal. It is not a sin; it is just a learning experience. However, a person who has wavered from the ideal has great difficulty believing that such a person has not committed any sin. It does not ring true to their ears.

They say, 'Really? I have committed a great mistake, a great sin, and Swamiji says that it is not an error or a sin.' Yes, it is not an error or a sin. No one has to suffer in hell or burning hells for that. It is just an opportunity to progress from the lower truth to the higher truth.

This journey from the lower truth to the higher truth is facilitated by the Gita, which is a manual that talks about the present situation of a person. That is why the Gita says that one has to have detachment in the here and the now. You will have to give up attachment, you will have to come away from sorrow or suffering, here in this lifetime, in this place; not anywhere else, not in any heaven or hell.

The Practice of Meditation

People have funny ideas about meditation. Generally, people think that when they meditate, they will see some light or there will appear a halo behind their head, and that such things would mean that they have become enlightened. Then they would not need to listen to any talks on the Gita or read anything on the Gita. One could also write another book on the Gita. Some years ago, someone published a book titled *Yet Another Book on the Gita*. There are so many books on the Gita! It is difficult to say what happens on enlightenment. Almost every person who attained such spiritual enlightenment talks about seeing an ocean of light. Sri Ramakrishna also says that.

The descriptions of the experience of enlightenment are difficult to understand because as Sri Ramakrishna said, such experience is inexpressible or indescribable, because it is beyond the realm of speech. However, as the Gita says, an enlightened person attains tranquillity.

There happened a funny incident about seeing light in meditation. A person used to regularly visit the temple of a centre of Ramakrishna

Math. This person used to attend the evening prayer and would meditate after that. After doing so for many months, this person felt that there was some enlightenment and said to the monk in charge of the temple that this person could see a light every day. The monk enquired all the details of the seeing of the light and found that it was always at a particular fixed time that the person saw the light. Immediately, the monk told him that it was the exact time when he switched on the light in front of the person! All the while that person was seeing an actual light, an electric lamp, and mistook it for enlightenment!

Therefore, one should be very careful in matters related to meditation or spiritual experiences. These things could be misleading. There is another incident that happened in one of the centres of the Ramakrishna Math. Once a young man approached a brahmachari of the Ramakrishna Math and said that he had a spiritual experience, a realisation of God. He explained that his kundalini had risen up, up, and up. That is what people generally think would happen. They think that the moment they start meditating their kundalini would rise up and suddenly something great would happen, like a magical spell of abracadabra. This young man also thought so and was explaining his experience. When the brahmachari asked him to give more details of what had happened, the young man said that he had this experience while he was ironing his clothes. Immediately, the brahmachari said that probably it was an electric shock that he had experienced, and the young man said that his psychiatrist also thought the same! The young man added that the psychiatrist also thought that he was experiencing the initial phase of the terrible psychological ailment called schizophrenia.

This is only a glimpse of what could go wrong if one is not careful about how one goes about managing the mind. Spirituality is changing

the way you live, changing the way you think; it is changing one's very perspective towards everything. It is not some kind of mystery-mongering or something miraculous.



V S Ramachandran (b. 1951)

There is an interesting book written by a leading neuroscientist, V S Ramachandran. The book is titled *Phantoms in the Brain*. This book is fascinating as it has been written by a person who lives outside India and approaches the mind from a neuroscientific perspective. He followed the research of Dr Wilder Penfield, who pioneered brain mapping and first published his findings in 1951.

Wilder Penfield inserted electrodes in the interpretive cortex of the brain of the subjects of his experiment and was surprised to find that a miniscule amount of electricity introduced to this part of the brain doubled the stream of consciousness. When a person talks, that person's consciousness is working in two streams, one stream engages in the talking and the other thinks something. Penfield found that when a fraction of a volt of electricity was passed through the interpretive cortex, the subject could simultaneously think of two things and talk of two things, that is, the stream of consciousness doubled, which he calls the 'doubling of awareness'.⁴ This sounds almost impossible but it actually happened and it has been reproduced over and again in many neurological experiments. Penfield published his findings in the much acclaimed book *The Mystery of the Mind*.

V S Ramachandran describes the various experiments done by Penfield and many who came



Dr Wilder Penfield (1891–1976)

after him, including Ramachandran himself, in his book *Phantoms in the Brain* and concludes that if these experiments do not prove that the idea of the human body being owned by a particular person is an illusion, then nothing will. That is a great statement. Ramachandran says that the idea that a person owns one's body is an illusion from the neuroscientist's point of view: 'If these examples don't convince you that your "ownership" of your body is an illusion, then nothing will.'⁵

Ramachandran explains how some patients who underwent surgery of the brain reported experiencing 'intense pleasure, "like a thousand orgasms rolled into one"' (175). Though many of his patients compared this experience to the experience of God, these experiences are not life-transforming or enlightening experiences. For most people in the world, the acme of joy is from physical pleasure and that is the only point of comparison. Sri Ramakrishna also quoted Gauri Pandit and said: 'Gauri used to say that when a

man attains ecstatic love of God all the pores of the skin, even the roots of the hair, become like so many sexual organs, and in every pore the aspirant enjoys the happiness of communion with the Atman.'⁶

Sage Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutra* talks of experiences that could be brought about by the consumption of drugs much like psychedelics. He says: 'The siddhis or supernatural powers come with birth or they are achieved by means of herbs or drugs, mantras, austerities, or perfect concentration.'⁷

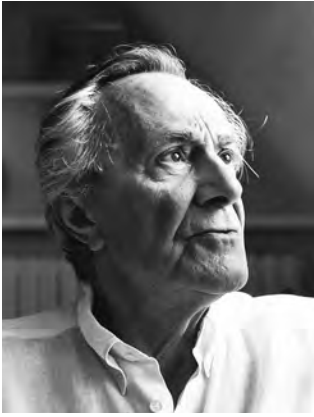
Then, one might think that these experiences are comparable to the experience of ecstasy or samadhi mentioned in the Upanishads. However, this experience that a brain stimulation brings about does not change one's character, does not bring a qualitative change in one's life. There is no behavioural change. This means that just having a blissful experience or just seeing a light does not mean that one has become a master of one's senses.

Mastering the Senses

The road to becoming the master of your senses is not an easy one. However, if one takes up that road, one eventually come to a state of mind where no matter what happens, one can prevent one's senses from destroying one's life. This has been portrayed by the Gita in this verse: 'Many who were devoid of attachment, fear and anger, who were absorbed in me, who had taken refuge in me, and were purified by the austerity of knowledge, have attained my state.'⁸

Here, Sri Krishna talks about these wonderful people who take his shelter. He uses a phrase, 'jnana-tapas', the austerity of knowledge, the tapasya of knowledge.

There was a French philosopher named Jean-François Lyotard, who was one of the pioneer postmodern thinkers. In 1979 he wrote



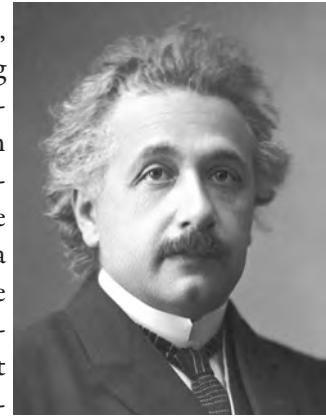
Jean-François Lyotard

the important and popular book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. In that book, Lyotard says that knowledge would be eventually commoditised, knowledge would be made a commodity. He writes:

‘Knowledge in the form of an informational commodity indispensable to productive power is already, and will continue to be, a major—perhaps *the* major—stake in the worldwide competition for power.’⁹

Lyotard is effectively saying that there would be a price tag on knowledge and that is what you would have to pay to become knowledgeable. Similarly, Einstein says: ‘I don’t burden my memory with such facts that I can easily find in any textbook.’¹⁰ These thoughts give us an idea of how knowledge has become a commodity and how it has become specific to the selection by the user of knowledge. All you need for knowledge today is the mantra *googlay namah*, salutations to Google! ‘Google’ has become a verb in the Oxford English dictionary which means to search the Internet. Once you know this mantra, you have access to an infinite amount of knowledge. You just need to search the Internet and you get the knowledge that you need.

However, the intellectual austerity, the jnana tapas that Sri Krishna talks about in the above mentioned verse of the Gita, is not knowledge in the sense of data or information. That is just information, not wisdom. Gita talks here about wisdom. There is a process by which one acquires knowledge and there is a process by which one becomes a master of a particular



Albert Einstein

knowledge. Here, Gita is not talking about such empirical knowledge. In empirical knowledge or knowledge in the form of data or information, one acquires some quantitative input but there is no qualitative enhancement of life or there is no holistic comprehension.

It is a qualitative, transforming, holistic knowledge that we need to be in true control of ourselves. Swamiji says that when a spiritual teacher or a guru teaches, it is not just some words that travel from the guru to the disciple but spiritual energy or understanding is transferred from the guru to the disciple: ‘Some power, real and tangible, goes out from the teacher and begins to grow in the mind of the taught.’¹¹

The austerity of knowledge talked about by the Gita is nothing but the training of the mind. That is what all of us need to do; train the mind. How is it possible when our mind is attached to the sense objects? Seeing the objects of desire and consequent attachment to those objects is the root of all evil. So, the austerity of knowledge or jnana tapas is like having someone in your brain saying, ‘No, I will not have this sense experience’.

The word *poota* means having become pure or purified. Here, it means being purified by the austerity of knowledge. That does not happen overnight. One has to constantly deny oneself unnecessary sense experiences. In Sanskrit, there is a beautiful word, *aparigraha*, which means possessing only that which is necessary. Our possessions must be minimal. Our utilisation of resources should be optimum.


Some people have a fleet of cars in their house. One can ride only one car at any point of time. Some people have so many wrist watches, so many mobile phones. Even the concept of a mobile phone with two SIM cards cannot be understood completely because at any point in time, one can attend only one phone call, so what is the point of having two SIM cards? Some might justify that it is for various service providers with varying network capabilities.

If one practises *aparigraha*, one would tell one's mind: 'No, I will not possess more than what I need. This is an allurements, this is a temptation, but I will not give in to this temptation.' In practice, all this struggle with the mind takes only a few moments. It only takes a few moments to give in to temptations. It also takes only a few moments to successfully withstand them. It also takes only a few moments for one to lose the hold on oneself.

After these few moments of struggle, once you have successfully overcome the temptations of the mind, you wonder how simple it was. The Ramakrishna Mission runs many educational institutions across the length and breadth of India and many such institutions have a hostel attached to them. There is an interesting incident about a student who was studying in one the hostels run by the Ramakrishna Mission. This boy had just joined the hostel and was understandably homesick. He wanted to return to his home and was not feeling well.

The monk in charge of the hostel knew how difficult the initial months of a student in hostel could become. This monk asked whether the student had eaten his lunch and asked him to have his lunch, have an afternoon nap, and then think of going to his home. The monk then instructed the kitchen to sumptuously feed and completely stuff that boy. Apart from other delicacies, the boy was fed the characteristic dessert

of all the centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, the Indian porridge, also called *kheer* or *payash*.

Finally, the boy, with a fully stuffed stomach, fell asleep. In the evening, when he woke up from his siesta and was having his tea, the monk asked him when he was leaving for his home. The boy asked: 'What are you talking about? Where would I be going?' The homesickness of that boy lasted only for some time and then it went away. This is so with all our temptations. It is only in the heat of the moment that one feels that one needs to do something or that one wants something, and that one cannot live otherwise. But, once the mind is turned somewhere else, it forgets about that want. This is how one can channelise the mind. 

(To be continued)

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Advaita Vedanta: Swami Vivekananda and the Global Context

Swami Satyapriyananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

IT WOULD NOT BE out of place to discuss the life and teachings of Acharya Nimbarka: Very little is known of Nimbārka's life, but he is held in reverence as one of the greatest saints of India, and the monastery he is said to have founded is still a celebrated place of pilgrimage. Nimbārka's philosophy remains unique in that it never attacked other schools of philosophy. Infinite is God and infinite are the ways to apprehend and comprehend him—and such was the opinion of Nimbārka also as he approached the fundamental problems of God, the universe, and the human soul.

According to Nimbārka's philosophy of Bhedābheda, or dualism in nondualism, Brahman has two aspects, the absolute and the relative, or, in other words, the impersonal and the personal. [1] In his personal aspect, Brahman possesses attributes, and from him as person has issued the universe of name and form. [2] But Brahman has not exhausted himself in the creation of the universe, for he [it] is also transcendental and impersonal, without attributes, and as such he [it] is greater than the universe.

The universe is, however, one with, as well as different from, Brahman, even as the wave is one with but different from the ocean, or a ray of the sun is one with but different from the sun. Such also is the relationship between individual souls and Brahman; they are at once one with him and different from him. It is not merely a distinction between the part and the whole that we have in mind, for they are both a part of Brahman, and one with him.



*Nimbarkacharya's Holy Icon at the
Ukhra Nimbarka Peeth Mahanta Asthal, West Bengal*

Thus there exists almost an identity between the philosophy of Nimbārka and that of Bhāskara, but with the important difference that according to Bhāskara the individual soul is a part of Brahman only so long as it remains in ignorance—that in knowledge and emancipation it becomes one with him; whereas Nimbārka declares that the individual soul is a part of Brahman, and is also one with him, both in the state of ignorance and in that of knowledge and emancipation.

In the state of ignorance—according to Nimbārka—the individual soul experiences the empirical world of phenomena, while in the state of liberation it attains the superconscious, transcendental vision of the noumenal, the absolute Brahman, at the same time that it realizes



Udupi Sri Krishna Matha Founded by Acharya Madhva

itself as living both in union with Brahman and separate from him.

Nimbārka lays stress upon both knowledge and devotion as means of attaining freedom. Knowledge reveals the true nature of Brahman, and devotion culminates in all-absorbing love for him [the personal aspect] and in complete surrender of the finite will to the infinite will, although in both the love and the surrender the individual self remains. For the followers of Nimbārka, Kṛṣṇa [Krishna] and his divine consort Rādhā embody both supreme will and supreme love.¹

Acharya Madhva and his Brahma or Sad Vaishnavism

Madhwa, another celebrated commentator upon the Brahma Sūtras, founded the Vaiṣṇava sect known as Brāhma or Sad Vaiṣṇavism. ... Madhwa wrote commentaries upon the Upaniṣads, in addition to those on the Brahma Sūtras and the Gītā ... and also many treatises in which he expounded his own views and attacked others, particularly Śaṅkara's theory of māyā. ...

The proposition on which Madhwa bases his realism is that both the knower and the object of knowledge must be real, for otherwise no knowledge would be possible. Knowledge necessarily implies them. All knowledge is relative. Absolute knowledge, or the transcendental consciousness, in which all distinction between knowledge, knower, and known vanishes—as absolute knowledge is defined in Yoga and by Śaṅkara—cannot be admitted. 'No knowledge can be known', says Madhwa, 'without the knower and the known'.

Pramāṇas, the means and instruments of knowledge, are perception, scriptural texts, and inference. Whatever is known through these is directly related to the object of knowledge, which has a reality of its own.

On this theory of knowledge, Madhwa erects his theory of the objective reality of the world. The world is real because it is perceived as such. The objects presented to our perception may be either subject or not subject to change, and the fact that an object is fleeting and changeable does not mean that it is not

real. [Acharya Shankara holds that the world is unreal because it is an object of perception and therefore not the subject.]

Our experience is the experience of difference. We see things and things, people and people, and we perceive them to be different from one another. Different from all living beings and non-living things is God, who exists in order that his law may be fulfilled in the universe, and in order that finite souls, less limited than non-living things in power and intelligence, may find release from the sufferings and bondage of the world in loving him and surrendering themselves to him.

Madhwa's whole philosophy is thus based upon the idea of difference or distinction. And distinctions are known to be five in number: (1) God is distinct from individual souls; (2) God is distinct from non-living matter; (3) one individual soul is distinct from every other; (4) individual souls are distinct from matter; and (5) in matter, when it is divided, the parts are distinct from one another.

The universe is divided into two categories: Swatantra, independent being, and aswatantra, dependent beings. God is the only independent being. He is the one omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent being. How can God, who is distinct from individual souls and non-living things, be omnipresent is explained by saying that he is not limited by time and space and that the dependent beings 'do not form a resisting medium to His presence'.

(1) Matter is distinct from God and human souls and in itself is only a dependent being. (2) God is the ruler of the universe, but the universe is real and eternally existent.

Each soul is distinct from every other, and all souls are distinct from God, though they have dependent existence in him. By nature, souls are intelligent. Each soul when born into this world and invested with body and senses is in a state of bondage, but by continued struggle through many lives release from this bondage may be obtained.

Moreover, although souls are distinct from one another, they fall into classes. Of these there are three, differing in their essential nature as well as in their destiny. One class, who are moral and devoted to God alone, will attain salvation and enjoy the eternal felicity of heaven—an abode called *Vaikuṅṭha*. The second class will never attain salvation but will remain subject to rebirth, experiencing in life after life both happiness and misery. The third class, who revile Viṣṇu and his devotees, will never attain salvation but will be subject to damnation. This belief of Madhwa, that only a few attain salvation while the rest cannot, and some even suffer damnation, is contrary to the teachings of all other Indian religious schools (319–21).

Vallabha and His Shuddhadvaita Philosophy

Vallabha, the founder of the Vaiṣṇava sect known as Rudra, lived during the first half of the sixteenth century. He was celebrated for his saintly character and for his great love of God and of the divine incarnation Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Like most of the other Vedānta philosophers, he wrote commentaries upon the Brahma Sūtras in which he expounded his philosophy [Shuddhadvaita]. He also commented upon the Bhāgavatam, one of the Purāṇas ... held in high esteem. ...

Brahman in his aspect of love is the centre of Vallabha's teaching. Brahman is personal; that is, he is endowed with divine attributes. He also possesses a spiritual body, which is blissful. A lover of God can realize mystic union with him in his spiritual body.

Brahman has projected this universe out of himself. No other motive can be attributed to him for this act of creation than a purely sportive one; that is, it was done as play (*līlā*)—just for fun. Though Brahman has transformed himself into the universe, he remains unchanged. This act of unchanging change is called *avikṛta pariṇāma*, unchanged transformation. It may be added that though God has



Sri Mahaprabhuji Prakaty Baithakji Mandir, Champaranya, the Birth Place of Acharya Vallabha

become everything, he remains unaffected by the sinfulness of individual souls. Though an individual soul is atomic, it is yet a part of Brahman, and as such is pure and divine. The soul resides in the heart, though its intelligence is manifested in every part of the being of man, as the fragrance of sandal paste is diffused in the atmosphere though the paste itself occupies but a small portion of space.

The soul is unborn and undying, for it is the body that undergoes birth and death and change. Souls, which differ in their nature because God desires variety for the sake of play, may be divided into three classes: [1] those who are steeped in worldliness, [2] those who follow spiritual injunctions and gradually grow spiritual in their nature, and [3] those who love God for love's sake.

According to Vallabha, the universe is real if it is seen truly, as a creation of God and as one with him. The universe in which suffering and bondage are experienced is not one with God; it is an appearance caused by ignorance of individual souls and therefore is

unreal. This ignorance, the cause of the unreal universe, consists of egoism and attachment. ... That there is the ignorance of egoism and attachment is also due to the will of God; he wills it, this too, because he loves variety and play. In all of this, no room is left for human responsibility. God is made responsible, as in a jest, for evil and suffering.

Vallabha admits the efficacy of the paths of knowledge, selfless work, and devotion, if one would attain spiritual growth. He also admits the state of absorption in and union with Brahman. But to him to love for love's sake is the supreme path, and living in mystic union with the Beloved Lord is the supreme goal of life. After we have freed ourselves from all egoism, and from all attachment to the unreal world, and have found the real world in God, and after there arises a hunger for God's love like that of the shepherdesses [of Vrindaban] for Kṛṣṇa, then it is that we reach the supreme goal. To love Kṛṣṇa as the Beloved, as this love is depicted in the Bhāgavatam, is regarded by Vallabha as the highest achievement in life (322-3).

Sri Chaitanya and His Philosophy of Love

In Śrī Caitanya is to be found the culmination and fulfilment of the philosophy and the religion of love. Through him Vaiṣṇavism, which is the philosophical expression of the ideal of love for God, ushered in a new era in the higher life of Bengal. His ideas have found exquisite expression in a richly emotional collection of hymns which have been a peculiar contribution of Bengal to Indian culture. Every Bengali has in his blood a liberal admixture of Śrī Chaitanya's religion of love.

Even more than his philosophy, it is Śrī Caitanya's pure and gentle character—his loving-kindness and his ecstatic love of God—that has ruled, and still rules, the hearts of the people of Bengal. He knew no distinction of caste or creed in his immense love of God and man; all men, whether they were sinners or saints, were to him but creatures of God, and his heart overflowed with sympathy for the lowly, the suffering, and the destitute. So his very name excites genuine spiritual emotions in the hearts of those who know about him. His followers see in him Kṛṣṇa reborn in the flesh (324). ...

Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa, who fully appreciated the spiritual greatness of Śrī Caitanya, remarked: 'Chaitanyadeva used to experience three moods. In the inmost mood he would be absorbed in samādhi, unconscious of the outer world. In the semiconscious mood he would dance in ecstasy but could not talk. In the conscious mood he would sing the glories of God.'²

It is interesting to note in this connection that Śrī Caitanya, though he did not accept Śaṅkara's doctrine of māyā, nowhere denounced Śaṅkara, as did most of the philosophers of the doctrine of love who preceded him. On the contrary, he very plainly stated, as is recorded by his disciples, that Śaṅkara wrote his commentary and expounded his philosophy by direct command of God.

Śrī Caitanya did not comment on the Brahma Sūtras as did his predecessors. Once



Sixty Feet Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Statue at Mayapur, Navadvip

he remarked that the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is the best commentary on the Brahma Sūtras. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇ, one of his followers, wrote a commentary called Govinda Bhāṣya, in which he expounded the Caitanya philosophy. ...

During most of the last twelve years of his life, Caitanya lived in samādhi and in the state midway between samādhi and normal consciousness. In these states he was like mad in his love of Kṛṣṇa, sometimes enjoying the sweetness of union with him, and suffering the pangs of separation from him. The pangs, too, were sweet. [How can pangs be sweet? A mother feels the pain of pregnancy but is happy when the child is born; this is the sweetness that persists through the painful moments. Similarly, a lover of God feels the pain of separation and in the subsequent union feels inexpressible pleasure; this pleasure exists during the so-called pain of physical separation albeit there is mental union and associated pleasure always.] ...

Śrī Caitanya gave little care or attention to a theoretical consideration of the problems of God, the human soul, and the universe. Above all things he was a God-intoxicated man. His spiritual experiences transcended the realm of time, space, and causation; his mind plunged into the domain where God is not an abstraction, but a reality in which dwell all joy, all sweetness, all love—a reality situated deep in the loving hearts of his devotees. ...


For him God was Kṛṣṇa, the God of Love—enchantingly beautiful, eternally youthful; and man was the eternal playmate, the eternal companion. For him, however, this Kṛṣṇa was not the Kṛṣṇa of history, who uttered the mighty spiritual discourses of the Gītā [on the battlefield of Kurukshetra], the philosopher, the harmonizer and the avatār [incarnation]. For him he was the Kṛṣṇa of Brindaban, the great lover and the embodiment of love, divested of all the powers of the Godhead, the companion of shepherds and shepherdesses, playing upon his flute and drawing souls unto him by his compelling love; he was the Soul of souls eternally dwelling in Brindaban—not a land one can point to on a map but the heart of man, the Brindaban that is beyond time and space.

Love divine, which is Kṛṣṇa, is not to be acquired by man, for it is already existent in the soul, though covered by ignorance, by attachment to the world of the senses. When the clouds of ignorance have been swept away, this love, forever existing, becomes manifest. Then does man realize himself. ...

To make manifest this infinite love—according to Śrī Caitanya—one must practise sādhan-bhakti, or disciplinary devotion, by chanting the name of God, hearing and singing his praises, meditating upon the divine play and deeds of Kṛṣṇa, and engaging in the rites and ceremonies of worship. He laid special stress on japa—repeating the name of God to the count of beads. ...

Śrī Chaitanya also emphasized the practice of ethical virtues, particularly humility and

forbearance. By the conduct recommended, one causes the divine love to be made manifest in the heart. Of this manifestation there are five stages, corresponding to various expressions of love on the plane of human life.

[1] First there is śānta, the peaceful stage, in which, as he finds joy in the thought of God, the aspirant attains poise and tranquillity. He feels God near him, but still no definite relationship between the two has been established. [2] Then comes dāsya, the servant stage, in which the aspirant feels that God is the master, or that he is the father, the protector. [3] The third is sakhya, the stage of friendship. God is now realised as friend and playmate. He is felt to be nearer as the sense of awe vanishes and the God of power and grandeur is forgotten. He is now only the God of love—a cherished friend. [4] The fourth is vātsalya, the child stage. Now, Kṛṣṇa, God of love, is a child, and the devotee must take care of him. We think of this stage as higher than the preceding stages because in our human relationships a father or mother has a deeper affection for a child than a child has for its parents. [5] The fifth and last stage is madhura, the sweetest of relationships, the relationship between the lover and the beloved. The strongest of human ties, that between man and wife, finds its ultimate realisation in the new tie between man and God, in which God is the beloved, and in which all the elements of love—admiration, service, comradeship, communion—are present. The highest expression of this type of love is to be found in the shepherdesses of Brindaban, above all in Rādhā. When this kind of love possesses the heart, mystic union is attained.³ 

(To be continued)

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YOUNG EYES

Please Stop Being Mobile on Mobile Always

Suravi Chattopadhyay

Class Nine, Raghunathpur Girls' High School, Purulia

TO ENTERTAIN OURSELVES in leisure, we indulge in the likes of watching TV, gossips, playing indoor games, and so on. But I feel frustrated to see my parents getting hooked to their mobile in leisure. In holidays, from dawn to dusk, I have to carry out a flurry of tasks pertaining to my school, tuition, drawing, and music classes. They overhaul my mind and I feel like unburdening myself through talking to my parents. But alas! Being busy in their world of social media, they turn a deaf ear to my pleas.

This is not the correct way to treat a child or adolescent. When treated this way she or he feels isolated, dejected, and monotonous. One day my cousin told me that she wanted to be

a smartphone as her parents love their mobiles more than her. If the parents don't spend time with their children, the latter become stubborn and disobedient. Hence parents must understand that their amicable association is what the children want most, not expensive toys or occasional outings. Even during the interactions, if a child gets reprimanded by parents, she or he won't feel bad. We all know that quality relationship is built in the process of learning and unlearning many things gradually.

I hear from my grandparents that they always enjoyed spending time with their children. Apart from taking their wards for picnics, family get-togethers, and social functions, they used

to spend hours telling them stories from grand epics. They were patient to their children's whims. I feel this to be an effective means of imparting holistic growth to children. Treated thus with love, care, patience, and good samskaras, in course of time an adolescent definitely grows up to be a responsible citizen of the country.



IMAGE: HUFFPOST



We know about the air pollutants like carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, methane, chlorofluorocarbon or CFC, and water pollutants like sewage, plastic, petroleum, decayed bodies of organisms, and so on. These pollutants destroy the purity of air and potable water. Likewise the overuse of mobile phones destroys the utility of mobile phones. It acts like the greenhouse effect for the mind. The light emitting from a mobile damages the eyes resulting in harmful chemical reaction, adversely affecting photoreceptor cells of the eyes.

The sight becomes really pitiable as the elders' eyes get riveted to their mobile phones in railway platforms, bus stops, and other public places. Little do they understand how this habit gradually impairs their thinking ability. The nature of messages received in the mobile phone determine their mental states. Good messages bring smiles to the lips, while bad messages bring tears. Thus we become slaves to our instincts and external objects.

It is my earnest plea to all the parents, specially

the working ones, to spend adequate quality time with their children. Otherwise, unnecessary use of mobile phones may bring more communication gap between the two. Apart from mobile mania, there are innumerable efficacious means to enrich ourselves. We can spend our leisure in painting, singing, writing poems and stories, reading good books, playing with children, exchange of lofty ideas, and so on. Besides walking in the green meadows, practising meditation, yogasanas and the like, give us physical fitness and spiritual growth. Even listening to the rustling of leaves in a forest or chirping of birds gives us positive energy. Hence, we are utterly wrong if we feel that mobile is our only guide. Swami Vivekananda said: 'The best guide in life is strength.'¹ This strength won't come unless we are self-controlled.



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BALABODHA

Ancient Wisdom Made Easy

Papa

THE WORD *papa* is a commonly used Sanskrit word. It is used by people, who do not even know Sanskrit, as it is present in almost every Indian language. The widely used meaning of the word *papa* is sin. However, it is necessary to see the other meanings and the origins of this Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word *papa* is derived from the root word *pa* by adding the suffix *pa*. The root word *pa* means to drink, quaff, sip, suck, swallow, imbibe, draw in, appropriate, enjoy, feast upon, drink up, exhaust, absorb, or drink intoxicating liquors. The word *papa* means bad, vicious, wicked, evil, wretched, vile, low, foreboding evil, inauspicious, a wicked person, wretch, villain, name of the profligate in a drama, name of a hell, a beast of prey, a witch, misfortune, ill-luck, trouble, mischief, harm, sin, vice, crime, guilt, unrighteousness, unpleasant, undesirable, killing, the cause of hell, destructive, malignant, abandoned, bad state, accursed, or a son of Brahmadhana.

Anything that is done to incur *papa* is also *papa*. The signs of *papa* are that it leads away from dharma to unrighteousness. It is the cause of misery and the undesirable. It leads to adversity and the destruction of a person. *Papa* is committed due to the absence of the control of the sense organs. It also results due to the non-performance of the regular duties stipulated in the Vedas. The stationary living things like the trees

can commit *papa* only through the actions of their bodies. Birds and animals can commit *papa* by their speech and the human beings can commit *papa* even by their minds. Any action that has a possibility of leading to one's committing *papa* is also *papa*. In this sense, drinking intoxicating liquors becomes *papa* because that could lead one to committing some bad or evil actions. In Sanatana Dharma, the killing of a brahmana, killing of a cow, stealing, ungratefulness, and the company of the evil are considered to be *papa*.

Papa is said to be ten divided into three categories depending upon whether it is committed by the body, speech, or the mind. Killing, stealing, and having a relationship with someone else's wife are three *papas* committed by the body. Speaking unreal things, roughness in speech, calumny, and untruth are four *papas* committed by speech. Hiding one's true intentions from others, having ill-feeling towards others, and thinking that all actions are purposeless are three *papas* committed by the mind.

The state can also commit a *papa* and the ill-effects of that *papa* will be experienced by the king or the members of the government that was instrumental in committing the *papa*. The *papa* committed by a husband affects the wife and vice versa. The *papa* committed by a spiritual guru affects the disciple and vice versa. The *papa* committed by the person for whom a priest is performing some rite affects the priest and vice versa. However, in the Kaliyuga, generally it is only the person committing the *papa*, who gets its results. ☪

TRADITIONAL TALES

The Floating Stone

SUTIKSHNA TOOK HIS early morning bath and put his undergarment on a tree for drying and wore the dried undergarment. He then sat in front of the Salagrama stone altar and started his worship. And then he noticed it and he thought: 'What is this! Why is this altar empty? Both the Salagrama stones are missing. What a mystery!' When people living in an ashrama hear about stealing, their mind shrivels as the limbs of a tortoise. Hence, Sutikshna hesitated to enquire about his missing Salagrama stones with the knowers of Brahman living around him in the ashrama.

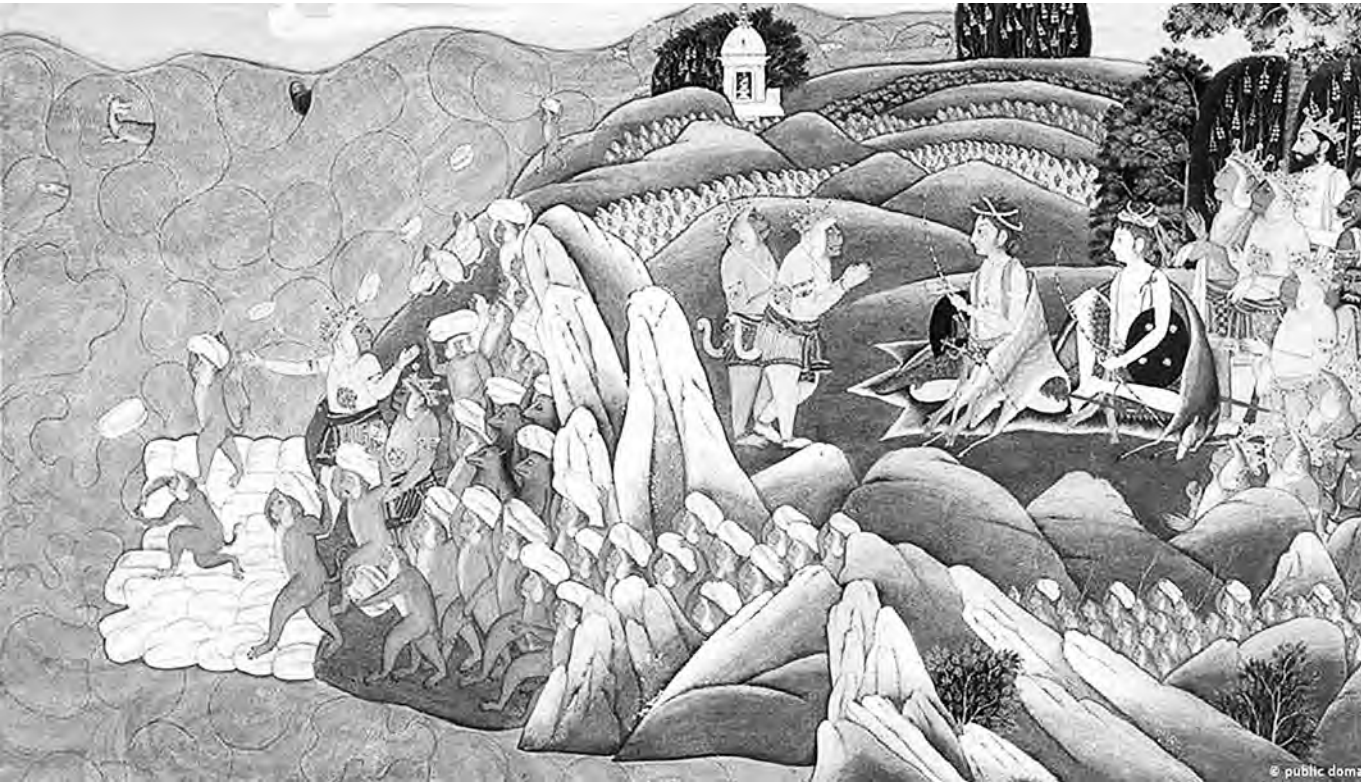
Sutikshna could not do anything since the Salagrama stones went missing. He could not



Salagrama Shila in Gandaki River, Nepal

pluck fruits, get edible roots, or gather flowers. Days passed thus. The summer arrived. The lake





A Painting Depicting the Construction of Bridge Over Sea by Sri Ramachandra

went dry. Water had to be drawn from the well-like pit in the middle of the lake. One morning when Sutikshna tied a rope to a vessel and drew water from the pit, he felt something heavy. He gradually took up the vessel of water and examined it. And lo! There were his missing Salagrama stones. His happiness knew no bounds when he saw them. He took the Salagrama stones to the ashrama and offered worship as usual.

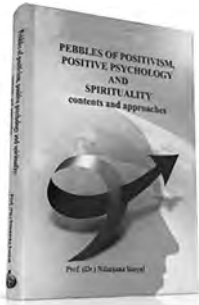
One day, the sound of vessels moving about came from the worship room. Sutikshna rushed to the room and saw that his Salagrama stones were being carried by two monkeys, each one taking a Salagrama stone on its head. Sutikshna ran after them. The monkeys threw the Salagrama stones into the lake and fled. Later, Sutikshna somehow managed to extract the Salagrama stones from the lake. This happened

several times and eventually Sutikshna got enraged. At the same time, he felt it was pointless to curse the monkeys. After some thought, he cursed those two monkeys thus: 'From now on, whatever you throw on water would float.' Since then, the monkeys regularly threw his Salagrama stones into the lake and Sutikshna brought them back to the ashrama.

Those monkeys that were thus cursed by Sage Sutikshna are well known to us. They are the monkeys Nala and Nila occurring in the Ramayana. Would this fact be unknown to the knower of Brahman, Hanuman? When Hanuman gave the idea of constructing a bridge across the ocean, Sri Ramachandra ordered that only Nala and Nila should arrange the stones for the bridge. That is why even big boulders did not sink and they floated on the ocean. Thus, Sage Sutikshna's curse had a good ending.

REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



**Pebbles of Positivism,
Positive Psychology and
Spirituality: Contents and
Approaches**

Prof. (Dr) Nilanjana Sanyal

Ramakrishna Mission Institute of
Culture, Golpark, Kolkata 700029.
Website: <https://www.sriramakrishna.org>. 2017. 320 pp. ₹200. HB. ISBN
9789381325926.

Let us inspect the terms of the title as presented in the book itself:

‘Positivism is a philosophy of science based on the view that in the social as well as natural sciences, data derived from sensory experience, and logical and mathematical treatments of such data, are together the exclusive source of all authentic knowledge’ (11).

‘Positive Psychology seeks to understand individuals by examining those characteristics that make them well adjusted, high functioning, valuable members of our societies’ (18).

‘Spirituality is the overall term used for a fluid understanding of the relation of the individual to the world, to self and to God. Spirituality is understood as that mental element which is central to a sense of meaning and purpose in an individual’s life and pertains to the sacred or transcendent’ (21).

The first part of the book deals with the theoretical blending of positive psychology and spirituality through certain values like authenticity, forgiveness, silence, gratitude, wisdom, bliss, and so on. Positivism, in its humanistic aspect, is applied here as the philosophical frame in which positive psychology and spirituality can be made practical mainly at the social level. The second part of the book proposes some methodology for therapy, based on the ample scope of methods that can be achieved by combining positive

psychology therapies and traditional spiritual practices. Transpersonal psychology, ‘in the wrappings of Positivism’ (181), as the author expresses it, is also considered to add useful elements in the process of developing a more spiritual approach to psychology in general. The final chapter is a sort of appendix in which the author analyses the last one hundred years of Western psychology theories and practices in the Indian cultural context, and their natural interaction with the inherent spiritual traditions of the land.

Though the language is often technical and wordy, several interesting conclusions, proper of an author with good experience in this field of knowledge, make worthy the experience of studying this volume. For example, while dealing with positive values in the first part, the author places ‘authenticity’ at the very beginning, as an essential quality to achieve higher levels of fulfilment, of happiness. The absence of authenticity, she states, creates identity crisis, which does not allow us ‘to look for true meaning in life’ (1). We remember here a sentence of Swami Vivekananda, ‘Let us be true. Nine tenths of our life’s energy is spent in trying to make people think us that which we are not. That energy would be more rightly spent in becoming that which we would like to be.’ (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 9.281.)

In several parts of the book the author brings back the topic of authenticity, and we can sense her trying to be authentic while writing this book. Hers is a noble attempt to approach to the public, a more refined type of psychology that not only brings to the conscious what is in the subconscious, but a spiritual psychology that elevates the conscious to the realm of the superconscious.

Swami Madhurananda
Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati



**Backpacking with the Saints:
Wilderness Hiking as Spiritual
Practice**

Belden C Lane

Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, UK. Website: <https://global.oup.com>. 2014. 288 pp. \$24.95. HB. ISBN 9780199927814.

The Hebrew Scriptures say that we are sojourners in this cooling world. Geoffrey Chaucer shows how pilgrimages are shams, and Joseph Conrad in his *Heart of Darkness* configures travel as one of despair and nihilism. Belden C Lane, contrary to Chaucer's pilgrimage, contrary to Conrad's journeys, in a very American, Thoreau-manner shows how travelling with a few books through the American wilderness can be a spiritually rejuvenating exercise in journeying into one's own interior castle:

Deep in the Medicine Bow Wilderness of Wyoming, my image as professor, spiritual seeker, and self-styled 'wilderness backpacker' counted for nothing. I could have been just another stray mule deer, with a lion studying its movements from behind dark firs. It was an unsettling feeling. ... The Hindus call it an experience of *darshan*, of seeing and being seen by the holy. [The Jesuit priest] Tony de Mello speaks of prayer as a matter of 'beholding the one beholding you . . . and smiling'. He draws on one of [St.] Teresa of Avila's favorite exercises in meditation, imagining Jesus as gazing at her. '*Mira que te mira*', she says. 'Notice him looking at you . . . with the deepest pleasure'. Poet William Cowper put it this way: 'I seem forsaken and alone, / I hear the lion roar; / And every door is shut but one, / And that is Mercy's door' (55-6).

Lane's openness to change effects in him an annihilation of the ego, the sense of 'I', that most of us can only read of; for the Truth has indeed set him free. The truth that he is nothing compared to the authors he reads while he travels. The range of his reading does him proud: from the Trappist Thomas Merton to the Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin, from Rainer Maria Rilke to Ed Abbey of the *The Monkey Wrench Gang* fame.

While Merton and de Chardin and even the Zen Master, Thich Nath Hahn are quite renowned; and all of these spiritual masters are analyzed by Lane, it is of interest to note what Lane has to say of the Franciscan, Father Richard Rohr. Rohr, it must be noted, is one of the greatest Roman Catholic theologians and philosophers of this century. Rohr not only draws from his Franciscan roots but also from the concepts of agape and the Omega Point of the Jesuit, de Chardin. Here is one instance of Lane on Rohr:

'We grow spiritually much more by doing it wrong than by doing it right', says Richard Rohr. The only way to make progress is by making mistakes ... over and over again. The seemingly perfect man isn't perfect at all. He's just better than others at hiding his shadow (137).

Lane's choice of reading material shows his empathy with those who are spiritual through being broken: the sick need Jesus more than those who are whole. Merton and de Chardin both were ravaged by secret affairs. Yet both saw the light of God more clearly than many celibates ever can. Graham Green in his *The Power and the Glory*, showed that both power and glory belonged to the alcoholic, anonymous, and lecherous Roman Catholic priest and not to the teetotaler Marxist self-righteous lieutenant. Lane's worldview is a very different worldview from Indic views and therefore the book should be reviewed keeping in mind the concept of the Christian God.

The Christian God, or Jesus, who is the Messiah hangs powerless in shame from his wooden rood though being omnipotent, omniscient, and eternally existent with Yahweh. The God of the Christians is weak unlike God as understood within the Indic religions. Brahman, as understood within Vedanta, is all-powerful and not weak. Reading Lane's book, one is made aware of the powerlessness of the human subject in the face of the infinitely broken beauty of nature, for:

Things in nature are optimal teachers to help us discern how to be ourselves. They point us back to the reed-bed of a common connectedness. We've been separated from the source of our identity and have to fall in love with it all over again. We need to give ourselves to the well-spring of our passion, says Rumi—delighting in

its beauty and accepting the discipline that love requires. We recognize what we *are* most deeply only as we relinquish what we *aren't* (162).

An interesting fact that even Sister Benedicta Ward does not mention in her works on the Desert Fathers and Mothers is mentioned in this book. Lane's acute observations derived from the lives of the Desert eremites needs to be quoted at some length before being commented upon:

The desert knows desire, after all; it's a landscape forever thirsty. The monks were remarkably attentive to the wounds (to all the baggage of desire) they brought with them into the wilds. These included the forced marriages or affairs from which they had fled, military service they were escaping, family problems that had been overwhelming. Entering the monastic life, they soon realized they weren't leaving the world behind them. They carried the old desires with them, like shadows in the heart—things they now had to face resolutely.

They spoke with keen insight, therefore, of the 'passions' that derived from their inner wounds. These desires continued to bind them in obsessive behaviors as they nursed old injuries from the past. Abba Poemen observed that such wounds (with their unfulfilled longings) have a way of expressing themselves in four stages of unconscious activity. They first appear in the *heart*, as festering wounds that crop up in our dreams and fantasies. They subsequently show up in the *face*, in passing glances of anger, jealousy, or envy. (Abraham Lincoln said that everyone over forty is responsible for his face. It mirrors everything we carry inside.) Thirdly, said Poemen, inner wounds reveal themselves in *words*, in our sniping at others, our passive-aggressive language. And finally, the wounds appear in our *deeds*. We replicate them in our actions, doing to others what had been done to us. What isn't transformed, in other words, will be transmitted. That's the danger of unacknowledged desire (61).

First, Professor Lane sanctifies the humanity of the Desert monks and nuns in all their weaknesses. This takes courage, since we tend to think of the spiritual life as being one of heroism and uninterrupted bliss. In fact, spirituality means accession

to the fact that we are lonely and at some point, have to experience the noonday devil, or *acedia*. In other words, the silence of God threatens us forever with the long loneliness experienced by Dorothy Day in her eponymous book. Jesus, humiliated on the Cross for no fault of his own, had to cry out to his silent Father: 'Father, Father why have you abandoned me?'

To be fully human is to experience the dark night of the soul that sets us wondering whether there is indeed a God who walks with us in our times of deepest heartbreak. Second, and more crucial to our self-fashioning, we are what we carry in our hearts. We *are* the memories we choose to feed in our hearts. In other words, we have choices either to forgive ourselves or, to be trapped in our own prisons of loveless non-forgiveness. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's ancient mariner remained haunted by his memories even though he was shriven by a holy hermit. The mariner, like most of us, could not forgive himself. As Professor Lane shows here, the Desert sojourners understood the workings of the human heart much before either Sigmund Freud or his cantankerous student, Carl Jung came into the world with their verbose nothings.

The book under review has been seen within the usual metaphors of wandering and pilgrimage in many other journals. This reviewer wants to point out one aspect of the author's description which is normatively not Hindu but in reality is about the Sanatana Dharma. Professor Lane speaks of Teilhard de Chardin saying Mass in the Mongolian desert; all alone and without the accessories needed for saying Holy Mass. Father de Chardin then goes on to consecrate the entire world to Christ and imagines within himself the missing accessories needed for the Holy Eucharist. This reviewer cannot help but see in this action of the votary of the Omega Point, the Hindu praxes of *nyasa* and *bhutasuddhi*. As Father Teilhard de Chardin rightly saw, everything is rushing to the Omega Point and as Professor Lane rightly finds, we too, in our moral failings through a process of finding ourselves in the desert, like Jesus, can become sojourners in the here and the now and find ourselves become one with that Omega Point. Like Professor Lane, if only we are silent, God will

speak to us as he did to Job once upon a time, and to Professor Lane. Here is Lane's encounter with the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*:

Then, in the darkness before dawn, I heard it. A voice carried on the wind that seemed to speak inside my body. I didn't *think* it. I simply received it, with an undeniable certainty. Four words addressed to me: 'Speaks with the Wind.' Nothing more. But I knew in that moment that I had been called ... I had been *named* (202). [This understanding of being called by name derives from the prophet Isaiah].

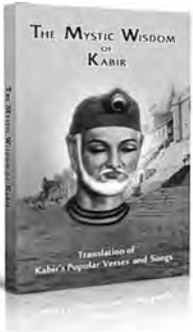
This is a book replete with poetry and wisdom, to be read slowly while seeing 'Eternity ... Like a great ring of pure and endless light' (Henry Vaughan, 'The World'), backpacking with the saints.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

Biblical Theologian

Assistant Professor of English

Narasinha Dutt College, Howrah



***The Mystic Wisdom of Kabir:
Translation of Kabir's Popular
Verses and Songs***

Trans. Swami Brahmeshananda

Sri Ramakrishna Math, 31, Ramakrishna Math Road, Mylapore, Chennai 600004. Website: <http://www.chennai.math.org>. 2015. 174 pp. ₹70. PB. ISBN 9788178835983.

The very mention of Kabir's name brings to the mind the kind of religious freedom one can breathe in India. 'To the Hindus, he is a Vaishnava Bhakta, to the Muslims, a Pir, to the Sikhs, a Bhagat, to the Kabirpanthis, an Avatar, and to the modern patriots, he is a champion of Hindu-Muslim unity' (1). And why so? Because Kabir addresses the truth beyond any religious denomination: 'There is no austerity like truth, no sin like falsehood. You (O Lord) reside in the heart of him who has truth in his heart' (71).

'In this book we have tried to bring to the lay person interested in Kabir an English rendering of Kabir's works—songs and verses—which are very popular with the masses and in religious circles. ... Although small, this compilation amply

represents Kabir's ideology. The reader will find herein Kabir's message of knowledge, devotion, ethics, and social equality well expressed' (17–8). This is stated by the translator in his introduction, wherein he also presents a brief account of Kabir's life, philosophy, views on yoga, ethical and social approach, devotional message, and literary works.

The selection comprises 275 *sakhis*—couplets in *doha* metre, easy to construct and recite—which 'are the evidences of Kabir's spiritual realizations' (16); and 89 *sabadas*, popular short songs. These *sakhis* and *sabadas* are presented in their original Hindi with the English translation below. At many places the translator adds notes to the translation, in an attempt to clarify certain meanings that could be lost in the translation, or to explain basic terms, or even to enhance the message of the verse. This book is mainly meant for those not much versed in the traditions of North India, as many of the notes suggest. And though the learned translator acknowledges the difficulty of translating poetry, he is still able to render Kabir's mystical experiences in a lucid way:

'We are intoxicated with love. Why should we be cautious? We live free from this world; why should we give importance to it?

Those who are separated from the Beloved, wander from door to door. Our Beloved is within us; why should we wait for Him?

The world labours much for its own name and fame. We like Hari's Name. Why should we love the world?

The Beloved does not part from us for even a moment, nor do we part from the Beloved. We are attached to Him only, why should we be nervous?

Kabir is intoxicated with love and has removed all dualities from his heart. When walking on the path is difficult, why should we carry a heavy load on our head?' (123–4).

Swami Madhurananda

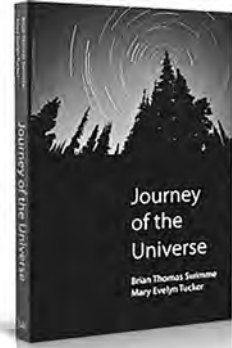
MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.
Extracts from a thought-provoking book every month.**

Journey of the Universe

Brian Thomas Swimme
and Mary Evelyn Tucker

Yale University Press, 47 Bedford Square, London
WC1B 3DP. Website: <https://yalebooks.co.uk>. 2014. 192
pp. \$15. PB. ISBN 9780300209433.



IMAGINE EXPERIENCING Earth's beauty for the first time—its birds, fish, mountains, and waterfalls. Imagine, too, the vastness of Earth's home, the universe, with its numerous galaxies, stars, and planets. Surrounded by such magnificence, we can ask ourselves a simple question: Can we find a way to sink deeply into these immensities? And if we can, will this enable humans to participate in the flourishing of life?

This book is an invitation to a journey into grandeur—a journey into grandeur that no previous generation could have fully imagined.

We are the first generation to learn the comprehensive scientific dimensions of the universe story. We know that the observable universe emerged 13.7 billion years ago, and we now live on a planet orbiting our Sun, one of the trillions of stars in one of the billions of galaxies in an unfolding universe that is profoundly creative and interconnected. With our empirical observations expanded by modern science, we are now realizing that our universe is a single immense energy event that began as a tiny speck that has unfolded over time to become galaxies and stars, palms and pelicans, the music of Bach, and each of us alive today. The great discovery of contemporary science is that the universe is not simply a place,

but a story—a story in which we are immersed, to which we belong, and out of which we arose.

This story has the power to awaken us more deeply to who we are. For just as the Milky Way is the universe in the form of a galaxy, and an orchid is the universe in the form of a flower, we are the universe in the form of a human. And every time we are drawn to look up into the night sky and reflect on the awesome beauty of the universe, we are actually the universe reflecting on itself.

And this changes everything.

Story

Every culture organizes itself with its central stories, in both written and oral forms. Such stories contain that which each culture holds as most valuable, most useful, most essential, and most beautiful. They are regarded as containing compelling orientations toward the most enduring human challenges. Some of these stories have been so deeply valued they have been told over and over by many generations. Homer's *Odyssey*, for example, has been passed down in the West for perhaps twenty-eight centuries. Or, in south Asia, the stories of the *Mahabharata* have been told for well over two millennia. In distinct and invaluable ways, these stories and many

others continue to shape billions of humans around the planet.

While such stories will no doubt be told far into the future, a new integrating story has emerged. Even though it is only a few centuries old, it has already begun to change humanity in crucial ways. This is the story of the universe's development through time, the narrative of the evolutionary processes of our observable universe. This story has, and will continue to have, many different names. But if we can think of the New Testament as that which tells a Christian story, and of the *Mahabharata* as that which tells a Hindu story, perhaps the simplest description of this new narrative is that it tells a universe story.

One of the differences between a universe story and more traditional narratives is that with this newer story we have a 'story of the story'—a historical account of how our awareness of this universe story came forth. This began in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when we realized that Earth was not stationary but was moving around the Sun. In the eighteenth century this idea was extended when we came to realize that the human mind was not static, nor was human society; instead, both had forms and structures that had emerged over many centuries. Then, in the nineteenth century, we discovered that the life forms themselves had gone through significant transformations over time. Even the rocks were not inert but were also in the process of deep change throughout geological time. Finally, in the twentieth century, we came to see that the stars too had changed dramatically, as had the galaxies, and, most astonishing of all, the entire observable universe had passed through a series of irreversible transformations.

This immense journey evokes wonder from scientists and non-scientists alike. And it challenges some religious traditions to rethink or

expand their worldviews. Certainly Copernicus was aware of the radical nature of his discovery of a heliocentric solar system and hesitated to reveal his work. Darwin also agonized over the revolutionary implications of his views regarding life's emergence. We are still struggling with the changes of worldviews that Copernicus and Darwin and many other scientists have presented to us over the past five centuries. And why? Because this is such a comprehensive story that it challenges our understanding of who we are and what our role might be in the universe. Are we here by chance, by necessity, by serendipity, or on purpose? What is the nature of creativity in this changing universe?

It will take time to answer these questions more fully and to integrate this universe story into our diverse human cultures around the world. *Journey of the Universe* is intended not to override or ignore these other stories, but rather to bring into focus the challenge of creating a shared future. The great opportunity before us today is to tell this new universe story in a way that will serve to orient humans with respect to our pressing questions: Where did we come from? Why are we here? How should we live together? How can the Earth community flourish?

Birth of the Universe

Let's begin at the very beginning. How did it all start?

An awesome question, certainly, but it appears there really was a beginning. Some scientists refer to this as the Big Bang. Let's think of it as a great flaring forth of light and matter, both the luminous matter that would eventually become stars and galaxies and the dark matter that no one has ever seen. All of space and time and mass and energy began as a single point that was trillions of degrees hot and that instantly rushed apart.



REPORTS

Sri Ramakrishna Tithi Puja

The birthday tithi of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated at Belur Math on Tuesday, 25 February 2020, with spiritual fervour and delight. Khichri prasada was served to 25,000 devotees. Swami Suvirananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the public meeting held in the afternoon. As part of the celebration, a devotees' convention was held on 28 February in which 2,300 devotees participated.

News of Branch Centres

Sri Tathagata Roy, Governor of Meghalaya, visited **Ramakrishna Math, Baranagar, Kolkata**, on 6 January.

On the occasion of Magh Mela, **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Prayagraj** (Allahabad), conducted a camp at Triveni Sangam from 8 January to 11 February. Besides providing board and lodging facilities to devotees in the camp, discourses, devotional singing, and an exhibition on Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda were also held and medical help was given to 14,285 patients.

Two girls' hostel buildings, one each at the Akabeda and Kundla tribal development centres of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narainpur**, were inaugurated on 31 January. The ashrama also held a *kisan mela*, farmers' fair, on 15 February, which was visited by 4,500 farmers.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Salem, concluded its centenary celebrations with a day-long programme on 2 February. In the public meeting held on this occasion, Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission and Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai,



Aalo School Building Inauguration

released a commemorative volume and a book on the history of the centre. Special lectures and bhajans were also held. About 2,300 devotees attended the programme.

Swami Suvirananda inaugurated the newly-built school building at **Ramakrishna Mission, Aalo**, on 9 February, the sacred birthday of Swami Adbhutanandaji Maharaj.

The new dispensary building and the second floor of the school building at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Manasadwip**, were inaugurated on 9 February.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the laboratory building of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, Kolkata**, on 12 February. Dr Partha Chatterjee, Minister of Education, Government of West Bengal; Dr Mahua Das, President, West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education; about 200 monks; and a good number of students and staff attended the programme.

Divyayan Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Morabadi, Ranchi**, was adjudged the best KVK at the

national level by *Outlook Hindi*, a fortnightly magazine. Sri Narendra Singh Tomar, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, presented a memento to the Ashrama at a programme held in Delhi on 24 February.

Students of the Sanskrit Department of **Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute (RKMVERI), Belur Math**, won five medals—two gold, one silver, and two bronze—in different competitions at the fourteenth All India Sanskrit Students' Talent Festival conducted by Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, Tirupati, from 28 to 31 January. Further, the RKMVERI secured the third position in the medal table.

GCS International, Seoul, South Korea, presented a plaque of appreciation to the Ramakrishna Mission in recognition of its efforts for the promotion of world peace. Swami Suvirananda received the plaque in a programme held at **Ramakrishna Mission, Saradapitha, Belur**, on 4 February by the GCS International to mark the Indo-Korean Taekwondo Cultural Festival.

On the occasion of the *kumbhabhishekh*am of the Brihadeeswarar temple at Thanjavur, **Ramakrishna Math, Chennai**, held a medical camp there on 5 February and also served porridge to about 2,000 pilgrims.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Hatamuniguda, conducted an anaemia treatment camp on 22 and 23 February in which 983 patients received medical attention.

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Vadodara, held an Ayurvedic medical camp on 23 February in which 35 patients were treated.

Ramakrishna Mission, Batticaloa, a sub-centre of Ramakrishna Mission, Colombo, Sri Lanka, distributed buttermilk to 2,000 devotees who participated in a function at a local temple on 5 February.



Values Education Programme by Bagda Math

Values Education and Youth Programmes

Bagda Math conducted a values education programme on 4 January in which 218 students and 63 teachers took part.

Cooch Behar centre held a youths' convention on 19 January, which was attended by 200 youths.

Delhi centre conducted 21 values education workshops in 11 cities all over India between 3 and 24 January, which were attended by a total of 850 teachers and 215 principals.

Gadadhar Ashrama conducted a values education programme on 11 January, which was attended by 60 students.

Gourhati centre held a students' convention on 18 January in which 650 students from 20 schools took part.

Haripad Math conducted values education camps at three schools in Wayanad district, Kerala, on 2, 3, and 4 January, which were attended by 534 students in all.

Kailashahar centre held values education programmes at 4 schools and colleges in Kailashahar and Dharmanagar from 7 to 19 January in which 1,575 students and 82 teachers took part.

Medinipur centre conducted 12 values education workshops in various schools and colleges in and around Medinipur from 2 to 25 January in which a total of 4,654 students and teachers took part.



Inauguration of Virtual Classroom Project at Visakhapatnam Centre

Mysuru Ashrama held a written quiz competition on Swamiji in which about 36,000 students from 387 schools and colleges in Karnataka took part. The state-level toppers were awarded prizes on 11 January.

Rajkot Ashrama conducted a residential personality development camp from 27 to 29 December and another camp on 18 and 19 January; a total of 88 students participated in these camps. The Ashrama also held 8 values education programmes on its campus, and 5 more programmes in Botad, Morbi, and Rajkot districts of Gujarat from 26 December to 18 January; a total of 3,149 students attended these programmes.

Taki centre held values education programmes at 4 schools in and around Taki from 1 to 14 January. In all, 474 students attended the programmes.

Vadodara centre conducted four values education programmes at different schools in Bharuch and Vadodara districts in January and February in which a total of 487 students participated.

Davanagere centre conducted a values education workshop on 17 February in which 78 teacher-trainees took part.

Haripad Math held a values education camp at a school in Alappuzha district on 16 February in which 391 students participated.

Kanpur centre conducted a youths' convention on 16 February, which was attended by 220 youths.

Medinipur centre held 9 values education workshops in various schools and ashramas in Paschim Medinipur district from 1 to 16 February in which a total of 2,845 students and teachers took part.

Rajkot Ashrama conducted the following events:

(i) A written quiz competition on Swamiji in which 88,519 students from 986 schools in Gujarat took part; state-level and district-level toppers were awarded prizes on 6 February;

(ii) Two residential personality development camps on 25 and 26 January and from 7 to 9 February; a total of 114 students participated in these camps;

(iii) Fourteen values education programmes on its campus, and 21 more programmes in five districts of Gujarat from 21 January to 20 February; a total of 7,919 students attended these programmes;

(iv) Two workshops in Kutch for teachers on 23 January and 13 February, which were attended by 63 teachers in all.

Shyampukur Bati centre held a youths' convention on 15 February, which was attended by 200 youths.

At **Visakhapatnam centre**, Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj inaugurated an ICT based virtual classroom project called Doorashikshanam through which distant rural or semi urban places are connected for imparting values education and the coaching of regular school subjects. Presently, it has been implemented in three places namely Bhavanapadu in Srikakulam district, Vetlapalem in East Godavari district, and Bapatla in Guntur district.

Relief

Fire Relief: Arunachal Pradesh: In response to a fire accident at Aalo in which 5 houses were completely burnt down, **Aalo centre** gave 12 blankets, 12 shirts, 12 trousers, 10 jackets, 8 sweaters, 5 belts, 30 notebooks, 6 pens, 9 pencils, 9 erasers, and 9 pencil sharpeners to 5 affected families on 28 January.

Winter Relief: The following centres distributed blankets and winter garments, shown against their names, to needy people: **India:** (a) **Aalo:** 348 blankets, 78 jackets, and 882 sweaters from 28 January to 9 February. (b) **Almora:** 938 blankets and 115 sweaters from 15 December to 3 February. (c) **Aurangabad:** 225 blankets and 395 suits from 5 January to 23 February. (d) **Ayodhya** (sub-centre of Lucknow Ashrama): 500 blankets from 3 to 27 January. (e) **Bagda:** 4,000 sweaters from 12 January to 19 February. (f) **Balaram Mandir, Kolkata:** 200 blankets from 20 to 31 December. (g) **Bankura:** 1,413 blankets from 12 November to 15 February. (h) **Chandipur:** 86 blankets from 26 January and 20 February. (i) **Chapra:** 1,000 sweaters from 16 November to 13 December. (j) **Dibrugarh:** 1,000 blazers or sweaters from 20 August to 6 February. (k) **Goa:** 435 blankets from 8 December to 14 February. (l) **Guwahati:** 353 blankets from 1 January to 19 February. (m) **Hatamuniguda:** 738 sweaters from 2 to 24 February.



Medical Help at Magh Mela by Prayagraj Centre

(n) **Jaipur:** 300 blankets from 29 December to 12 January. (o) **Jamshedpur:** 500 blankets and 500 sweaters from 11 October to 28 January. (p) **Jayrambati:** 3,700 blankets from 5 January to 2 February. (q) **Kankurgachhi, Kolkata:** 426 blankets, 4 blazers, 279 coats, 218 jackets, 133 suits, 173 sweaters, and 25 sweatshirts from 6 to 27 January. (r) **Katihar:** 300 blankets from 12 December to 8 January. (s) **Khetri:** 64 blankets from 24 November to 26 January. (t) **Koalpara** (sub-centre of Jayrambati): 800 blankets from 14 December to 11 January. (u) **Kothar:** 600 blankets and 200 jackets from 5 December to 24 January. (v) **Lucknow:** 520 blankets and 5,000 sweaters from 19 December to 27 January. (w) **Manasadwip:** 15 shawls from 14 to 16 January. (x) **Saradapitha, Belur:** 500 blankets and 2,000 sweaters from 2 December to 7 February. (y) **Sarisha:** 500 blankets from 23 November to 25 December. (z) **Shillong:** 500 sweaters from 23 November to 18 January. (aa) **Shyamsayer, Bardhaman:** 500 blankets and 500 sweaters from 12 August to 12 January. (bb) **Sikra-Kulingram:** 100 sweaters from 14 September to 31 January. (cc) **Silchar:** 1,000 blankets and 3,000 sweaters from 24 September to



Distribution of Sewing Machines by Ramanathapuram Centre

16 February. (dd) **Varanasi Advaita Ashrama:** 200 blankets and 796 sweaters from 17 November to 26 January. **Bangladesh:** (a) **Bagerhat:** 35 blankets on 10 February. (b) **Dinajpur:** 850 blankets from 19 December to 5 February. (c) **Faridpur:** 300 blankets from 18 December to 17 January.

Distress Relief: The following centres distributed various items, shown against their names, to needy people: **India:** (a) **Aalo:** 853 shirts, 853 trousers, and 171 belts from 28 January to 9 February. (b) **Almora:** 290 kg rice, 145 kg dal, 29 kg soya chunks, 29 kg edible oil, 6 kg assorted spices, 29 kg salt, and 29 kg sugar from 15 December to 3 February. (c) **Aurangabad:** 3,345 T-shirts from 20 April to 16 February. (d) **Bagda:** 1,680 notebooks, 996 pens, 348 pencils, 180 sharpeners, and 40 geometry boxes from 6 to 22 February. (e) **Baranagar Math, Kolkata:** 498 T-shirts from 30 September to 30 October. (f) **Chapra:** 1,000 shirts and 1,000 trousers from 4 to 14 February. (g) **Chengalpattu:** 351 shirts and 351 trousers from 20 October to 22 February. (h) **Dibrugarh:** 1,000 shirts or T-shirts and 500 trousers from 20 August to 6 February. (i) **Gadadhar Ashrama, Kolkata:** 140 T-shirts and cloth for 250 shirts on 8 and 17 February.

(j) **Hatamuniguda:** 1,648 shirts and 2,558 trousers from 2 to 24 February. (k) **Jamshedpur:** 500 shirts from 11 October to 1 January. (l) **Jayrambati:** 5,380 saris from 5 January to 2 February. (m) **Kalady:** 300 mats, 300 bedsheets, 300 bars of soap, and cloth for 300 shirts on 14 February. (n) **Kamarpukur:** 3,500 trousers from 6 December to 6 February. (o) **Kankurgachhi, Kolkata:** 150 shirts, 148 T-shirts, 131 tops, 508 trousers, and 2 leggings on 27 January. (p) **Koalpara** (sub-centre of Jayrambati): 930 saris from 14 December to 11 January. (q) **Kothar:** 200 shirts and 200 trousers from 15 December to 24 January. (r) **Koyilandy:** Cloth for 1,500 shirts on 16 February. (s) **Lucknow:** 2,000 shirts, 2,500 trousers, and cloth for 2,100 shirts from 3 to 23 January. (t) **Ramanathapuram:** 3,000 trousers and cloth for 2,000 shirts from 5 January to 4 February. (u) **Ranchi Sanatorium:** 330 shirts, 170 T-shirts, and 500 trousers from 7 December to 17 January. (v) **Saradapitha, Belur:** Cloth for 2,000 shirts from 24 September to 6 January. (w) **Shillong:** 2,500 T-shirts and 1,500 trousers from 23 November to 18 January. (x) **Shyamsayer:** 2,000 shirts, 500 trousers, and 200 *punjabis* or loose collarless shirts from 12 August to 28 January. (y) **Sikra-Kulingram:** 200 T-shirts from 14 September to 31 January. (z) **Silchar:** 560 dhotis, 151 saris, 4,064 shirts or T-shirts, 8,000 trousers, and cloth for 5,000 shirts from 24 September to 16 February. (aa) **Varanasi Advaita Ashrama:** 581 saris, 300 shirts, and 1,000 trousers from 17 November to 26 January. (bb) **Vrindaban:** Cloth for 1,000 shirts from 22 to 27 December. **Zambia: Lusaka:** 100 kg powdered maize and a bicycle on 23 January and 13 February respectively.

Economic Rehabilitation: Under self-employment programme, **Ramanathapuram** centre distributed 16 sewing machines on 31 January to poor and needy people. PB



SRI RAMAKRISHNA ADVAITA ASHRAMA



(A Branch of Ramakrishna Math, P.O.- Belur Math)
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AN APPEAL

TO THE DEVOTEES AND WELL-WISHERS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO BUILD MONKS' QUARTERS

Kalady is the Birthplace of great Sri Adi Shakanracarya. Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama was started in 1936, by Swami Agamananda (a disciple of Swami Brahmananda) Later it was affiliated to Ramakrishna Math, Beur Math, Howrah in 1942.

Ashrama is one of the old Spritual, Cultural, Educational and Social service centre of Kerala. It has a School (Brahmanandodaym Schools) from Kindergarten to +2, Gurukulam Hostel for Boys, Computer and Typewriting centre for Scheduled Caste and economically backward classes. Ashrama conducts flood and disaster relief programmes in the State. Besides there are other services and rural activities. Ashrama has a temple with a marble statue of Sri Ramakrishna and an Auditorium to conduct worship, prayers, spiritual activities, retreats and discourses.



All the above services during these 83 long years are tendered by the tireless services of dedicated monks. Due to the paucity of funds, there is no dedicated building (Sadhu Nivas) for Monks. Monks are staying in the buildings which are more than 80-90 years old. They are made of clay mortar and have tiled roofs. The walls are feeble, rafters are weak, roof always leaks during monsoon. This has rendered the buildings uninhabitable.



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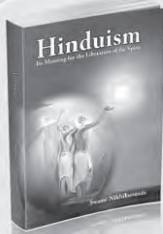
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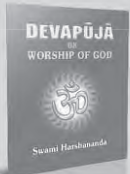


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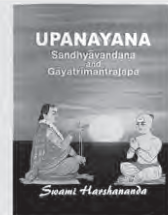
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PILGRIM'S GUIDE TO THE HOLY TRIO IN KOLKATA



A Day in the Life of Holy Mother at Udbodhan House 3

It was nine-thirty in the morning at Udbodhan. One day Tinkari and Tarasundari, both famous actresses at the time, visited Holy Mother at Udbodhan. Holy Mother had recently seen Tinkari act in *Vilwamangal Thakur*. Tinkari, the famous actress, went upstairs to see the Holy Mother. Sister Lakshmi, who was present at the time, asked her to sing a song. Tinkari said hesitatingly, 'What kind of song shall I sing for you?' Holy Mother replied, 'Please sing that song of Pagalini [from *Vilwamangal*].'



Actress Tinkari

Tinkari had performed in that role. Suddenly we heard Tinkari's sweet and melodious voice singing to the *Chayanat* tune. 'Krishna travels holding my hand.' The monastic attendants stopped work and went upstairs to listen to her sing. Sharat Maharaj was writing something; he dropped his pen and became absorbed in the music. Yogin-ma was cutting vegetables; she also went upstairs. The cook and servants also stopped what they were doing and went upstairs to listen to the song. Holy Mother had finished her worship and was listening to the song, sitting on the floor. Tinkari sat on the little veranda near the entrance to the Master's shrine. We felt that her overflowing devotion was reverberating

throughout the entire house through her singing. 'Krishna travels holding my hand. Wherever I go, He follows me, Even if I don't ask Him to.' Holy Mother looked at the Master's photo and then closed her eyes. After a while she opened her eyes,



Holy Mother
in Udbodhan



but we felt that she was indrawn. Her eyes were open but she was not seeing anything. Tinkari continued, 'He wipes my face with great care, And intently looks at my face. When I smile, He smiles; and when I cry, He cries. How lovingly He takes care of me.' The whole house was completely still, as if no one were there. Everyone was overwhelmed and absorbed in an exalted mood. Was it the influence of Tinkari's singing or Holy Mother's spiritual power? Who could say? Tinkari finished the last lines of the song, 'So I came to know: who says that the Precious One does not exist? Come and see for yourself whether it is true or false. He is talking to me with great love.' Holy Mother expressed in an ecstatic mood: 'Ah! Ah!' Tinkari finished her singing. Holy Mother remained in that condition for a while, and silence prevailed. Then she wiped her eyes and said to Tinkari, 'What a beautiful song you have sung today, my child!'

In loving memory of Dr. Rina Bhar –Dr. Gopal Chandra Bhar



*The best guide in life is strength. In religion,
as in all other matters, discard everything
that weakens you, have nothing to do
with it.*

—Swami Vivekananda



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