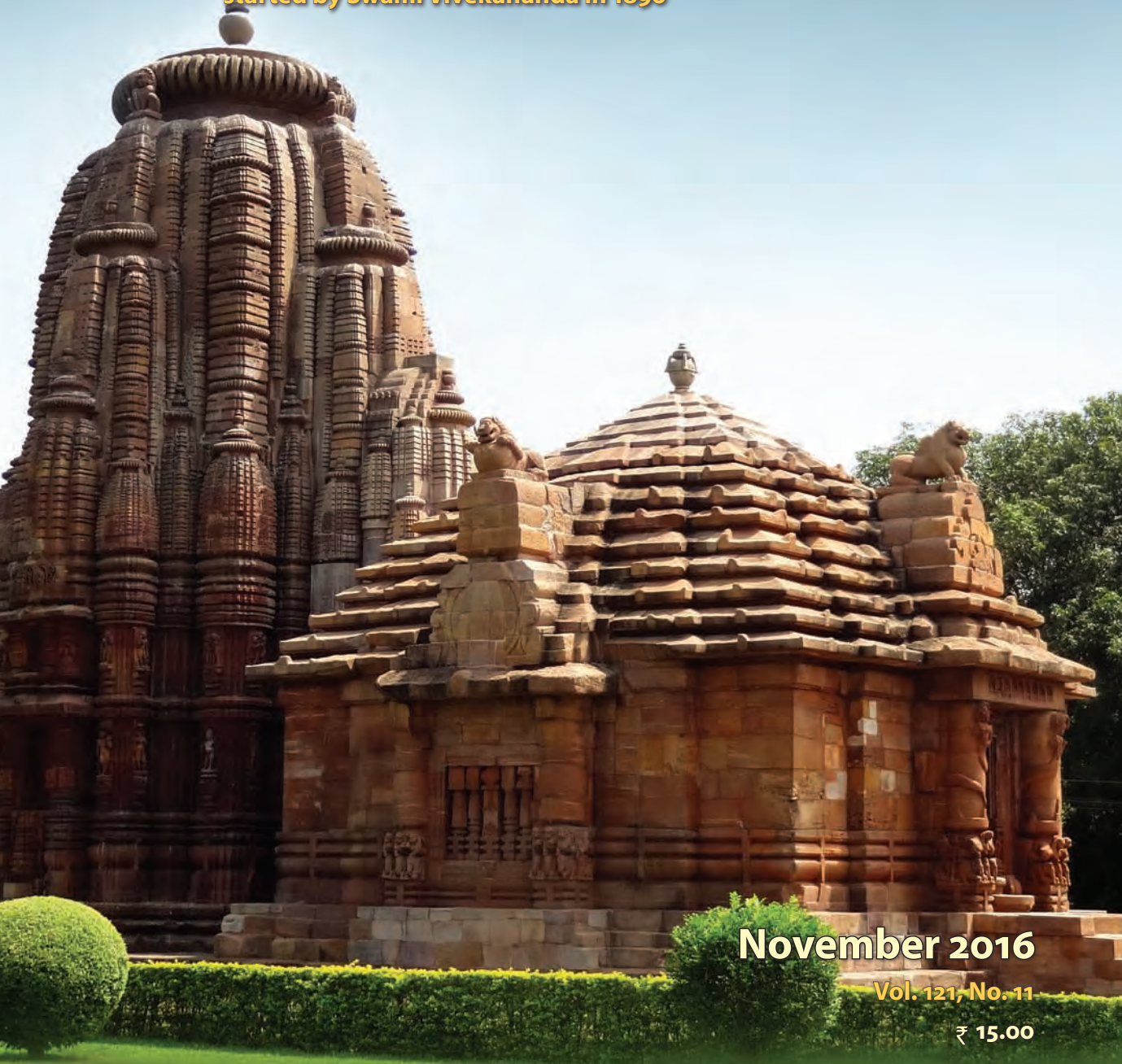


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A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



November 2016

Vol. 121, No. 11

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THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

Analysis of Vedanta Philosophy V

There are others that are not so high, who do good works, but want some reward. They say that they will give so much to the poor, but want to go to heaven in return. When they die, what becomes of them? The speech enters the mind, the mind enters the Prana, the Prana enters the Jiva, and the Jiva gets out, and goes to the lunar sphere, where it has a very good time for a long period. There it enjoys happiness, so long as the effect of its good deeds endures. When the same is exhausted, it descends, and once again enters life on earth according to its desires. In the lunar sphere the Jiva becomes what we call a god, or what the Christians or Mohammedans call an angel. These gods are the names of certain positions; for instance, Indra, the kind of the gods, is the name of a position; thousands of men get to that position. When a virtuous man who has performed the highest of Vedic rites dies, he becomes a king of the gods; by that time the old king has gone down again, and become man. Just as kings change here, so the gods, the Devas, also have to die. In heaven they will all die. The only deathless place is Brahmaloka, where alone there is no birth and death. So the Jivas go to heaven, and have a very good time, except now and then when the demons give them chase. So after their reward is finished, they fall down again, come through the clouds, through the rains, and thus get into some grain or



plant and find their way into the human body, when the grain or plant is eaten by men. The father gives them the material out of which to get a fitting body. When the material suits them no longer, they have to manufacture other bodies. Now there are the very wicked fellows, who do all sorts of diabolical things; they are born again as animals, and if they are very bad, they are born as very low animals, or become plants or stones. In the Deva form they make no Karma at all; only man makes Karma. Karma means work which will produce effect. When a man dies and becomes a Deva, he has only a period of pleasure, and during that time, makes no fresh Karma; it is simply a reward for his past good Karma. When the good Karma is worked out, then the remaining Karma begins to take effect, and he comes down to earth. He becomes man again, and if he does very good works, and purifies himself, he goes to Brahmaloka and comes back no more.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,
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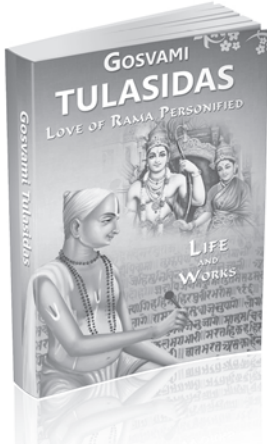


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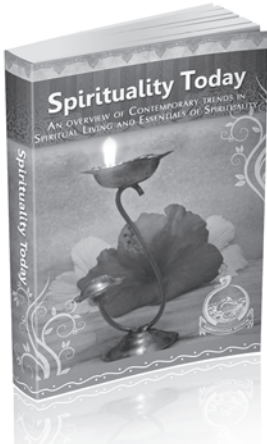
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Maitrayaniya Upanishad

November 2016

Vol. 121, No. 11

मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

ब्रह्मणो वावैता अग्न्यास्तनवः परस्यामृतस्याशरीरस्य तस्यैव लोके प्रतिमोदतीह यो यस्यानुषक्त इत्येवं
ह्याह । ब्रह्म खल्विदं वाव सर्वम् । या वाऽस्या अग्न्यास्तनवस्ता अभिध्यायेदर्चयेन्निहुयाच्चातस्ताभिः
सहैवोपर्युपरि लोकेषु चरत्यथ कृत्स्नक्षय एकत्वमेति पुरुषस्य पुरुषस्य । ॥४.६॥

*Brahmano vavaita agnyas-tanavah parasyamritasya-asharirasya tasyaiva loke pratimodati-ih
yo yasyanushakta ityevam hy-aha. Brahma khalv-idam vava sarvam. Ya va'sya agnyas-tanavas-
ta abhidhyayed-archayen-nihnuvach-cha, atas-tabhih sahaivopary-upari lokeshu charati-atha
kritisna-kshaya ekatvam-eti purushasya, purushasya. (4.6)*

These are the principal forms of the supreme, immortal, bodiless Brahman. One rejoices in that world to which one is attached. It has been said thus: 'The entire universe is indeed Brahman.' Indeed these are its principal forms which one meditates upon, worships, and discards. With these, one moves in higher and higher worlds. And, when everything perishes, one attains unity with the Purusha, indeed, the Purusha. (4.6)

THIS MONTH

THE SENSE-ORGANS and the mind create havoc and pull us in different directions. They weaken one's will and character. They have to be in one's control for doing anything properly. This increases the importance of **Spiritualising the Senses**.

The academic study of Hinduism and its research from within the faith-tradition have been at loggerheads for quite some time now. Hindu studies have been lately in the news often for the wrong reasons leading many to believe that there is an agenda against Hinduism at work. It is important that there be institutions dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of Hinduism. Jonathan Edelmann, Assistant Professor at the Department of Religion, University of Florida, Assistant Director of the Center for the Study of Hindu Traditions, University of Florida, and a section-editor for the *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, examines this issue in **The Dilemma of American Hinduism—Problem and Solution**.

Dr Sukanya Ray, Assistant Professor of political science, Lady Brabourne College, Kolkata, analyses **Vivekananda's Addresses at the Parliament of Religions: Reflections on the Historic Significance of A Landmark Document**.

Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita, the Bengali original of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* continues to inspire many by the sheer richness and depth of the text. Dr Sreemati Mukherjee, Associate Professor, Department of English, Basanti Devi College, Kolkata, explores **Sri Chaitanya**

as Affect and Epistemology in the Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita.

In the tenth instalment of the edited transcript of a series of lectures on **Mandukya Upanishad** given by Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, who was the thirteenth president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, we are told that the ultimate reality does not change because of apparent impurities.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, has been asked various questions regarding various aspects of spiritual life by the young and old alike, over a period of time. The seventh instalment of the collection of such questions and his answers to them is given in **Vedanta Answers**.

Various steps of mental control are discussed in the eighth and concluding instalment of **The Psychological Aspects of Spiritual Life** by Swami Nityasthananda, Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysuru.

Sri Ramachandra's Atonement is the story of Vibhishana being protected by Sri Ramachandra's grace. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Arulneri Kathaigal*.

Peter van der Veer, Director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen and a Distinguished Professor at Utrecht University, Netherlands has written **The Modern Spirit of Asia**, discussing innovative modernity in Asia. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

Spiritualising the Senses

THE SENSE-ORGANS have always been seen as enemies of critical thought. They have been shown to fall prey to all baser emotions like lust, greed, jealousy, anger, and the like. Our discriminative faculty is weakened and its strictness is affected by the strong pull of the sense-organs. Religion and non-religious sources of education have always warned us of the pitfalls of indiscriminately following the sense-organs. It is not that people do not understand that the sense-organs are misleading; it is very difficult to get away from them. All regimens and recipes for individual development or progress, including health recovery plans, stress on not giving a free rein to the sense-organs. But it seems almost impossible.

All spiritual aspirants have great difficulty in practising the restraint of sense-organs, so much so that religious life seems to be a distant dream for most. Many lifetimes are spent in tackling the senses. The pull of the senses operates on many levels: the physical, psychological, neurological, and the spiritual. Only by having a good understanding and complete control of these levels of action of the senses, can we aim to use them to desired ends in one's spiritual life.

Sense-organs get their power from the sense-objects. And so, our controlling of the sense-organs should begin with the controlling of the sense-objects. It is necessary for a spiritual aspirant to practise severe control of exposure to various sense-objects till one gets a complete control over the sense-organs. Some people foolishly believe that they can control their senses or rather

test their mental strength by constantly exposing them to the strong influences of various sense-objects and not be attracted to their lure. Not

Desires propel our mind to be forcibly pulled by the sense-objects.

only does this never happen, it only shows that the vestiges of desire have not been completely annihilated and that the aspirant wants to have the best of both the worlds! Such a situation could only lead to a disaster leading to a fall from the spiritual ideal and the complete erasing of the spiritual practice done till then.

Apart from the maximum possible abstention from sense-objects, a change in attitude towards them would enable one to have the least possible harm from them, even when exposed to them. This can be done by constantly reminding the mind that basic food, shelter, clothing, and other basic needs are required to continue one's spiritual life and that the ultimate goal is to realise one's true nature. By constantly telling the mind to think in such a manner, the mind becomes gradually free of its attachment to things more than absolutely necessary. This is also an exercise to increase the strength of mental resolves.

Even these basic needs have to be fulfilled with an idea that one is divine. The sense-objects and the sense-organs should be seen as aids to the training of the mind. However, this training should not be through the abundance of the sense-objects but by abstaining from them. This way, the sense-objects become tools for realising


one's divinity. One should constantly question with how less can one live. Then, one's needs would gradually reduce and finally one would look upon the body also as an extra possession. Even when one is having just the bare minimum of the sense-objects, the nature of the sense-objects should be changed. One should not be exposed to sense-objects that could accentuate one's baser instincts. For example, if one has to read, one should not read books that deal with baser human emotions like lust and greed. Instead, one should read spiritual and philosophical literature. Similarly, if one has to hear music, such music should not be loud or harsh but should be soothing and conducive to bringing peace of mind. Even while mixing with people, one should take care not to mix with people who have no higher ideals in life.

The biggest problem in spiritual life is that one has to constantly live and do spiritual practices through the body. Hence, it is necessary that one constantly meditates on the fact that one's true nature is not the body. The true reality is wrongly read as this universe due to our ignorance. In its essence, however, the universe is a divine principle. That is what the spiritual aspirant needs to remember whenever dealing with the body, mind, the sense-organs, or the sense-objects. Spiritual aspirants following the path of bhakti can offer the sense-objects to one's chosen ideal before experiencing them. However, they should remember that this should not encourage them to increase the enjoyment of sense-objects; rather they should gradually reduce their dependence on sense-objects.

The major cause of our attachment to the sense-organs and sense-objects is desire. Desires propel our mind to be forcibly pulled by the sense-objects. By a continuous process of meditating upon the transitoriness of this universe and all experiences within it, and also by understanding the cyclical nature of the experiences of the sense-organs, one can eventually reduce desires.

The reason for doing so is the plain truth that desiring things is mostly counterproductive. Restlessness of the mind, often disguised as activity, is another important cause of our becoming weak in front of the sense-organs. Every spiritual aspirant should strive hard to maintain an inner poise and calm irrespective of the external circumstances and be unruffled by any adversity. Only a calm mind can stem the upsurge of desires.

The entire exercise of spiritualising the senses is possible only when the spiritual aspirant has the clear and strong conviction that this is a practice that would eventually lead to the dawn of knowledge and consequent liberation from the transmigratory cycle of births and deaths in which one is bound due to ignorance. And this ignorance is manifested as the idea of duality. This duality is further seen in the doubtful and misleading nature of both the intellect and the mind. All our resolves are filled with uncertainties about our choices and they narrow us down to a particular way of thinking or living. This again leads to the vicious cycle of attempting to make better choices and the cycle never stops. Even if the resolves and ignorance about spiritual truths can be to some extent dispelled by a proper guru, until the spiritual aspirant completely gets rid of superimposition by one's intellect, a complete removal of ignorance does not take place.

Therefore, the main purpose of spiritualising sense-organs and sense-objects is to get rid of this confusing characteristic of the mind and the intellect, which in turn would lead to a decrease in the attempts to make a better choice, eventually leading to a decrease in desires. Finally, this exercise of spiritually dealing with the sense-organs and sense-objects would lead to the knowledge of the ultimate reality and liberation. The spiritual aspirant should have this thought in mind always and then the difficulties of the practice of spiritualising the senses would seem much less. 

The Dilemma of American Hinduism —Problem and Solution

Jonathan Edelmann

IT IS NOT TOO OFTEN THAT a scholar of Indian religion can become embroiled in controversy, but recent events have provided opportunity where none existed before. Scholars such as Wendy Doniger¹ and Sheldon Pollock² are the recipients of petitions to suppress their work, controversies over textbooks on Hinduism continue to burn in California almost as hard as the forest fires,³ and the University of California-Irvine refused a donation of \$3 million—a fortune for one working in religious studies—because of its connection to alleged Hindu right wing groups,⁴ a connection that was drawn by professors from a variety of disciplines.⁵

While it is tempting to see this as evidence of newfound interest in Indian religion beyond the halls of academia, I offer a cold shower—an assessment of the *cause* of these problems and a fairly simple—but not fairly cheap—*solution* to them. My proposals here build on suggestions, arguments, and evaluations by Amod Lele from Boston University in his article, ‘How Not to Defend Hinduism in Academia.’⁶ I will also use this as an opportunity to reflect on the ghosts of colonialism and the thrusting forces of globalisation as they pertain to the preservation and development of Hindu thought today, especially in the US.

I think that the cause of the conflict between academic scholars of Hinduism—some of whom are Hindu—and the American Hindus—some of whom are academics, but not trained scholars of religion or philosophy—is that unlike other

major religions in the US, Hinduism does not have its own *intellectual* space. Where is the place in which young women and men in the US might go to study Hindu history, the relevant languages, and the learned philosophical, poetic, and theological texts in the context of Hindu ritual, contemplative, and devotional practice?

This would be a place in which the issues of tradition and faith could be scrutinised in the light of reason and logic, with the support of religious practice and piety, and informed by the relevant languages, histories, and texts. It would engage the great traditions of learned Hindu literature and the many hundreds of scholars who currently know those traditions, as well as the terms and methods of contemporary academic, political, and popular discourses. Students would gain wisdom from their study and inspiration from their religious practice, thus going into the world with knowledge and conviction. I don’t think such a place exists for American Hindus today, but I can envision it in the near future.

A goal of such a place would be to examine the length and breadth of the Hindu traditions, to learn it and discuss it, to train students, and to produce literature that speaks with confidence, clarity, accuracy, and wisdom to the social, philosophical, and political issues that confront American Hinduism today—an *ancient tradition with a contemporary vision and voice*. Despite the size and affluence of the American Hindu community and despite the enduring appeal of Indian

religiosity in America, American Hindus have *not* created a forum for objective and tradition-based reflection. There are individual flashes in the pan here and there, but not a sustained, systematic, and cooperative effort that will outlive individual players. There is no *place* for Hindus to study, reflect, consider, teach, and write about their tradition within a context that is supported by Hindu scholars, Hindu ritual and contemplative practice, Hindu architecture, and Hindu arts. This is the *source* of the controversies that we see today.

Why have American Hindus not developed this space? What is the connection between the lack of a Hindu theological space and the antagonistic relationship between Hindus and academics? What does the lack of a Hindu theological space mean for the future of American Hinduism? I shall address the first question first.

The reason for this is simple—it is *money* or lack thereof. Hindus don't spend money on Hindu education. Religious scholarship requires massive private financial support. The space where Abrahamic theological reflection usually occurs in the US is the universities, colleges, and seminaries. We know there is no Hindu university, college, or seminary in the US. There is no reason why American Hindus need to follow American and European model of religious education, but there needs to be *some* space or another. There is no Hindu ashrama of which I am aware of, that has a research library of Indian texts, supports Hindu scholars and scholarship, teaches regular courses on Sanskrit, Tamil, Hindi, and the like, teaches the major Shastras and their commentators, teaches the major movements within Hindu intellectual history, and teaches the larger intellectual discourse such as *kavya*, Buddhism, and Jainism. Thus, there is no place to study Hinduism in the US within a community of other Hindu scholars and Hindu students. At least I am not aware of one.

Other religions in the US do have institutions in which religious practice and religious study are taken together. This might be in well-known Christian divinity schools at Harvard, Princeton, Duke, Notre Dame, Columbia, Georgetown, Calvin, or Claremont, but there are scores of local colleges and seminaries in this country, Europe, Asia, and so on. There is also the Hebrew Union College with Campuses in Manhattan, Cincinnati, and Los Angeles for Jewish students and rabbis, and the Naropa University, established in 1974 for Buddhism, but that is in addition to the bridge-building institutions between Buddhist monks and academics, as well as a number of endowed chairs at the finest universities in the US like Columbia and the University of California, Santa Barbara. These places, however, are not presently equipped to support theological investigation of the Hindu traditions by and for women and men who are themselves Hindu. Nor should one expect them to adopt or digest Hinduism into their institutions—they weren't designed for that. Hindus need to develop their own spaces. They can't play victim forever, but must take control of their fate in the US. Hindus haven't put much money into developing chairs at public or private schools, and have put even less money into developing their own institutions.

I don't think there is a conspiracy against Hinduism as many have suggested and insinuated. I don't think academic scholars of religion are consciously or unconsciously downplaying Hinduism. Some scholars are critical and skeptical of religion. Hinduism isn't going to escape that any more than the other religions. I am thinking of Rajiv Malhotra's recent books; he thinks Hinduism is uniquely targeted by academics. It isn't. In fact, it is probably rather sheltered. I think Hindus don't have a voice in the discussion because they have failed to put the time, money, and organisation into developing

one. *Market forces*, therefore, might be the most parsimonious explanation for the types of scholarship on Hinduism in the US today.

That Hindus have not privately funded Hindu theological programs and public support only goes as far as student interest. American Hindus put millions into temple construction and Hindu students want degrees in medicine or computer science, but not theology, religious studies, the Sanskrit language, or philosophy. Thus, American Hindus are not producing quality literature about Hinduism today.

As someone who has taught a wide variety of courses on Indian religion and Sanskrit over the past six years, very few of my students are of Indian ethnicity and very few are Hindu. As an academic scholar of Hinduism, there is very little

private funding for my research from the Hindu communities; most of it comes from state and federal support, or private Christian and secular institutions. Other religious traditions give millions in private funding for education in their religion every year, seeing it as inherently valuable to have religious scholars teach religious young women and men. If Hindus want to change the discourse, they can't just ban and badmouth academics, they've got to change the funding sources. They have to create a new discourse *in their own terms*, but it must be informed by their own history, texts, languages, and the scholars that have this information and wisdom. Malhotra and the many petitions against American scholars of Hinduism seems to be little more than griping, like a disenfranchised cricket fan,

Ruins of Nalanda University



complaining on the sidelines of the field but offering little constructive or positive contribution to the discourse. It is also 'wishful thinking' because the academic study of Hinduism is well-established in the American and European situation and it won't be the least bit impacted by a petition or outsider criticism.

Perhaps Hindus in America see religious education as something best conducted in the home, and for this reason they have not built universities, colleges, ashramas, and the like for the study of Hinduism. Religious education should take place in the home, but I don't feel that this approach would enable Hindu women and men to address the larger issues of Indian intellectual history we see today. Home education is only as effective as the knowledge of the parents. But where are parents going to get the deep historical, linguistic, and scriptural knowledge about which I am speaking? Are they supposed to build their own, individual libraries? Aren't they busy raising a family, having a career, and mowing the lawn? Perhaps the attempt to ban academic work is evidence for my gut feeling that home-based education isn't working.

Thus we are left with two broad types of Hindu scholars today. The first consists in academics. Academic professors of Hinduism, Sanskrit, or Indian philosophy at public and private universities are not generally encouraged to engage directly with issues of the Hindu faithful; their professional community is that of other academics, not Hindu swamis, devotees, or priests. It is not part of their job training or job description to support or enrich the faith of Hindu students, even if some scholars may see that as an unofficial or personal mission. Research topics are selected because they fill in missing spaces within the academic landscape, not because they address the needs of a Hindu temple community or American Hinduism in general. American

Hindus cannot and should not expect university professors to be doing the sort of work they want them to do. Academics in this country have the freedom to pursue their own research interests and that is what they will do. Some of them are Hindus and will pursue projects that support Hinduism, but some are not and will write books that are critical of Hinduism. American Hindus cannot control this any more than Christians, Jews, Muslims, and the rest can control what academics say about their religions. The difference between American Hindus and Americans of the other major religions is that American Hindus have not created spaces to counteract what they see as the pernicious effects of academia, whereas other religions have.

The second major group of scholars of Hinduism in America consists of Hindu preachers, priests, who have technical knowledge of ritual performance, and organisers of particular Hindu communities. They are generally centered around Hindu temples or home-meetings for the local Hindu population. Their mission involves performing rituals, preaching, teaching, inspiring, and supporting Hindus that attend their events. Their community is the devoted followers of their particular Hindu tradition. They speak inside a tradition of faith and practice, but engaging contemporary academic, social, or political topics in ways that outsiders might appreciate is not part of their job training or description, even though some may take on such issues as a personal mission. In my estimation, this second group of Hindus is not deeply steeped in the history, language, and technical body of scriptural information that a pandit or *acharya* would be, nor do they have the technical expertise of a normal academic scholar of Hinduism. While my knowledge of American Hinduism is not complete, I am not aware of any people within this second category who have the training, the financial support, and

the infrastructure or foundation—for example, a library, classroom spaces, the student base, and the like—to teach Hinduism in the systematic and comprehensive manner of which I spoke.

Clearly these two groups have come into conflict with one another recently. But it will always be hard for them to speak to one another. They speak different languages and they have different goals. Perhaps the most fruitful relationships have been between Hindu pandits and *acharyas*, most of who live in India, and academic scholars of Hinduism. They have tended to work together on book publishing and research. But academics and American Hindus, the rare pandit aside, haven't ever said much to each other in the past. I hope that changes, but I don't think it will in the foreseeable future. The bridges between them aren't easy to find. Is there even a map? Why should they even be found? American Hinduism is thus defined by two different streams of discussion: one that has all the technicalities and richness of academia, and the other that has the passion and conviction of a lived faith. Each can probably live in isolation from the other, but a different and arguably more productive future is possible too.

The historical precedents for the divide between the two groups may go back as far as pre-colonial India, wherein a particular person's relationship with her or his Hindu tradition would have been mediated between a local family priest, a temple priest, and a scholarly teacher, *acharya*. The first two may have known very little about the finer points of history, philosophy and theology, while the third may not have been easily accessible to the average person. As a result, an average Hindu may not have had the ability to study, say, the works of Acharya Shankara, the great ninth century Advaita theologian, or of Abhinavagupta, the great tenth century Shaiva theologian, even if she or he would self-identify as part of their tradition. Those structures and centers for the study of

Hinduism in India are dwindling as I think many Hindu scholars in India would lament. The development of the academic and theological space for Hindu scholars and students would be *new* for Hinduism in America because it would need to redefine the form in which the education would take place, the language in which it would take place, and the types of issues it would need to incorporate so as to enable Hindus to speak meaningfully to fellow Americans.

I think that the negative reactions of Hindus against academic scholars of Hinduism is, firstly, mostly symbolic because it cannot have a long-term impact on the academy, but more importantly, it arises out of a sense of disempowerment and fear. There isn't a quality constructive body of literature produced from within a Hindu theological community in the US to counter the technical and what many might see as incorrect or offensive claims of American and European academic scholars of Hinduism. There are a few books produced here and there by independent American Hindus, but not a concerted and systematic program for research and publication.

As stated above, other major religions in the US have *many* places in which they can study their traditions theologically, that is, a context that is deeply informed by texts, histories, and languages as well as spiritual and ritual piety. Indeed the oldest and wealthiest schools in the US were created just for that purpose. I am not suggesting that American Hindus adopt the exact same model, although I do think it is one that has been remarkably successful for at least 800 years, if one were to include the European counterparts such as Oxford and Cambridge, the University of Paris, or the University of Bologna. If it is not the European university model, then *something* needs to be developed. American Hindus at least need to generate a discussion about *what* Hindu education could look like in 5, 10, or 500 years from now.

Do they want rural hermitages for contemplative study, practice, and conversation with subtle minds, or grand stone buildings in power centers for direct discourse with political and social influence, or something in between, or both? What books are needed to build libraries? Who will care for them? Which scholars are to be engaged? What topics, languages, and Shastras are to be taught? How will they be taught? Are degrees to be offered? What types? A BA in Hindu philosophy, or a Tirtha in Nyaya or Vedanta? What type of relationship between study and *sadhana* will be constructed for students and faculty? These are important questions that any religious tradition needs to answer for itself. As far as I know, Hindus are not asking them as a community in the US. Once they are answered, Hindus need to step forward and *invest* in the models they construct. They need to encourage their children to not only become competent engineers and doctors, but learned representatives of their heritage. Hindus need to continue to build temples and support their priests that worship in them, but they also need to support the scholars who can explain why this worship is important, what it means, and why it should be taken seriously by their fellow Americans.

I can understand why American Hindus might not want to imitate the American educational system. It is based on the British and European system. The British taught Hinduism within the context of their larger nation building imperialistic empire. The result was that their views were not always sympathetic toward Hinduism or accurate representations of Hinduism. To study Hinduism in a university context might be seen as or felt as embracing the colonial powers that were shed in 1947. But it is important to remember that Hinduism has always had its own powerful methods of teaching, whether we are talking about the oral recitation of the

Veda taught from father to son, the great monastic institutions of North and South Vaishnava and Advaita traditions, or the learned groups of Shaiva ascetics and householders. In addition to the questions I asked above, Hindus in the US need to think about what aspects of their own history they can draw upon to rethink themselves in the US, and which aspects of European and American history they can use to their own benefit. I think that American Hindus are an important and vital part of contemporary American life, that they will be here for as long as there is an America, but that there should be and could be greater effort and greater agency taken in the development and determination of their own future, specifically with regard to the creation of Hindu educational systems.

In conclusion, I would contend that a thriving American Hindu intellectual tradition—one capable of responding to the challenges and opportunities of the American academic system and political forces—will never develop unless American Hindus take it upon themselves to develop one. One can create another petition to ban professor X or book Y, and academic scholars of India can continue to sabotage funding from Hindu organisations they deem unworthy. But what does that look like in 50 years? Lots of Internet bans and petitions and even less opportunity to research and teach Hinduism to the eager minds that want to learn it. It won't change the actual study of Hinduism in the academy very much. There is too much private and public funding behind it.

This negative approach will not create independent seats of learning for the Hindu communities, but will only further a divide between American academics and American Hindus—I am not suggesting the two groups are mutually exclusive because there is an overlap. These seats of Hindu study and practice can develop, and should develop, by creating places for Hindu scholars to

teach young Hindus how to think faithfully and critically about their tradition with the intellectual resources—this will require the financial support of Hindus themselves. It will require a sober reflection on what Hindu education in the US should look like. I hope American Hindus will *think* about the education of their children and then swiftly and generously *invest* in it. ☞

Notes and References

1. See Jeffery D Long, 'Pick a Side, We're at War!', *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 4 September 2014, for a discussion of the petition against Wendy Doniger and an analysis of the political, social, and intellectual issues that surround it. <<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/pick-side-war/#!>> accessed 15 September 2016.
2. See Rishi Iyengar, 'Indian Academics Demand the Removal of Top American Scholar From a Harvard Project', *Time*, 2 March 2016, for a discussion of how and why some of Sheldon Pollock's work is opposed. <<http://time.com/4244326/india-harvard-sheldon-pollock-academics-petition-murty-library/>> accessed 15 September 2016.
3. In 'California to Revise How India Is Portrayed in Textbooks', *The New York Times*, 19 May 2016, Jennifer Medina describes some of the controversy, highlighting how Hindus have addressed what they feel are misrepresentations of Hinduism in the school textbooks. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/20/us/california-to-revise-how-india-is-portrayed-in-textbooks.html?_r=0> accessed 16 September 2016.
4. See Mridula Chari, 'Why A University in California is in Uproar Over Donations by a Hindu Right Group', *Scroll*, 18 January 2016 <<http://scroll.in/article/801953/why-a-university-in-california-is-in-uproar-over-donations-by-a-hindu-right-group>> accessed 16 September 2016. This story is about how a group of Hindus tried to give about \$3 million US dollars to a state school for the study of Hinduism and how it was refused by the university for fear of being unduly influenced by Hindu political movements.
5. This is the letter and petition that most likely caused the UC Irvine administration to reject the money from Hindu organisations: 'Open Letter to the University of California, Irvine', *Ipetitions* <<http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/open-letter-UCI>> accessed 16 September 2016.
6. See Amod Lele, 'How Not to Defend Hinduism in Academia', 09 August 2009 <<http://loveofallwisdom.com/blog/2009/08/how-not-to-defend-hinduism-in-academia/>> accessed 16 September 2016.

Sama Veda Manuscripts



Vivekananda's Addresses at the Parliament of Religions: Reflections on the Historic Significance of A Landmark Document

Dr Sukanya Ray

SWAMIJI'S ADDRESSES at the Parliament of Religions—presented on the floor of the Parliament in Chicago on 11, 15, 19, 20, 26, and 27 September 1893—have few parallels in history. This unique document marked philosopher-saint Swami Vivekananda's scholarship and oratory of the highest order in the philosophy of religion. It brought about in the aftermath of its presentation in that august religious assembly, the wholesome estimation of India by the world, the West especially, giving India strength and confidence as a nation. And, it signalled the global movement towards a new spirituality. In these terms, the present article reflects on the historic significance of this landmark document.

I

The full significance of Swamiji's addresses,¹ as delivered at the Parliament cannot be appreciated unless I explain below, the kind of mindset and predispositions that Swamiji had to encounter in the US on the eve of the Parliament.

Whatever might have been the officially stated objectives of the Parliament,² some of the organisers had religious axes to grind, their unstated objective being to prove through the Parliament the superiority, uniqueness, and even the finality of Christianity as a religion. Reverend

John Henry Barrows, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Chicago and the chairman of the general committee to oversee the Parliament, for example, otherwise unfailing in his courtesy towards the assembled delegates, nevertheless observed: 'We believe that Christianity is to supplant all other religions, because it contains all the truth there is in them and much besides, revealing a redeeming God.'³ In the same vein, one bishop in the US advised the organisers to 'make use of the immense gathering to usher in the triumph of his [Jesus Christ's] truth' (24–5). The Archbishop of Canterbury observed that the Christian religion was the *one religion* and that other religions could not be granted equality or parity vis-a-vis the Christian religion in the Parliament of Religions (20–2).

Apart from the complex over the superiority of the Christian religion, colour complex was also there, particularly in the Southern states of the US. Only a year before the Parliament, that is in 1892, Mississippi passed its law making it obligatory for the Negroes of the state to pay poll tax for at least eight months before an election in order to be entitled to vote. This meant that the abolition of slavery could not really bring in improvement in the conditions of Negroes or lessen the prejudice of the Whites against them,

a situation that led Swamiji to observe: 'Today, they [Negroes] are the property of nobody. Their lives are of no value; they are burnt alive on mere pretences. They are shot down without any law for their murderers; for they are niggers, they are not human beings, they are not even animals.'⁴

The colour complex also found an expression in the anti-Asiatic laws passed by the US Congress and several state legislatures. The Chinese exclusion Act of 1882 passed by the US Congress as also the anti-Japanese laws passed in 1893—the very year of the Parliament of Religions—by the Pacific Coast states were pointers towards the race prejudice prevailing in the US. Swamiji himself was a victim of racial intolerance in the US on several occasions. In the days preceding the Parliament he was ill-treated on the streets of Chicago and narrowly escaped being mobbed on the streets of Boston. 'On account of his darkish skin, he was taken to be a Negro and he never attempted to save himself by saying that he was Oriental. A friend once expostulating with him on this account, he replied, "What! Rise at the expense of another!"'⁵ Sister Nivedita clearly expresses Swamiji's attitude towards fellow human beings, particularly blacks, in the following words:

His great acumen was yoked to a marvellous humanity. Never had we dreamt of such a gospel of hope for the Negro as that with which he rounded on an American gentleman who spoke of the African races with contempt. And when, in the Southern States he was occasionally taken for 'a coloured man,' and turned away from some door as such ... he was never known to deny the imputation. 'Would it not have been refusing my brother?', he said simply when he was asked the reason of this silence.⁶

Along with religious bigotry and racial intolerance, materialism too had its impact on the US at the time Swamiji visited that country. In

fact, materialism was the ruling philosophy of life for most Americans, with money mattering to them more than anything else. Religion was fine to the extent it provided the means to prosperity in the form of money, health, beauty, or long life. 'The bulk of the [American] nation had been taught by their faith, which was Calvinistic, that God was behind the businessman, who in seeking his self-interest was brining about the welfare of all and so contributing human progress. This particular religious belief, which Vivekananda found to be ingrained in the minds of Americans at large, was reinforced by the speculations of Adam Smith and other classical economists, who taught that the individual could best contribute to the advancement of civilization by devoting himself to moneymaking.'⁷ And of the money that the Americans were making through their materialistic attitude—a good amount of that—in fact, millions of their dollars, they were spending through their missionaries for converting heathens in Asia and Africa and that too when in their own country only about 46 per cent⁸ of the total population belonged to some church or the other in Christianity. For most Americans, enjoyment was their God. As for American missionaries, evangelism was the name of the game.

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In such a context, that a section of the Christian clergy would seek to push through the Parliament the idea of the superiority of Christianity over all other religions and even the finality of Christianity in all matters of religion was not surprising. Such parochialism, exclusivity, and narrow-mindedness were against all that Swamiji learned and stood for. The liberal religious atmosphere of his family, his education in English and Sanskrit, his exposure to Western and Indian philosophy, particularly to Indian sacred books, his spiritual training under his master Sri

Ramakrishna—a living embodiment of the Vedantic oneness, who taught him with his life's examples 'the truth that all religions were one, that they were all paths leading to the selfsame goal, the selfsame God'⁹ and his own realisation of the divinity of beings made him controvert the narrow, parochial, and partial view of religion as propagated by a section of the Christian clergy.

Invariably, the theme that Swamiji offered instead to the august Parliament of Religions in his inaugural address delivered on 11 September 1893 was the universality of religious truth to the effect that God was in every religion, not in any particular religion to the exclusion of other religions, that purity and holiness could not be the monopoly of any particular religion, that the end of religion could be pursued through the path of any religion and that exclusive claims towards superiority or finality of any particular path of any particular religion brings in its wake parochialism and narrow-mindedness which, in turn, inhibit the development of human beings. Romain Rolland expresses universality as the characteristic note of Swamiji's speech as follows: 'His speech was like a tongue of flame. Among the grey wastes of cold dissertation it fired the souls of the listening throng. ... Each of the other orators had spoken of his God, of the God of his sect. He—he alone—spoke of all their Gods, and embraced them all in the Universal Being.'¹⁰

In an incisive analysis of the reason for uncharitable feelings between the followers of different religions, presented to the Parliament on 15 September 1893, Swamiji observed that the reason lay in the insularity of the religious outlook of the followers. Having lived in the little world of her or his faith, a follower takes her or his little world as the whole world and tends to become intolerant of people believing otherwise. Such an attitude born of little mentality taken to the extreme, produces fanaticism. The solution

to such problem, said Swamiji, lay in the transcendence of the little mentality, of the little self by human beings and in the embracing of their real Self in the universal Being.

It is only by embracing the real and the universal in us that we truly develop ourselves as human beings. This is the theme that Swamiji developed more fully in his presentation before the Parliament on 19 September 1893 whereby he taught human beings everywhere as to how best they could bring about their highest development as human beings by orienting religion to that end. That human soul is the manifestation of the universal soul and that human being in its essential nature is the ever-existing Atman living in a body—is the main thrust of Swamiji's teaching in this regard. The body dies but the soul does not. However, the soul goes on evolving. As a body acquires certain tendencies from heredity, so a soul acquires certain tendencies through its past actions and by the law of affinity finds its new centre in a body which is the fittest instrument for the display of these tendencies. This process of evolution for the soul goes on till it becomes one with the universal soul.

If by the law of causation, by past actions, so to say, the human soul goes on evolving, then, is there no escape from this or hope ever for human beings to be free from a seemingly endless cycle of causation? Swamiji's answer is that the human soul, in its essence, though being ever free, unbounded, holy, pure, and perfect, is somehow overtaken by maya. Thus, being oblivious of its real nature, it comes under the bondage of matter. As such, human beings who in their real nature are divinities on earth, begin to think of themselves as sheep, though, in the essence of their nature, they are lions. Having thus analysed the nature of human beings, Swamiji exhorted them to come up in fulfilment of their true nature. To quote his inspiring words: 'Come up, O lions,

and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortals, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.’¹¹

So, human beings need not despair. They can escape from the ‘endless’ prison of cause and effect by realising their true nature as divinities on earth. Such realisation can be pursued through non-discrimination, psychic control, selfless love, or selfless work. Through steadfast living and manifestation of the divinity within, by any of these means, human beings will gradually become pure and divine and will eventually attain liberation from the bonds of imperfection, which will bring about one’s oneness with the universal soul. Swamiji assures human beings and asserts that it is possible to attain oneness with the universal soul even in this life itself (1.13) through constant struggles to that end. Thus, as per Swamiji’s formulation, becoming one with the universal soul or experiencing the Absolute constitutes the core of religion. As he asserts, Advaita is the only logical conclusion of Religion: ‘Science has proved to me that physical individuality is a delusion, that really my body is one little continuously changing body in an unbroken ocean of matter, and Advaita (unity) is the necessary conclusion with my other counterpart, soul’ (1.14).

So far as the ultimate goal is concerned, science and religion are both striving for the same goal, that is, perfect unity. As Swamiji pointed out, Chemistry was in search for that one element—out of which all others could be made. Physics was in search for that one energy of which all the others are manifestations. Religion was engaged in a similar enterprise—being in the search for that One who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world, the one soul of which all other souls are but manifestations. In both science and religion, it is through ‘multiplicity and duality, that the ultimate unity is reached’ (1.15).

Swamiji did not deny the multiplicity of religions. It was his firm view nevertheless that religion, ideally speaking, should be universal in the following respects. In embracing every human being from the lowest to the highest, in denying any place whatsoever to persecution or intolerance in religion, in recognising divinity in every woman and man, and in aiding humanity to realise its own true, divine nature (1.19).


In giving the Parliament of Religions the essentials of religion, Swamiji gave to humanity at large a new concept of the human being and religion; that in its true nature, the human being is nothing but God, and that the human beings’s highest development and true fulfilment lies in the fulfilment of inherent and intrinsic divine nature and in helping one realise one’s own true nature. Religion, in the ultimate analysis, is nothing but realisation. Swamiji’s concept of religion, which links up the two concepts of divinity and development in respect of humans in a positive and progressive relationship is his special contribution at once to the thoughts on religion and human development.

III

In proclaiming through the Parliament to all the people of the world, the sovereignty of human nature, and in charting out the course of all humans towards the progressive realisation of divinity, Swamiji, the unknown wandering monk of India, became a world figure and he came to be known ever since as one who gave to the world the doctrine of the divinity of human beings. Did America ever learn anything like this before, and that too, from a ‘despised’ Hindu, or a ‘degraded heathen’? The answer is best given in the words of Honourable Mr Merwin-Marie Snell, President of the Scientific Section of the Parliament of Religions. Being an eyewitness to the Swamiji’s eminence in the Parliament and having called him on that count ‘the most popular and influential

man in the Parliament' and 'indeed a prince among men,' Mr Snell observed: 'Intense is the astonished admiration which the personal presence and bearing and language of Paramahansa Vivekananda have wrung from a public accustomed to think of Hindus—thanks to the fables and half-truths of the missionaries—as ignorant and degraded "heathen"; there is no doubt that the continued interest is largely due to a genuine hunger for the spiritual truths which India through him has offered to the American people. ... America thanks India for sending him.'¹²

The American press and well-known periodicals echoed the observations of Merwin-Marie Snell. The *New York Herald*, for example, wrote: 'He [Vivekananda] is undoubtedly, the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation' (1.428). If such approbation of the West indicated anything it was this—that Swamiji raised degraded India—the slave of foreign conquerors for the last thousand years, and the despised Hindu immensely in the eyes of the world, particularly the West. And he raised India no less in her own eyes. He gave the Indians back the belief in themselves. They now knew that they too were capable of doing great things. Apart from restoring their self-belief as a nation, Swamiji gave back to India her sense of pride in her civilisation and culture. Indeed, the doctrine of the divinity of human beings that he offered to the world as the new mantra for the development of human beings was now recognised as the distinct contribution of India to the world. Such new estimation of India found reflections in the words of a man who, after hearing Swamiji in the Parliament of Religions, said in amazement: 'That man a heathen ... and we send missionaries to his people. It would be more fitting that they should send missionaries to us' (1.429).

What follows from all this in conclusion is that Swamiji's addresses at the Parliament of Religions is a crucial historical document—invaluable for understanding his life and works, invaluable for its significance as a turning point in the history of modern India, and also invaluable for marking the rise of a new spiritual wave in the history of the world, and drawing the attention of humanity to this philosophy of religion that the human being is to become divine, that such is the human being's entitlement and ultimate destination, and that the whole purpose of religion is to help the human being reach that ultimate destination or that acme of perfection. 

Notes and References

1. See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 1.1–24.
2. The officially stated objectives, inter alia, were: 'To set forth the distinctive truths of each Religion and to enquire what light each Religion may offer to the other Religions of the world.' See *The World's Parliament of Religions*, ed. John Henry Barrows, 2 vols (Chicago: Parliament, 1893), 1.18.
3. *The World's Parliament of Religions*, 26–8.
4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 3.214.
5. Sailendra Nath Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda*, 3 vols (Chennai: Vivekananda Kendra, 2012), 2.618.
6. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, 5 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1995), 1.371–2.
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10. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, trans. E F Malcom-Smith (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), 29–30.
11. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 1.11.
12. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 1.436.

Sri Chaitanya as Affect and Epistemology in the Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita

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IN THE RICHLY LAYERED and plural text that the *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* is, Sri Chaitanya is one of the most referred to figures, at once an historical example through whom Sri Ramakrishna grounds the states of bhava and maha-bhava, yet, also mythical, in participating and extending the divine Eros of Radha or Srimati, herself. Even if it is possible to establish Radha as a historical personality, it is for her quality of affect, her absolute and complete self-forgetfulness in her love for Sri Krishna that she functions as myth and archetype to the Indian mind, setting absolute standards for love, both quotidian and spiritual. She becomes the pivot or the fulcrum through whom generations of poets and singers have explored the limits of self-transcendence offered by love, as an integral response to life. Sri Chaitanya becomes a participant in Radha's affective continuum by embodying in himself, her consummate love for Sri Krishna, and of being able to lose the world in a state of perfect divine Eros, that Sri Ramakrishna describes in the following manner in a song: '*Bon dekhe brindavan bhabe, samudra dekhe Sri Yamuna bhabe*; he sees the forest and thinks it is Vrindavan, and when he sees the sea, he thinks that it is the Yamuna.'¹

However, to the reader of the *Kathamrita*, Sri Ramakrishna, who often remained immersed in a state of samadhi, who was transported to intense bhava during kirtan singing, and who pined for his devotees with such longing that he felt that his heart was being wrung like a wet towel, inhabits

the same affective continuum as Radha and Sri Chaitanya. Mahendranath Gupta, M., describes Sri Ramakrishna: '*Nishidin haripreme—ma-rpreme—matoara*; constantly intoxicated with the love of Hari and Kali' (130). In this context, one is also reminded of how during his pilgrimage to Vrindaban with Mathuranath Biswas, Ganga-mata, a saintly woman of Vrindaban, identified Sri Ramakrishna as 'Dulali' or Radha.²

Thus, if in the *Kathamrita*, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Chaitanya, and Radha, seem simultaneous, where Radha is mythical, and the other two, historical personages, the text demonstrates how myth and history may mutually inhere in each other, and set up a rich universe of correspondences, parallels, and affective mutuality. Through Sri Ramakrishna's constant recall and remembrance of Radha and Sri Chaitanya, his ecstatic responses to songs from the *Gaurchandrika* and *Chaitanya Lila*, *madhura* resounds through the text, is constantly recalled and reinforced, creating an incredible sound universe, where Radha and Sri Chaitanya become powerful leitmotifs, both epistemologically and artistically. If Radha is *ananta premamayi*, eternal love-incarnate, who worshipped in the *madhura* rasa, then Sri Chaitanya who worshipped in the Radha mode, is similarly *premamay*, love-incarnate and a yogi in the *madhura* rasa. Sri Ramakrishna, who in Swamiji's words was 'love personified', was similarly both *premamay*, love-incarnate and *rasamay*, rasa-incarnate; so compelling was the joy

that emanated from him, through conversation, song, and his ecstatic response to Kali, Sri Krishna, Radha, and Sri Chaitanya.

Before one goes further, one needs to talk about the *madhura* bhava, of which Radha is the prime exemplar and Sri Chaitanya, an equally important one. And their inclusion in this text throws a different light on Sri Ramakrishna, where they function as extensions of each other, complementary to each other, and variations of each other, which unquestionably leads to great richness. The most important bhavas through which the Vaishnava worships Sri Krishna are *madhura*, love; *shanta*, quietitude; *dasya*, servanthood; *vatsalya*, childlike worship of God; and *sakhya*, friendship. These bhavas are all mentioned in the *Kathamrita* too. Sri Ramakrishna cites the case of Srimati or Radha and says: 'Srimati had *madhura* bhava.'³ He further adds that within the '*madhura* bhava' there is '*shanta*, *dasya*, *sakhya*, *vatsalya*' (ibid.) and says: 'I have the attitude of a child' (65). *Vatsalya*, which is to relate to God as a parent, is how Sri Ramakrishna related to Kali whom he called the 'Divine Mother'. Shivaprasad Bhattacharya claims that *premananda*, happiness over love; *bhumananda*, happiness in the world; and *brahmananda*, experience of the ultimate happiness of Brahman, come together in the *madhura* bhava, the bhava with which Radha worships Sri Krishna.⁴

The *tattva*, principle of Radha, also merges with *shakta-tattva*, the principle of the Divine Mother where the divine unity is seen in the conjunct figures of Shiva and Shakti or Brahman, Sri Krishna and Shakti, Radha. Refracted through this Shakta epistemology, Radha also becomes the *adya-shakti*. On 5 October 1884, Sri Ramakrishna refers to an incident where Yashoda, Sri Krishna's foster mother, not being able to bear the absence of Sri Krishna, seeks solace from Radha. Whereupon, Radha tells Yashoda that the latter should take a boon from her, because

she is *adya-shakti*.⁵ Radha is also Brahman's *bladini* form that allows the *lila*, divine play, of form, colour, beauty, emotion to take place, in infinite combinations and variations.⁶

Some of the most memorable moments of the *Kathamrita*, or one of the most charged descriptions in the *Kathamrita*, are of Sri Ramakrishna's ecstatic references to Radha and Sri Chaitanya, and his singing and dancing on such occasions. That Sri Ramakrishna was a great artist, in fact, a consummate artist, is well demonstrated in his frequent use of songs to elucidate subtle philosophical issues, and his use of stories, to constantly draw in the world of everyday lived and observed experience, with spiritual states, inabilities, progress, and elevation. He was a born musician and a born storyteller. His parables, like Jesus's, contain great immediacy, simplicity of appeal, and have a wide range of accessibility, because the language is direct and unpretentious. They are of the style of folk artists or *baul* songs, or Ramprasad's lyrics, where the spiritual aspirant speaks in simple language and homely metaphors, and draws her or him, depending on the reader's level of artistic and spiritual discrimination, to read wider and wider circles of meaning in these stories. This also locates Sri Ramakrishna, within a much grounded folk tradition of Bengal, which once again, strikes a resonating chord with the great mass involvement of the Sri Chaitanya movement.

I will now refer to the events of 18 June 1883. The occasion is the Panihati festival, where Sri Ramakrishna is described as dancing in front of the Radha-Krishna temple. M. refers to his state as '*gargar matoara*; drunk with ecstasy.'⁷ Sometimes he is described as passing into a state of samadhi. The tie between Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna that the text highlights leads to the mutuality of Radha-Sri Chaitanya-Sri Ramakrishna, and to the deepening and intensifying of the *madhura* bhava, and is brought out by narratorial comments

like the following, where M. says: 'The thousands who were assembled at the Panihati festival were thinking that definitely Sri Gauranga must have manifested himself in this great person. Some were thinking that he was Sri Gauranga himself' (ibid.).

After the dancing and the kirtan, Sri Ramakrishna sits down to talk with Nabadvip Gosvami. He tells him that when bhakti matures it becomes bhava, which leads to *maha*-bhava, which in turn leads to *prema* and after that '*vas-tulabh*; self-realisation or god realisation.' He further tells Nabadvip Gosvami: that 'Gauranga had *maha*-bhava. Also love. ... He jumped into the blue ocean thinking that it was the Yamuna.' He then adds: 'Jiva does not have *maha*-bhava or *prema*. They have only bhava. Sri Gauranga had three states, right?' Nabadvip answers: '*Antardasha*, entirely immersed in the Self; *ardhabahyadasha*, the consciousness is divided between the world and the Self; and *bahyadasha*, fully engaged or aware of the world.' Sri Ramakrishna responds: 'In the state of *antardasha*, he used to be in samadhi; in *ardhabahyadasha*, he used to only dance; and in *bahyadasha* he used to do *nama-sankirtana*, singing the names of God' (225).

An epistemological and intellectual dimension comes in with Sri Ramakrishna explicating Sri Chaitanya. Not only does he respond to Sri Chaitanya with joy, inhabiting his affective space like a close companion, but he also has keen intellectual perception of the many spiritual ontologies of this celebrated medieval Bengali saint. Therefore, a dialogue between Sri Ramakrishna's affect and intellect also takes place through Sri Ramakrishna's exegesis, adding to the splendour of both spiritual figures and of the *Kathamrita* as an intertextual and myriad-faceted text.

On 14 December 1883, Sri Ramakrishna tells Ramlal to sing the following kirtan. A kirtan often has an *akhar*, refrain, and it comes out in the following song through the words in the parenthesis:

Ramlal sings about Sri Gauranga's sannyasa:

Ki dekhilam re, Keshav Bharatir kutire

[Oh, what did I see in Keshav Bharati's house]

Aparupa jyoti, Sri Gauranga murati, du nayane prem bohe shatadhare

[The glorious and resplendent Gauranga, from whose eyes love flows out in mighty streams] (327).

The greatness of Radha's personality, and the rareness of the Radha-like state, is brought out through the haunting questions that the next song asks:

Radha-r dekha ki pay sakale

[Do all get to see Radha?]

Radhar prem ki pay sakale

[Can all love like Radha?] (327).

Sri Ramakrishna then asks Ramlal to sing the following song: 'Gaur and Nitai, you are two brothers', and then Sri Ramakrishna himself starts singing with Ramlal:

Gaur Nitai, tomra du bhai, param dayal hey prabhu

[Gaur and Nitai, you are two brothers, very compassionate lords]

(Ami tai shune esechi, hey nath)

[I have always heard that, O lords!]

Ami giyechhilam Kashipur-e, amay koye dilen Kashi Bisheshvar

[I had gone to Kashi and the Lord of Kashi, Kashi Vishveshvara, said to me]

O shey parabrahma Shachi-r ghar-e

[The *parabrahman* resides in Shachi's (Sri Chaitanya's mother) house]

(Ami chinechi hey parabrahma)

[I have recognised you, O Lord]

Ami giyechhilam anek thain, kintu emon dayal dekhi nai

[I have gone to many places, but nowhere have I seen like this]

(Tomader moto)

[Like the two of you]

Tomra braje chhile kanai balai, ekhon node eshe hole Gaur Nitai

[In Vraja, you were Krishna and Balaram, now in Nadia, you are Gaur and Nitai]

(*Shhey rup lukaye*)

[You have hidden that original beauty] (328).

I will now refer to another incident of 3 July 1884, which enacts a magical coalescence of song, dance; of songs to Kali and Sri Krishna. As Sri Ramakrishna dances on the occasion of Ratha Yatra in front of Balaram Bose's house, M. describes Sri Ramakrishna as being full of Sri Chaitanya's bhava (502). M. further states that it was as if Sri Gauranga was dancing full of love for Sri Krishna in *rasamandira*, Shrivasa's courtyard. M. says that Balaram's house was like Nabadvip from the outside and like Vrindavan from the inside. The song in this context is: '*Amar gaur nache sankirtane shribas angane bhaktagana sange*; my Gaur dances with devotees in Shrivasa's courtyard' (503).

Kennedy says:

Chaitanya gave himself whole heartedly to his musical worship, called *kirtan*. The courtyard of a certain Srivasa was the centre for the evening devotions. Here, night after night, Chaitanya found an atmosphere so highly emotionalized and a fellowship so congenial and enthusiastic as to arouse him to a high pitch of excitement. This courtyard figures very prominently in the history and hymnology of the sect in Bengal. Chaitanya himself in later days, when a sannyasi residing at Puri, used to speak of it with affection and a trace of homesickness.⁸

In another instance, when Sri Ramakrishna starts dancing ecstatically in response to Nilkantha's singing of kirtan, M. concludes that Sri Ramakrishna's room at Dakshineswar was like Shrivasa's courtyard.⁹ The educated and erudite references of the narrator and documenter of *Kathamrita* help to set up mythical as well as historical parallels and correspondences to Sri Ramakrishna's divine play at Dakshineswar.

These references widen and broaden the historical and mythical implications of this invaluable text. It creates a historical continuum, in

which Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna figure, it also creates a continuum *sahardya*, affect, whereby Bengal itself becomes implicated, whereby kirtan, the musical instruments, and dancing becomes a Bengali cultural and spiritual response. The added strain of Radha as an affective pivot, a centripetal source from which Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna are both taking their spiritual charge, brings bhakti and kirtan into a wider field of Indian spiritual modes. The past and the present inhere through myth and history, setting up intricate and rich interrelationships and correspondences. Dakshineswar, Vrindavan, and Nadia become coterminous and co-extended. Each inheres in the other and sets up an intricate and layered symbolic liturgy, which resounds with the *madhura* bhava. Panihati, Balaram Bose's house, and all such places are drawn into this magnificent universe of call, response, and echo. This interpenetration also makes the *Kathamrita* one of the most musically resonant of texts, as various melodies cross and interfuse.

The following incident in the *Kathamrita*, is a very interesting one. It is 5 October 1884. Nilkantha, the kirtan singer has come and Sri Ramakrishna asks him to sing a song to the Divine Mother. Nilkantha starts singing. When he sings, '*Jar jatay Ganga, tini Rajarajeshvari-ke hridaye dharan koriya achhen*; he who carries the Ganga on his head, carries Rajarajeshvari in his heart', Sri Ramakrishna goes into samadhi. The reference is obviously to Shiva. Intoxicated with divine love, Sri Ramakrishna starts dancing. Nilkantha and the devotees encircle him and sing and dance. What a scene of divine beauty and the transporting delight of music! How music, dance, and a common spiritual goal create these contingent and also permanent communities where love of the divine is established and resonates! M. says that the room was full of people who all seemed drunk with divine bliss. The place was reminiscent

of Shrivasa's courtyard. Sri Ramakrishna's devotee, Manmohan Mitra seemed to go into a trance. Women from his household had also come, and one of them, was also similarly affected (*ibid.*).

Soon Sri Ramakrishna started singing himself: '*Jader Hari bolte nayan jhure, tara tara dubhai eshechhe re*; 'those two brothers whose eyes brim with tears on hearing Hari's name, have come' (*ibid.*). After this ecstatic singing and dancing, Nilkantha boldly declares: 'You are none other than Gauranga' (632).¹⁰ Sri Ramakrishna is of course, incredulous and in his humble way says: 'What on earth! I am everyone's servant's servant. The wave is of the Ganga, not the Ganga of the wave.'¹¹

I will now refer to the kirtan singing on 24 April 1885. The various states of Radha or Srimati's yearning for Sri Krishna are described. Her state of complete abandonment on hearing Sri Krishna's flute and how she becomes desperate to see Sri Krishna are described. On hearing the words, '*Aha sakal madhuryamay Krishna-nam*; Oh, all sound is full of the sweet resonance of Sri Krishna's name', in the kirtan, Sri Ramakrishna cannot remain seated anymore, and stands up in a state of samadhi. On partially regaining consciousness, he sweetly keeps uttering the name, 'Krishna, Krishna'. He seems close to the state of Radha, who says in the kirtan: '*Je dekhechi yamuna-tate, shei dekhi ei chitrapate*'; 'the one whom I saw on the banks of the Yamuna, is the one who I see now in the painting.' This would imply a state of complete oneness with one's chosen ideal (816).

Therefore, we find the two distinct strands of the *madhura* bhava, one focussed on Radha and the other on Sri Chaitanya, closely interlocked or intertwined in the *Kathamrita*, where mention of Radha often leads to the mention of Sri Chaitanya and vice versa. The interlocking, interpenetration, and merging of the two heightens the quality of *madhura* based affect in the text, and sets up, as I have mentioned, a system of recall,

whereby each distinctive strand of *madhura* is refracted through the other, causing ever expanding levels of melodic and thought resonance.

Another interesting musical seam that enters the *Kathamrita*, comes in through the Kali or Shyama songs, which many of the kirtan singers mentioned here also had as part of their repertoire. In fact, it is a frequent occurrence that right after the bhava of the kirtan singing focussing on Radha and Sri Chaitanya, many of the kirtan singers, like Vaishnavacharan and Nilkantha, break out into Kali songs. Other singers like Ramlal and also Narendranath Datta also do the same during the Ratha Yatra day at Balaram Bose's house.

A significant instance is when Sri Ramakrishna comes to Adhar Lal Sen's house on 1 October 1884. Among the people who were present, there was Kedarnath Chatterjee, himself a kirtan singer, Vijayakrishna Goswami—a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, yet, initially born into a family of Sri Krishna worshippers—Baburam Ghosh, later Swami Premananda, and M. Vaishnavacharan, a renowned kirtan singer, who was also present, was requested by Sri Ramakrishna to sing. M. describes his voice as extremely sweet.

Vaishnavacharan starts with a song about Radha's journey to meet Sri Krishna, amidst difficult circumstances and also sings about the union of Radha and Sri Krishna. Dance is another performance-oriented response to life and music that the text sometimes highlights as Sri Ramakrishna responds in delight to kirtan and starts dancing. The above instance is a case in point. M. describes the situation: 'As soon as the kirtan of Radha and Sri Krishna's union started, Sri Ramakrishna started dancing and the devotees too, encircled him and danced. After the dancing was over, Sri Ramakrishna said to Vijayakrishna: "He [Vaishnavacharan] sings well."' Vaishnavacharan sings an oft-repeated song in the *Kathamrita*: '*Shri Gaurangashundor naba natabar, tapata*

kanchan kay; Shri Gauranga who has skin like molten gold is the new actor of this stage' (598).

Yet oddly, Vaishnavacharan, the kirtan singer, soon sings Kali or Shyama songs. This signals a change of mode, mood, and aesthetics. However, this must have been the cultural norm, where kirtan singers not only sang songs on Radha, Sri Krishna, and Sri Chaitanya, but also songs based on love for the divine mother Kali. All the bhavas flow into each other as Vaishnavacharan sings:

Shridurga nam japa sada rasana amar
[Oh, my tongue always chant Durga's name]
Durgame Shridurga bine ke kore nistar
[Who except Durga, will protect us during trouble?] (599).

The fact that Nilkantha, Vaishnavacharan, Ramlal, Narendranath, and Sri Ramakrishna all sang both Shakta and Vaishnava songs, attests to the rich plurality and synthesising characteristics of the Bengali culture. This is a culture marked by deep community appreciation of music, where the appreciation was so keen, that during moments of wholehearted musical response, the philosophical disputes between Shaktas and Vaishnavas would be forgotten. This great catholicity is to be seen in the figure of Sri Ramakrishna who often ordered for both modes of music, who constantly spoke of 'as many faiths, so many paths'. Attesting to the simultaneity of Kali and Sri Krishna worship, are the Radha-Govinda temples at two very significant Kali temples of Bengal, Dakshineswar and Kalighat.

In the *Kathamrita* all the bhavas flow into each other, reinforce and recall each other, set up rich parallels, contrasts and interfaces, startling juxtapositions, and interpenetrating symbolic layers that render the text inexhaustible and incomparable. Perhaps no other religious text in the world is this polyphonic or multitudinous, with a melodic resonance that is almost unsurpassable. Affect, performance, melody,

philosophy, and orality merge dramatically and unforgettably in this great text, which is also one of the most performance-oriented texts.

The impact of the rhythmical and melodic ethos of Sri Chaitanya's *sankirtana* lives in Bengal even today. Rabindranath Tagore modelled his song '*O amar desher mati*' from the kirtan '*Sonar Gaur kene kende elo O Narahari*'. The song is sung within and without nationalist contexts. The latest and most entrancing pop melody, arousing the magical power of the *sankirtana* is a song sung by the pop band *Bolpur Bluez*, which expresses deep yearning for the figure of Sri Chaitanya. The song carries the power to enfold hundreds within its rhythmical and melodic world: '*Boli chhede dile sonar Gaur, ar to pabona*; if I leave you gold-complexioned Gauranga, I will not get you again.'¹²



Notes and References

1. *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita: Srīma Kathita* (Bengali) (Kolkata: Udbodhan, 1997), 599. Translations are mine.
2. See Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play*, trans. Swami Chetanananda (St Louis: Vedanta Society of St Louis, 2003), 614.
3. *Kathamrita*, 64.
4. See Shivaprasad Bhattacharya, *Padavalir Tattvasoundarya O Kavi Rabindranath* (Bengali) (Kolkata: Rabindra Bharati Vishvavidyalaya, 1967), 55.
5. See *Kathamrita*, 630.
6. Melville T Kennedy translates from the second chapter of the *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, which explains *hladini* shakti: '*Hlādinī* is so named because of giving delight to Kṛṣṇa who tastes delight through that power. Kṛṣṇa himself is delight. *Hlādinī* is the cause of the *bhakta*'s delight; the essence of *hlādinī* is called *prema* [love]'. Melville T Kennedy, *The Chaitanya Movement: A Study of Vaishnavism in Bengal* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1993), 94. I thank Srīmat Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, for introducing me to Melville T Kennedy's book.

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Mandukya Upanishad

Swami Ranganathananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE 'CREATION OR MANIFESTATION of the *Jīvas* (embodied beings) from the Supreme Self, as stated in the Vedānta, is like the creation or manifestation of the⁷⁷ *ākasha* in a little, little form—just a limitation, appearing limited. 'Ether enclosed in a jar from the *Mahākāśa* (or the great and undifferentiated ether)' (ibid.). From which this space is born. When you make a pot, suddenly you develop a little *ākasha*. From this *ākasha*, this is born. There is no birth, only the unlimited appears to be limited.

That is to say, creation or manifestation is not real. As from that *Ākāśa* are produced such physical objects as the pot etc., similarly from the Supreme Self which is like the *Ākāśa*, are produced the entire aggregate of material entities, such as the earth etc., as well as the individual bodies, all characterised by causality, the entire production being nothing but mere imagination like that of the snake in the rope. Therefore it is said, 'the aggregates (of the gross bodies) are produced like the pot' etc. When the *Śruti*, with a view to the enlightenment of the ignorant, speaks of the creation or manifestation (of the *Jīvas*) from the *Ātman*, then such manifestation, being admitted as a fact, is explained with the help of the illustration of the creation of the pot etc., from the *Ākāśa* (140-1).

Jīva is like a spark from a fire. But, that is fire only. That is fire, this is fire. This is limited, that is unlimited. *Ākasha* does not really create the *Ākasha* enclosed within the pot. Language is like that. Human language has to use that statement.

The pot cannot be produced without space. Suppose there is no space in the pot, then it is not useful at all. If there is no space in the house, it is not useful at all. Chinese philosophers will say that the emptiness in the house is the importance of the house. So, emptiness is very important. Emptiness is space.

Limitation appears to be there; ignorance creates limitation. A knowing man will never say that this pot is born from that pot; ignorant people will say that, but a knowing man will not say. Space appears to be limited by this particular partition. That is why when you have a house here, nearby there is another house, and the compound wall is there. But the birds never recognise these limitations. And the bees, particularly, they come to your compound and steal your honey from the flowers. They don't recognise all these limitations: 'my property', 'your property'.

As on the destruction of the pot, now comes the next verse. Here is a pot and there is a pot and so much of *ākasha* is enclosed in it. It is born from that *ākasha* you will say, as you destroy the pot, what happens to the ether enclosed in the pot? It merges in the *ākasha*; it was a part of it and it is part of it even now. Similarly, the jivas merge in Brahman. Neither creation nor destruction is in itself real from the standpoint of the Advaitin.

'As any portion of *Ākāśa* enclosed in a pot being soiled by dust, smoke, etc.' (142). Now another example, in India we use the example of wine. Put wine in a pot, that pot becomes dirty,

we call it dirty. Any pot in which wine is put is considered to be dirty. Now, the pot is dirty but the space in the pot is never dirty.

The very fact that you are seeking knowledge shows that you are ignorant. Those who do not seek knowledge, they are always wise. Ignorance is wise.

We have forgotten our true nature and therefore, we are in search of it now. In ignorance all these goes on. Suppose you knew the mind, will you be running about in dream, when you knew the whole thing is in the mind? You don't know the whole thing is the mind. Therefore you have got so many activities in dream. When you know the whole thing is the mind, then none of these will exist there as separate things. Causality in dream is an illusion. Because the mind alone is; there is no elephant jumping at you. You say my heart is beating because the elephant is running behind me. All that is mere mind. You will dream all these things. Whatever experience you have here, you will have there. Dream will continue. It is a physical experience. Everybody has passed through these various states. As in the waking; if he has no waking, he has no dream. But delusion will come. For him waking and dream are the same.

In the dream, you will be just dreaming. But at the back of it, the total knowledge of the Atman is always there. It is just like eating food. He eats rice, he eats chapatti or bread. He won't eat a table or a chair because these are separate things for him. Because he is looking at it from the physical point of view. So, worldly experiences continue at a worldly level without this delusion involved in it.

You ask this question in dream: when did this dream begin? You will never get the answer; it is beginningless. To the dreamer, dream is a beginningless experience. When you wake up, then you realise that you were dreaming.

Within ignorance there is no beginning. It is called beginningless ignorance, *anadi* maya. Gaudapada has used that word in the first book. When the jiva, asleep from the beginning of time, wakes up from that sleep, then he realises that he was never like this. Not that at this time I am free, even then you were free, but you were asleep at that time. It is beginningless ignorance, but endful. Ignorance can be beginningless but you can put an end to it, as soon as knowledge comes. A room is dark from the beginning of time. Light a matchstick and immediately the darkness ends. Knowledge destroys darkness immediately.

That is another way of explaining this subject. As you bring in the concept of shakti and all that, it is another way of explaining. This is one way: This is all unreal. We go to the real and then look back to the unreal—everything is Brahman. When the shakti idea comes, Brahman and the whole of duality that we see is a play of Shakti, which is also Brahman. Unification of universe in Shakti, manifested universe.

For example, say you have realised Brahman but you eat when you are hungry. Why don't you have the same feeling for others? At that level you are just a human being with human attitudes. People respond to the suffering of people, you serve them. But when you feel hungry, you want food. Why not have the same with others?

It is a play and my going to serve that person to remove the suffering, is also a play. It is not half play, but full play. My working for the good of others is also a play. Take the thing in its totality, then it looks alright. Take the things in half, and then it does not look well. It is like a man who said that the deity controlling the right hand is Indra; that is the belief. So, one brahmin killed a cow. They came to punish him. He said: 'Why do you punish me?

I did not do it. Indra did it, because he is in charge of this hand.' So, that fellow was given punishment. He was told, 'If Indra has done it; you take now this punishment.' When it comes to punishment he wants to pass it on to Indra. But when it comes to anything pleasant he says, 'I will take it now, it is mine.' Never do so. Be consistent. Good or evil—you must take everything, either God or you. Good is yours, bad is God's—that's not the way. That's human temptation. That should not be. Consistency; everything is the play of the Lord. True. When suffering comes to you, you must say, 'This also is play'. Then there is no harm. But when others get it, it is a play, and when I get it, it is serious. I go to the doctor. That should not be. Be consistent.

'As any portion of *Ākāśa* enclosed in a pot being soiled by dust, smoke, etc., all such other portions of *Ākāśa* enclosed in other pots are not soiled' (ibid.). This pot's *ākasha* is soiled. This jiva is suffering along with the judge; you need not be, that is explained. A pot is soiled here; the *ākasha* in the other pot is not soiled. And yet really speaking, no *ākasha* is ever soiled. 'So is the happiness etc., of the *Jīvas*, i.e., the happiness, misery, etc., of one *Jīva* do not affect other *Jīvas* (ibid.).

One person's misery affects another only by sharing. In one house somebody is dead and they are weeping. In the other house nobody is dead and weeping. That's it. A pot has *ākasha*. There is dirt in it. The other pot has *ākasha*. This dirt does not affect that *ākasha* in that pot. That is why these diverse experiences are explained from that point of view—limitations.

The opponent contends that the origin of memory is to be found in the contact of the mind with *Ātman*. But this argument is not valid. For, *Ātman* is ever present. In that case the mere effort of the mind to remember anything should

bring its memory. But this does not happen. In spite of all our efforts we often fail to bring back the memory of many past events. Further, *Ātman* is indivisible and without parts. Therefore any impression that arises in the *Ātman* cannot be confined to any particular part of the *Ātman*. If such be the case, then all beings should remember a thing at the same time. Still another difficulty of this theory is that, *Ātman* being without parts, one should remember all things at one and the same time. Hence no rule exists regarding memory (148).

In the next verse, form, function, and name—three beautiful ideas are there—*rupa*, *karya*, *samakhya*. 'Though form, function and name are different here and there yet this does not imply any difference in the *Ākāśa* (which is one). The same is the conclusion (truth) with regard to the *Jīvas*' (ibid.). Form, function, and name.

So, Shankara says that in the objection, the opponent says: 'If *Ātman* be one then how is it possible to justify the variety of experiences pointing to the multiplicity of *Ātman* (which is explained as being) due to *Avidyā* (ignorance)?' (148–9). So many different experiences are there. How can you say that the *Ātman* is one?

This is thus explained: In our common experience with regard to this *Ākāśa* (which is really one), we find variety of forms, such as large, small, etc., in respect of the *Ākāśa* enclosed in a pot, a water-bowl and a cover. Similarly, there are various functions (of the same *Ākāśa*) such as fetching water, preserving water and sleeping. Lastly there are various names as the ether enclosed in the jar (*ghata*), ether enclosed in a water-bowl (*karaka*), etc., caused by different *upādhis* [meaning limiting objects]. All these different forms, functions and names are matters of common experiences. This variety of experience caused by different forms, etc., is not true from the standpoint of the ultimate Reality. For, in reality *Ākāśa* never admits of any

variety. Our empirical activities based upon the difference in *Ākāśa* are not possible without the instrumentality of an adventitious *upādhi*. As in the illustration, the *Jīvas* (embodied beings) which may be compared to the *Ākāśa* enclosed in jar, are regarded as different, this difference being caused by the *upādhis*. [The body-mind complex is called *upādhi*]. This is the conclusion of the wise (149).

Difference is not in the consciousness but in the medium which expresses the consciousness. Just like the bulb. Electricity is the same. You put different bulbs, you get different lights, does not make any difference to electricity. The medium through which it expresses makes all the difference—that is exactly the meaning. Same electricity used in different ways; different ways of using it. In this electronic age, how many things we do with electricity! All are different but electricity is just one. The *upādhis* are different. This is the strong point of Vedanta, which Schrödinger writes: ‘Consciousness is one, of which the plural is unknown.’ Very definite. *Upādhis* make differences. If you find difference in consciousness, it is due to maya splitting up into many. The word ‘maya’ he uses there. One appears as many.

As the *ghatakasha*—these are all common expressions in Vedanta. *Ghata* means a pot; *akasha* enclosed in a pot. There are three types of *akasha*: *ghatakasha*, *akasha* enclosed in a pot; *mahakasha*, the infinite expanse of *akasha* outside; and *chidakasha*, *akasha* of pure consciousness. These are physical realities; that is non-physical. *Ghatakasha*, *mahakasha*, *chittakasha*—that is the third; the space in mind. Mind also has a sense of space like in dream. The sense of space in mind is *chittakasha*. And finally, *chidakasha*, of pure consciousness, infinite expanse of pure consciousness. That is the last. So from *akasha*, limited to unlimited.

As the *Ghatakāśa* (i.e., the ether portioned off by the pot) is neither the (evolved) effect nor part of the *Ākāśa* (ether), [is it evolved or is it part; *akasha* has no part at all] so is *Jīva* (the embodied being) neither the effect nor part of the *Ātman*. ...

Our experience of the variety of forms, functions etc., associated with the ether enclosed in the pot etc., is true from the standpoint of the ultimate Reality (and not illusory, as you say). ...

[The answer is] No, this cannot be so. For, the ether enclosed in the pot cannot be the evolved effect of the real ether in the same way as the ornament etc., are the effect of gold or the foam, bubble, moisture, etc., are the effect of water. Nor, again is the *Ghatakāśa* (the *Ākāśa* in the pot) similar to the branches and other parts of a tree (150).

Just a part you can say. This *akasha*, part of it is here. *Akasha* has no part. It is impartible. What makes it appear to be parted, is that pot form. Break the pot form, all goes. What was one becomes one again.

As *Ghatakāśa* is neither a part (limb) nor an evolved effect of the *Ākāśa*, so also the *Jīva* (the embodied being), compared to the *Ākāśa* enclosed in the pot, is neither, as in the illustrations given above, an effect nor part (limb) of the *Ātman*, the ultimate Reality, which may be compared to the *Mahākāśa* (i.e., the undifferentiated expanse of ether) [space outside]. Therefore the relative experience based upon the multiplicity of *Ātman* is an illusion (from the standpoint of the ultimate Reality) (ibid.).

From the point of reality, it is an illusion. But in normal life we have it. Just like in dream state, everything is okay. We are running, jumping, eating, everything. But from the ultimate point of view there is no such experience called dream separate from the dreamer. It is all the dreamer only. The *Atman* is everything, is the conclusion. I am sure that Schrödinger has read this book.

Many people read this book, because it discusses causality and they are very interested in that; from Eddington onwards.

‘As ether appears to the ignorant children to be soiled by dirt, similarly, the *Ātman* also is regarded by the ignorant as soiled’ (151). As sinful, as impure, etc. Children will say the sky is murky. Isn’t it? Sky is never murky. Similarly, you say that the Atman is murky, sinful, and impure. Absolutely false it is.

‘*Ākāśa* (ether)—which, to those who know, the real nature of a thing by discrimination, is never soiled by any contamination’ (ibid.). So the discriminating mind will say *ākasha* is never dirty, never murky, no dirt can touch it.

So also the Supreme *Ātman*, the Knower, the innermost Self directly perceived within, is regarded by those who do not know the real nature of the innermost Self, as affected by the evils of misery, action and result. But this is not the case with those who can discriminate. As in the desert are never found foam, waves, etc., though thirsty creatures falsely attribute these things to it (ibid.).

When you see a mirage, even you can see the foam, the waves—everything you can see. Discrimination is not there. The Atman is never affected. That is why throughout this Vedantic literature, the purity of the Atman, the true nature of man is always maintained. Whatever you see as impurity, you find in some other way, but never the Atman.

‘*Ātman*, in regard to its birth, death, going and coming (i.e., transmigration) and its existing in different bodies, is not dissimilar to the *Ākāśa* (i.e., the *Ghaṭākāśa* or the ether portioned off by a jar)’ (152). All these are part of the pot only, not the *ākasha*. The body has birth, death; not the *ākasha*. The Gita also emphasises this point; it is continued and developed here.

Now comes an inclusive statement:

All aggregates (such as body, etc.) [*Sanghataḥ*, aggregate; is a technical term in Buddha’s discourses and in Vedānta] are produced by the illusion of the *Ātman* (i.e., the perceiver) as in a dream. No rational arguments can be adduced to establish their reality, whether they be equal or superior (to one another). ...

The aggregates of body etc., answering to the pots etc., in the illustration, are produced—like the body etc., seen in dream or conjured up by the magician—by the illusion of the *Ātman*, i.e., the *Avidyā* (ignorance) which is in the perceiver. That is to say, they do not exist from the standpoint of the ultimate Reality. ...

The bodies of gods etc., on account of their superiority and adorability cannot be unreal. This is an argument of the ignorant, as all bodies, whether belonging to gods or lower animals, are constituted of five elements. Hence there is no intrinsic difference between gods and other beings. It is like the various objects seen in the dream, such as gods, birds, men, beasts, etc. They are made of same thing, viz., the mindstuff. Therefore, they are of the same nature known to be unreal when the dream vanishes. Similarly a wise man knows all bodies from *Brahmā* to the blade of grass to be unreal (153–4).

Bodies are unreal, they come and go.

‘The Supreme *Jīva* (i.e., the non-dual Brahman) is the self of the (five) sheaths, such as the physical etc., which have been explained in the *Taittirīyaka Upaniṣad*’ (154). Five sheaths of the *Taittirīya Upanishad*: food sheath, bio sheath, psychic sheath, intellectual sheath, the bliss sheath, and finally the Atman. These are the five sheaths, *pañchakośha*, which have been explained in the *Taittirīya Upanishad*. ‘That the Supreme *Jīva* is like the *Ākāśa* has already been described by us (in the third verse of this chapter) (ibid.). There are so many of these beautiful statements in the *Taittirīya Upanishad*.

‘*Rasa* etc., are the five sheaths such as the

physical sheath (*Annarasamaya*), the vital sheath (*Prāṇamaya*) etc.' (154–5). *Manomaya*, *viññanamaya*, *anandamaya*, etc.—five sheaths are there and the Atman is not any of these sheaths. It is a sword. The word sheath is used like in the case of a sword. You put a sword in a sheath, then another sheath, another sheath, five sheaths and the sword is inside. Sheath looks like the sword; we mistake it to be the sword. Actually it is only a sheath. And finally, the Atman, the real Self.

In Buddha's first lecture in Benaras, he said that these five aggregates, *skandhas*—people take that to be the Atman. Some take the body, some take the *prana*—none of these is true. Negate all this, that much he said. In the end, there is an Atman left, that he did not say. So Buddhists believe in a non-Atman theory. A separate jiva in each of us is not there; that Vedanta also accepts. But there is no Atman at all, some Buddhists say. And they got into trouble, they became nihilists. Only sheaths are there, nothing in the sheath—that is one school of the Buddhists, *śūnyavāda*, they call it, nihilistic school of Buddhism. They could not stand.

This time I asked Suzuki, he said yes, the Vedantic idea is correct. One infinite truth is there, but individual selves are not there. That is exactly what Vedanta says. Yourself, myself—these are all illusions. This sheath creates all this illusion. But there is no ultimate one infinite Atman—that some Buddhists say. And, Suzuki said, 'We don't accept that.' There is one infinite. Otherwise, there is no fun in all this trouble. He becomes simply a zero in the end. That is why I asked Suzuki when he came to Delhi. I arranged a lecture in the ashrama. Very nice, venerable old man and a nice, young Japanese lady as the secretary, very bright. And I have got a photo coming down from the hall, she in front, on the lower step, on the higher step Suzuki, and I am there. That photo is there. Similarly a Sinhalese

scholar from Sri Lanka, Malalasekera—he was a great Buddhist scholar. He also said that this Vedantic way of putting this is the correct way. They accept this idea. The individual selves are not true, but one infinite self is true. So, *anattavāda* theory that there is no Atman refers only to the jiva, separate jivas. That is the indication in the famous book *Vedantic Buddhism of the Buddha* by Jennings, a British scholar—a big thick book.⁷⁸

Don't speak anything about that Atman, Buddha kept silent. Don't ask anything further about that. That if you say this, that means affirmation means negation. Atman cannot be affirmed or negated. So, keep quiet. So Buddha kept quiet. But others didn't keep quiet. They went on positing all sorts of things. That's how Buddhism came into trouble philosophically. Then Shankaracharya came and what Shankara said is Buddha's Advaita. Buddha was an Advaitin and Shankara only showed it—this is correct in that way. A lecture on 'Bhagavan Buddha and Our Heritage' is a thorough exposition of this subject. What is the meaning of Buddha's silence? What are its consequences? The Vedantic background of Buddha you will find in that lecture.⁷⁹

'The description by pairs, as that of the *Ākāśa*, which is in the earth as also in the stomach (though referred to separately).'⁸⁰ In the Upanishad there is a reference to this one: *Akasha* in the stomach, *akasha* in the earth, *akasha* in this, *akasha* in that—these are all *akasha*, which is only one—none of these things can cut it into various bits. 'Applies equally to the Supreme Brahman described in the *Madhu-Brāhmaṇa* (a chapter in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, as being both in the corporeal (*Adhyātma*) and in the celestial (*Adhidaiva*) regions' (ibid.).

'In the words "all this is the Supreme *Ātman*, the Brahman, the bright, the immortal Person

who is both the celestial (superphysical—*Adhidaiva*) and the corporeal (*Adhyātma*), who is in this earth as well as the Knower incorporated in the body” (ibid.). That is the text in the Upanishad. ‘Brahman alone is described in order to indicate the limit at which duality vanishes. Where does this occur? It is thus replied: It occurs in the *Madhu-Brāhmaṇa* chapter which is known as the chapter dealing with the Knowledge of Brahman. It is because therein is described the nectar (i.e., immortality) which is known as *Madhu*’ (ibid.). The word *madhu* in Sanskrit is the name for honey, nectar, and wine, as it gives us the highest bliss. *Madhu*, in the sense of the highest bliss. ‘This Brahman is like the *Ākāśa* which is said to be the same or identical though separately indicated as existing in the earth and in the stomach’ (ibid.).

This is the text: ‘This earth is the honey (*Madhu*, the effect) of all beings and all beings are honey (*Madhu*, the effect) of this earth’ (156–7). We mutually enjoy each other. We enjoy the earth, the earth enjoys us also. When we are dead we are put in the earth.

‘Likewise this bright, immortal person in this earth and that bright immortal person incorporated in the body (both are *Madhu*). He is indeed the same as that Self, that Immortal, that Brahman, that All.’ The purport of this *Śruti* passage is this: the Supreme Brahman alone has been described as existing in all the pairs of the corporeal (*Adhyātma*) and the superphysical (*Adhidaiva*). ...

As the identity of *Jīva* and *Ātman*, through their non-dual character, is praised and multiplicity is condemned (in the scriptures), therefore that (non-duality) alone is rational and correct (157).

Everywhere the scriptures condemn this idea of separateness. Duality is due to ignorance. Always unity, non-duality is praised.

‘The *Śāstras* [that is, the various Upanishads] as well as the sages like Vyāsa etc., extol the identity of *Jīva* and the Supreme Self through the negation of all differences—the conclusion arrived at by reasoning and supported by the scriptures. Further, the experiences of multiplicity which are natural (to the ignorant) [person] and common to all beings’ (ibid.). Animals, men—all see multiplicity. Our senses reveal only multiplicity. It is mind that reveals unity behind the multiplicity. That is the scientific investigation.

‘The view propounded by those who do not understand the real import of the *Śāstras* and who indulge in futile reasoning—have been condemned thus: “But there is certainly nothing corresponding to the dual existence”, “Fear arises from the consciousness of duality”’ (ibid.). This is a text in the Upanishad. ‘*Dvitiya vai bhayam bhavati*; fear is born out of duality.’⁸¹ When you find a separate person you are afraid. If you know he is your own, then you are not afraid. Any stranger, that’s why every house has got a pin hole opening, through which you see. ‘Let me see whether he is a friend or enemy.’ It is very interesting. I tried to look from outside in, I can’t see; from inside out only you can see.

It is a beautiful idea: From duality arises fear. Mother and child—there is no duality; one’s own. Any outsider, fear. Then you talk, make friends, shake hand, then fear goes away. Even two dogs, looking at each other, then slowly make little loving gestures and lick each other. Same thing. This is a very great utterance. All fears arise from duality, separateness. When we meet foreigners, we are afraid, until you become known to each other, then all fear goes. Fear arises from duality. *Dvitiya vai bhayam bhavati*, from separateness alone fear arises. When you know you are one, there is no fear.

All this is verily the Atman. 'If he sees the slightest difference (in *Ātman*) then he is overcome with fear.'⁸² Any slight difference, fear comes out of it. '*Etasmin udaramantaram kurute atha tasya bhayam bhavati*; for whenever an aspirant creates the slightest different in It, he is smitten with fear.'⁸³ Even the slightest sense of difference, separateness you create, that itself is a source of fear. That is why in modern times we have developed a human awareness. Formerly all were separate. One tribe and the another tribe, and there is fear always. Now that is gone.

Bigger quantities have come now, smaller quantities are gone. Even individual Americans and Russians are not at all afraid. In groups only they are afraid; as masses, as a nation. Americans go to Russia, they are very happy with friends and all that. But as groups, what is called false national entities, they are full of fear about each other. In the past, they were full of fear for each other. But it is better now. What was the Iron Curtain is now a bamboo curtain. That is how they use the word. With thin difference, the old Iron Curtain has gone, now it is a bamboo curtain. But, the curtain is still there. They are peeping across the curtain. 'I shall give you television programmes; you come here, I come there.' It is a very good challenge, no doubt.

'Other Knowers of Brahman as well as the scriptures (quoted above) extol identity (of *Jīva* and Brahman) and condemn multiplicity.'⁸⁴ That song which Surdas sang, which that girl sang before Vivekananda in that Rajasthan Khetri palace: '*Mere to avagun chit na dharo*.' Swamiji was asked by the Maharaja, 'Come and hear this music, she is a very good singer and we want to entertain you and she is a dancing girl.' Vivekananda said: 'I am a sannyasin. Why should I hear a song of a dancing girl?' The Maharaja pressed him, and so finally he came and sat. And she

sang this particular song of Surdas. Very touchy. 'Don't look upon my evil qualities. Thy name is same-sightedness. One drop of water is the gutter, another is the Yamuna. When both join the Ganges, both become holy; don't look upon my evil qualities. Thy name is same-sightedness.' She sang with such passion that Swamiji was deeply moved: 'I was still now making a distinction that this is a dancing girl and this is a sannyasin. I have never understood Vedanta well. This lady has taught me real Vedanta.' You will find it in Swamiji's life.

'The false views (vainly) advanced by logicians, not easy of comprehension, cannot be accepted as facts (Truth)' (ibid.). Logicians are always dualists. And Shankara goes after these logicians all the time. Logic means relation, relation is two. Here there is no relation. Atman, relating to whom? They can't understand. This unity of Atman is a truth incomprehensible to all logicians. They are like a bull only lacking horns and the tail. That bull of logicians. They can confuse other people but they can't understand the truth. Mostly all logic ends up in dialectics. Lawyers want dialectics. They must prove that white is black and black is white—that is all logic. In a lawyer's court, you find out. This is what Socrates discovers and this is what he describes. What you call lawyers and dialectics—they must prove that white is black and black is white. And you believe in it.

'The separateness of *Jīva* and *Ātman* which has been declared in (the ritual portion of) the Upaniṣad [the Karmakanda], dealing with the origin (of the universe), is only figurative, because this portion (of the Vedas) describes only what is to be [not what is]. This statement regarding separateness can never have any meaning as truth' (158). '*Jivatmanoh prithaktvam yat pragutpatteh prakirtitam, bhavishyadvrittitya gaunam tanmukhyatvam hi na yujyate*.'

Even the *Śruti* has already declared the separateness of the *Jīva* and the Supreme Self in that part of the Upaniṣad which describes the creation (of the universe), i.e., in the ritual portion (*Karmakāṇḍa*) of the Vedas. The texts of the *Karmakāṇḍa*, referred to here, describe the Supreme *Puruṣa* who had multiple desire, in such words as, ‘desirous of this’, ‘desirous of that’, ‘He, the Highest, supported the heaven and the earth’ etc. This being the case, how is it possible, when there is a conflict between the knowledge portion and the ritual portion of the Vedas, to conclude that the unity underlying the meaning of the knowledge portion (of the Vedas) is alone reasonable and accurate? (ibid.).

That is the objection.

(Reply)—Our reply is as follows:—the separateness (of *Jīva* and *Paramātman*) described in the *Karmakāṇḍa* (ritual portion of the Vedas)—anterior to such Upaniṣadic statements dealing with the creation of the universe as, ‘That from which all these beings emanate’, ‘As small sparks (come out) from fire’, ‘The *Ākāśa* has evolved from that which is this *Ātman*’, ‘It created heat’—is not real from the absolute standpoint. [Creation is not truth from the absolute standpoint.]

(Objection)—What is it then?

(Reply)—It has only a secondary meaning. The separateness (between *Jīva* and *Paramātman* implied in these passages) is like that between the undifferentiated ether (*Mahākāśa*) and the ether enclosed in the jar (*Ghaṭākāśa*). ...

The Vedas make the statement regarding the separateness of *Jīva* and Brahman keeping in view the experience of multiplicity by the ignorant people. The idea of past, present and future is formed only in the realm of ignorance. [Time, past, present, future, is relative; it is not absolute.] When the grain (i.e., the uncooked rice) is boiled, people say that the rice (cooked rice) is boiled. This sort of statement

is common parlance. [Rice is not yet boiled but boiling is going on, expecting in future that it will be boiled after some time.] Here the present tense is used keeping in view a future happening. Similarly the scriptures speak of duality before creation with a view to indicating the future state of Knowledge when multiplicity is known to be unreal. ...

The Upaniṣads accept the empirical view of the world as it appears and explain it by saying that Brahman who is both the material and efficient cause of the universe, created the world with all its beings and then entered into all as the living Self. [That is a wonderful way of putting it. He formed a world and entered into it. He formed a bird, entered into it; he formed a man, entered into it and begins to serve there. That is the language used in the Upanishads.] This explanation establishes the unity of Brahman and *Jīva*, the apparent difference being ascribed to ignorance. The import of the *Śruti* is this: The non-dual Brahman alone exists. He is birthless, causeless and changeless. If one sees multiplicity that is also Brahman. The experience of multiplicity in the non-dual Brahman is due to *Avidyā* (158–60).

(To be continued)

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78. See J G Jennings, *The Vedantic Buddhism of the Buddha* (London: Oxford University, 1947).
79. See Swami Ranganathananda, *Bhagavan Buddha and Our Heritage* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2013).
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81. *Bṛihadaranyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.4.2.
82. *The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad With Gauḍapāda's Kārikā and Śaṅkara's Commentary*, 157.
83. *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, 2.7.1.
84. *The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad With Gauḍapāda's Kārikā and Śaṅkara's Commentary*, 157.

Vedanta Answers

Swami Smaranananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

[Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, has been asked various questions regarding various aspects of spiritual life by the young and old alike, over a period of time. This is a collection of such questions and his answers to them—*Editor*.]

QUESTION: Gurus and global leaders sound similar in their attitude to simple and sincere work. Can you please compare the good traits of Swami Vivekananda, Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, and others?

Answer: Resisting evil is not violence. What Mahatma Gandhi meant was that you should not compromise with evil of any kind. The path of truth should be followed. Comparing great leaders with one another is not advisable.

Question: Non-violence was the essence of the Indian freedom movement. But Swamiji emphasised in *Karma Yoga* to resist evil and not resisting evil is tamasic, which appears contradictory.

Answer: Struggle is the law of life. Mahatma Gandhi did not mean only physical violence in the context of non-violence. He also advised resistance of Pakistan's aggression in 1948. So there is no contradiction. Only we should take into account the circumstances before deciding to resist or not. Total non-resistance is meant only for sannyasins.

Question: What is the limit of our observation? Is there any truth that is impossible to be observed according to Vedanta?

Answer: Even at the physical level, what is known is only a fragment—the size of a mustard

seed—and what is not known is as big as the world! And the reality behind all phenomena is unknowable from the relative point of view.

Question: Things start revealing a different meaning once we keep observing them. How does it happen? How does something become so apparent while it was so nebulous at first?

Answer: This question needs further elaboration. If the mind gets concentrated on something, it will reveal its secrets.

Question: We all are tuned to form an image of others even when we know that we don't have sufficient data to do so. Can the power of observation be improved to gain a correct understanding of others to facilitate a better social relationship?

Answer: The power of observation is not to be improved; it is to be made deeper by concentration.

Question: We hear that Swami Vivekananda is the incarnation of Budhakaushika Rishi. Is this true?

Answer: I have never heard even the name of Budhakaushika Rishi.

Question: Is realising God the goal of human life?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Does proper observation require a trained mind? If yes, how to train the mind?

Answer: Yes, a trained mind makes it easier to understand things. Train the mind through concentration.

Question: Swamiji, How do I cultivate the art of observation?

Answer: A concentrated mind observes

more than an ordinary mind. Improve your concentration.

Question: It is said that the whole universe is within us and whatever we see and observe is actually within us. How true is it?

Answer: Who said it? What does she or he exactly mean by it? The world is within us means that one is connected with everything else.

Question: How to work consistently?

Answer: It is said that 'consistency is the hobgoblin of a weak mind'. Everything need not be straitjacketed.

Question: Hinduism believes in destiny, that is, everything is destined. So, how can we, being proactive and doing actions, change our destiny? Also some people always work hard, but are never much successful, while others put less effort and are very successful. How do we explain this? Can one change one's destiny? If yes, then the concept of Hinduism is wrong.

Answer: Hinduism does not believe in destiny. It believes in karma. Everything works out according to one's karma and the experience one has gained in earlier births. Destiny is only karma. You can change your karma in this and future births, whereas destiny or fate as understood is evocable.

Question: How can human beings find the right proactivity? Why do some people spent considerable amount of energy in finding out the right area for proactivity? Is it because of maya?

Answer: Not clear. The question is confusing.

Question: Many of us are afraid to take initiatives, not just to do big things but also to do small things differently. Why does such fear arise and how can one overcome it?

Answer: Fear or no fear depends upon one's mental strength. Make the mind strong by thinking positive thoughts. Read the life of great women and men. That will give you strength and fearlessness.

Question: Dedicating one's life for meditation

and doing good for society by helping the needy—which is really proactive?

Answer: Both are good. One is dhyana yoga and another is karma yoga. There is no contradiction. Both are working towards the same goal—God-realisation.

Question: You rightly said that there are people blaming parents or grandparents for their not being proactive. This applies to all of us. Some of us are very privileged people. How about a child born in a slum who works in a tea stall to make both ends meet? Such people should not be blamed if they are not proactive. How do you think this vicious circle can be broken?

Answer: Attempts have been made in modern times to build an egalitarian, socialist, or communist society. But all such attempts have failed. The main reason is human selfishness. Those who feel for others may help some poor people. But that is only casual. But to bring about a total, radical change, a non-violent revolution is necessary. Who will take it up?

Question: How do I know that I am becoming proactive?

Answer: No answer.

Question: How can we know whether our becoming proactive will be good or bad?

Answer: Use your brain to get an answer!

Question: You gave the example that for judging an organisation or apple tree, one has to consider the best result or apple produced out of it. However, there is also a saying that just by testing a single rice grain, one can judge whether the rice in the pot is cooked or not. Are they contradictory sayings or different views? What is your comment?

Answer: By picking up the best apple, you assess the potential of that apple tree. Similarly, by testing a grain of cooked rice, you can understand the possibility of the rice cooked in the whole pot. So where is the contradiction?

(To be continued)

The Psychological Aspects of Spiritual Life

Swami Nityasthananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

PDOUSPENSKY compares an ordinary person's personality to a house without any master, in which servants are ruling the roost. They are doing perfectly what is not to be done, and absolutely imperfectly what is to be done, without any guidance. One can very well imagine the chaotic condition prevailing there. If one master goes there then the order is restored. Similar is the case with our personality. The senses, mind, emotions, desires—all these are our servants. But we fall prey to them. There is a Sanskrit verse expressing a similar idea: '*Dushta bharya shatam mitram bhrityashchottaradayakah, sasarpe cha grihe vaso mrityureva na sanshayah*'; the wife is wicked, friends are cheats, servants are most disobedient, and the house is infested with serpents. To live in such a house is undoubtedly nothing but death.³⁷ This verse had been composed by a man, and if a woman were to do so, in place of 'wife' the word 'husband' would be there. This kind of house is somewhat analogous to our personality. Here the wife or husband is the mind; we are wedded to this mind which is restless and full of wicked thoughts. Our emotions are friends; they give rise to different desires which give temporary happiness when fulfilled, but harm us eventually. The sense organs are our servants which are unruly, as it is obvious to all. And crowning it all, there is the serpent called ego with its hoods raised. This gives a clear picture of what kind of house we are living in, and exhorts us to be ever vigilant.

Another verse that deserves to be quoted in this context: '*Kamah krodhashcha lobhashcha dehe tishtanti taskarah, jnanaratnam apahari tasmad jagrata jagrata*'; in this body there reside three thieves which are waiting to steal the jewel of knowledge. So be wide awake always.' Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavadgita that these three are the gates to hell: 'This door of hell, which is the destroyer of the soul, is of three kinds—passion, anger, and also greed. Therefore one should forsake these three.'³⁸

All these ideas stress the importance of inner control. We must be masters within ourselves. To be rulers outside and be ruled within is really a deplorable and detestable condition. There are two aspects of mental control: *vritti nirodha* and *samskara nirodha*.

Vritti Nirodha

The controlling of the thought-waves constantly arising in the mind is called *vritti nirodha*. Swami Vivekananda compares the mind to a lake. If the surface of the lake is full of waves and the water is muddy, the bottom of the lake is not visible. To see the bottom of the lake the water must be transparent and free from waves. Similarly, if our mind is full of thought-waves and is impure due to old *samskaras*, the bottom of our personality, that is, the real nature of the Self cannot be known. Most of the thoughts that come to our mind are useless and repetitive. Some thoughts are powered by certain emotions, some are good,

some are bad, and yet others are neutral. They are the product of samskaras, desires, or contact with the external objects. These thought-waves are to be controlled through concentration and meditation. Here is a brief description of meditation given by Swami Yatiswarananda:

If you want to follow the formless meditation, merge your body, mind, the whole world and everything into God. Think: 'I am a little sphere of light, and the supreme Being is the infinite sphere of light, shining everywhere.' But so long as we have body consciousness and too much of the sense of personality, we cannot practise this type of meditation. So, now think that your soul is putting on a pure subtle body (i.e. mental body), and a pure physical body, and that the infinite Spirit takes the form of the *Iṣṭa Devatā*, the divine Ideal we worship.

Now visualize: In the infinite divine Light which is also infinite Love and infinite Bliss, we have the devotee and we have the Deity who is the embodiment of infinite Light, infinite Love and Bliss. Repeat some appropriate divine Name (*mantra*) and meditate on Him.

First of all, meditate on the blissful luminous divine Form of the *Iṣṭa Devatā*. Then meditate on His infinite purity, His infinite love, His infinite compassion. Finally, meditate on His infinite Consciousness in which He is, as it were, drowned. ...

Our mind wants to run away from the object of meditation. But through the practice of moral culture, we should succeed in minimizing these disturbances of the mind. And further, as we do our *japa* and meditation we give the mind a certain theme, that is, the divine

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Name we repeat and the divine Form we visualize. All these serve to focus the mind and hold our attention within. We must think of Him with a little love in our heart. When there is some love and devotion in our heart for the Chosen Ideal, it becomes easy for us to follow the path of *japa* and meditation.³⁹

During meditation one must be alert and avoid intruding thoughts or watch them objectively without identifying with them. Sri Aurobindo's advice on this point is very useful:

What the sadhaka has to do is to be careful to reject and hush these outsiders, so that during the meditation at least the peace and quietude of the mind and vital may be complete. This can be done best if you keep a strong and silent will. That will is the will of the Purusha behind the mind; when the mind is at peace, when it is silent one can become aware of the Purusha, silent also, separate from the action of the nature. ... So long as the being is subject to the whirl of thoughts or the turmoil of vital movements, one cannot be thus calm and fixed in the spirit. To detach oneself, to stand back from them, to feel them separate from oneself is indispensable.⁴⁰

However, *vritti nirodha* is not all; it should be coupled with *samskara nirodha*, which can be achieved through *viveka*, discernment and *vairagya*, dispassion. So the Gita and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* stress *abhyasa*, practice and *vairagya*—there must be *vairagya*, along with the practice of *japa*, meditation, and other spiritual disciplines. If meditation is practised seriously without the real spirit of detachment or with lukewarm detachment, the concentrated mental energy may activate the old *samskaras* and one may succumb to them. For example we read in our Puranas about asuras practising intense austerities for hundreds of years and thereby becoming more demoniacal. Swami Yatiswarananda says:

It is dangerous to practise concentration before the attainment of minimum purity. Before we practise concentration or store up our energy, we must know how to direct this energy along higher channels; otherwise we may come to grief. ...

We call up our energy but we do not know how to utilize it. This energy is frittered away in doing useless things and this is a great tragedy in spiritual life. We must know how to give this energy a higher turn. Otherwise this stored-up energy may stimulate our desires, may stimulate our senses; and if we do not succeed in giving these desires a higher turn, they may become like bombshells and wreck our body and mind. It is dangerous to try to play at concentration and meditation. But if we are properly trained, if we have the necessary qualifications, it is a joy to live a life of concentration and meditation.⁴¹

Sublimation

Channelising the mental energy in a higher direction is called sublimation. Cultural evaluation is possible when animal propensities are controlled and mental energy is used in creative pursuits. According to anthropologists who study primitive tribes, the cultural growth among tribes is directly proportional to the control of their sexual drive. Without this control of sense gratification, we do not get sufficient energy for higher spiritual pursuits. In the beginning it is no doubt difficult to give a spiritual turn to all our mental energies, for we would not be able to practise meditation, *japa*, and other spiritual disciplines effectively, deriving inner fulfilment. That is why, due to the influence of *samskaras*, the mind runs towards the objects of senses. Along with spiritual practice we have to adopt certain other methods of sublimating our mental energy.

Karma yoga or desireless action is one of the ways of sublimation. Karma yoga is performing work that comes to one's lot with an attitude of dedication to the Lord, with the spirit of service,

without likes and dislikes, without grumbling, being free from personal desires and ego gratification. There is a misunderstanding that karma is bondage. The traditional way of thinking is that ignorance creates desires, which prompt one to act, and action produces its results, and in this way the wheel of karma continues. So karma is to be abandoned. This idea is applicable only to selfish karma, action with desires. There must be a complete change of attitude towards work. Karma is not meant for gaining something, but rather expressing something. Through work we can express our inner talents and capacities, virtues like love, compassion, and the spirit of service. We have to look upon karma in this sense and accept it as a necessity without disdain, but not as a burden.

It is good to recollect what Swami Yatiswarananda says about karma:

Do not do your duties in a haphazard way. If we meditate properly, we can work properly. Work and meditation are inter-related. Do everything in life with as much care as possible. Nothing is too low for us and nothing is too high. If we work for a good cause sincerely, we feel uplifted, we feel great peace and joy. Sometimes we progress in spiritual life more through service than through meditation. If we are easygoing in work, we shall be easygoing in meditation also (668).

Second, through creative activities mental energy can be sublimated. One must develop a taste for music, art, and literature, and give expression to one's own talents related to them, which gives a sense of fulfilment. However, if we involve ourselves too much in them, our spiritual aspiration will slowly get slackened. Because of want of spiritual aspiration, these talents may even make a person more sensuous. We see many great artists, musicians, and writers, being intensely sensuous. Girish Chandra Ghosh was a great genius and equally sensuous. While Swami Vivekananda, though highly versatile, never

turned to sense objects because of his intense spiritual aspiration.

The third method of sublimation is scholarly pursuit. Through systematic study, deep thinking, and writing, mental energy can be profitably channelised. Again, if we do not hold on to the spiritual ideal firmly, we will be overpowered by the ego of scholarship and desire for fame. The most important thing to be noted here is to develop the love of knowledge which is sattvic by nature, and this sattva quality is essential to spiritual practice.

The exact opposite of sublimation is repression, which is an unconscious process where one negative emotion is repressed by another. Negative emotion, for example, hatred or anger, due to the fear of public opinion. Some of our instinctive drives and impulses, which are abhorring

Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950)



and damaging to our self-respect or which are censured by social institutions, get pushed to the unconscious mind, rendering them more powerful. And this will exert greater pressure on the conscious mind, because of which the mind becomes more restless, and sometimes one may behave abnormally under the pressure of the unconscious mind. We have to accept what we are and consciously try to control our lower impulses and give them a higher direction. It is like refining crude oil in different stages.

Sublimation and repression are exactly opposite in character. Sublimation is progressive; repression is regressive. Sublimation causes the psyche to move forward; repression causes it to move backward. Sublimation serves rationality; repression produces irrationality. Sublimation is integrative; repression is disintegrative.

Samskara Nirodha

According to Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, there are mainly three kinds of samskaras: *vasana* samskara, *karmashaya*, and *klesha* samskara. The first one is the result of experience of happiness and misery in our everyday life, and these samskaras appear themselves in the form of memories.

Karmashaya is the result of our actions. Due to *vasanas* we remember pleasant or unpleasant experiences of the past which prompt us to act again, either to get the pleasant or to avoid the unpleasant. To give a commonplace example: My earlier pleasant experience of enjoying a sweet will give rise to the memory of it when I see the same sweet again, which is followed by the urge to enjoy it again and then the act of enjoying takes place. This is to be applied to other kinds of enjoyment as well. The mental impression that is formed out of this action of enjoyment is called *karmashaya*. We have to control the desire at the stage of memory itself with the help of the strength of our spiritual ideal, not allowing the

action to take place. This will prevent the formation of new samskaras and the old samskaras will get nullified by higher spiritual experiences. So, conscious control is very essential.

Klesha samskaras are the effect of five *kleshas*: *avidya*, *asmita*, *raga*, *dvesha*, and *abhinivesha*. *Avidya* or ignorance here has the empirical sense, not the metaphysical sense. *Avidya* means taking one thing for another. Everyone understands things according to one's own capacity, state of mind, and attitude. A person tells something or behaves in a certain way and others will take them in a different way without knowing the real motive behind them. News takes different forms, assumes different colours, and passes through different people. Facts get distorted, mutilated, or exaggerated. This leads to much misunderstanding and the result is obvious. It is in this sense that it is said that *avidya* is the root cause of *raga*, attachment and *dvesha*, aversion. *Asmita* is egoism or the sense of individuality. If it is very strong, it gives rise to many negative emotions. We have already discussed this. *Avidya* and *asmita* are the primal causes for the rest of the *kleshas*. *Abhinivesha* is clinging to one's own individuality, and this manifests itself as fear of losing one's own individuality, fear of death, and other emotional impulses.

Subliminal impressions of these *kleshas* are called *klesha* samskaras, which weld together *vasanas* and *karmashayas*. When the memory of pleasant or painful experiences sprout due to *vasanas*, then *kleshas* get activated giving rise to emotions like attachment, aversion, or fear, which culminates in action. These actions will produce fresh samskaras, and in this way the wheel of karma continues. The only way to stop this is self-control—not allowing *kleshas* to get activated, and in turn resulting in action. Sometimes due to carelessness we allow impure thoughts to play in the mind overly believing in our strength. These stimulate *kleshas*

and create problems. Acharya Shankara says in *Vivekachudamani*: 'One should never be careless in one's steadfastness to Brahman. Bhagavan Sanatkumara, who is Brahma's son, has called inadvertence death itself.'⁴²

Vasanas are compared to a fertile field. If the seeds of *karmashaya* fall on it, there will be a luxuriant growth of plants. We must prevent the seeds from falling on the field. As we progress in spiritual life, these seeds become weak and with the force of spiritual experiences they become impotent.

Kleshas are the root cause of all problems. They induce actions and multiply desires, and thereby multiply *samskaras*. According to yoga they exist in different states as described below.

Prasupta • Dormant state in which we are not even aware that they are there. For example, children appear to be so innocent, free from lust, hatred, and the like, but as they advance in age, when psycho-physical framework grows and becomes mature, all the *samskaras* like lust and greed raise their heads. Even if we presume that we don't have any bad *samskaras*, when the atmosphere is conducive, they may get enkindled, and then we come to know the presence of bad *samskaras* in us. Same is the case with good *samskaras* also.

Udara • In this state the *kleshas* are fully manifested without any control, which we normally find in ordinary wicked people having no individual or social responsibility.

Vichchhinna • In this state one emotion is controlled by another emotion. For example, if we hate somebody, we want to beat, harm, or kill that person. But somehow, we do not do so, for we are afraid of that person or the fear of public reprobation may prevent us from indulging in such acts. Here, fear is suppressing hatred; one emotion is suppressing another emotion. In psychology it is called repression. Without our knowledge this kind of repression could be taking place in us. Therefore, we need to analyse

objectively why we are doing or not doing a particular thing. Are we really exercising control over something or is it because of one emotion suppressing another?

Tanu • This is consciously exercising control over desires and emotions. When we get angry, controlling it through discrimination or saying to ourselves that it is only harmful to us. Anger is the price we pay for somebody else's mistake, as some psychologists put it. And all negative emotions are harmful to us. By applying various methods of controlling, when one suppresses emotions and desires, they become weak and attenuated. But through overconfidence if one becomes heedless, they may become stronger through associations.

Niruddha • It is a sufficiently controlled state and there is no danger of being overpowered by *kleshas*. However, a small residue may remain. It is like a piece of live charcoal beneath the ashes. It may give rise to some mental *vruttis*, but will not lead to indulgence. Here we may recollect the famous verse of the Gita: 'When one abstains from sense-enjoyments, the objects turn away from one, but their taste continues to linger in the mind; but even this taste turns away from one when the supreme Self is realised.'⁴³

Dagdhbija • This is the state of a burnt seed. It is there only in form but it cannot germinate or manifest, absolutely safe without any fear of creating fresh *samskaras*. One has to aspire for this state.

These states can be compared to different animals in the forest, some of them are sleeping, some active, and so on. Sleeping animals are like the *prasupta* state, they are harmless, but when we go near, they can be dangerous. Those animals which are freely running around hunting, killing, and eating, can be likened to the *udara* state. When an animal is afraid of another or one is dominated by another, that is like the *vichchhinna* state. When an animal is caught,

controlled, and tamed, it is the state of *tanu*. But still it sometimes acts erratically and creates trouble. When it is fully controlled, it is like the *niruddha* state. When there are no animals at all, it can be compared to the *dagdhabija* state.

Apart from these three above-mentioned samskaras, there is another samskara called the *nirodha* samskara. Whenever we exercise control over desires, the controlling itself becomes a samskara, and that will go on strengthening within the mind, and without one's knowledge, it will be controlling all the desires. So, in spiritual life, what is important is to increase these *nirodha* samskaras. If we go on increasing the *nirodha* samskaras, over time we will realise how much control we have gained over our desires and negative thoughts.

There is still one more samskara called the *prajna* samskara which is formed out of spiritual experiences, such as the joy of meditation or seeing a divine light, and this will nullify other samskaras. Therefore it is said in yoga texts that one must constantly keep getting spiritual experiences so that the *prajna* samskara becomes stronger and nullifies other negative samskaras. Hence it is important to make efforts to increase *nirodha* and *prajna* samskaras.

Vritti nirodha can be achieved by japa, meditation, prayer, and some such spiritual practices called *abhyasa*. Samskara *nirodha* can be achieved only by discernment and dispassion. One is complementary to the other. These two are very important for our progress in spiritual life. It has been said: 'The perfect man employs his mind as a mirror. It grasps nothing. It refuses nothing. It receives, but doesn't keep.'⁴⁴ A mirror receives everything but does not keep anything. This is the ideal state of mind one must aspire to possess.

Conclusion

We may analyse the mind and try to understand

its different facets, its deceptions, and its various masks. However, we should not remain engrossed in this process of analysis, forgetting our spiritual goal; it should not become an obsession with us. If there is intense spiritual aspiration, if we are able to derive greater satisfaction and fulfilment in sadhana, many of our psychological problems will automatically get resolved. To come out of the forest is our goal, not to remain there fighting with the animals always. When we confront an animal, then we take steps to escape from it or to kill it. But we should not go in search of animals. As it is wrong to find fault in others, so also it is wrong to brood over our own faults. We have to just move forward. If the fire is blazing, whatever is thrown into it becomes fire. Similarly, intense spiritual aspiration will change all defects into virtues. Sri Ramakrishna says:

Boil your sugar well over a burning fire. As long as there is dirt or impurity in it, the sweet infusion smokes and simmer. But when all impurity and scum is cast out, there is neither smoke nor sound; only the delicious crystalline syrup heaves in its unmixed worth. Then whether liquid or solid, it becomes the delight of men and of gods. Such is the character of the man of faith.⁴⁵ ❧

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TRADITIONAL TALES

Sri Ramachandra's Atonement

ONCE, VIBHISHANA was imprisoned by some brahmanas. When Sri Ramachandra, the gem of Raghu dynasty, heard that his great devotee was in distress, he became much worried. He sent his messengers in all directions in search of Vibhishana. Finally, the whereabouts of Vibhishana were found. Sri Ramachandra himself went to meet Vibhishana. And what a sight he saw! The brahmanas had tied Vibhishana's hands and legs and imprisoned him in a cellar.

Sri Ramachandra was shocked at this plight of this great devotee with good qualities. He enquired the brahmanas about Vibhishana's crime. Upon seeing Sri Ramachandra, the brahmanas prostrated at his feet and welcomed him with great honour. Then, they said to him: 'O Lord! One day, an asura came to the forest near our ashrama in a chariot. An old brahmana of the ashrama had gone to the forest to collect *durva* grass. The asura asked him something. The old brahmana could not reply as he was keeping a vow of silence. Angered at this, the asura kicked the old brahmana, who fell down, and died on the spot. On learning this, we went and imprisoned that asura. No matter how much we beat him, he did not die. Your arrival here is a great blessing to us. You have to punish this murderous sinner.' The brahmanas pleaded to Sri Ramachandra. They brought the bound Vibhishana in front of Sri Ramachandra. Vibhishana was greatly embarrassed to see Sri Ramachandra. Sri Ramachandra became uncomfortable seeing Vibhishana's condition.

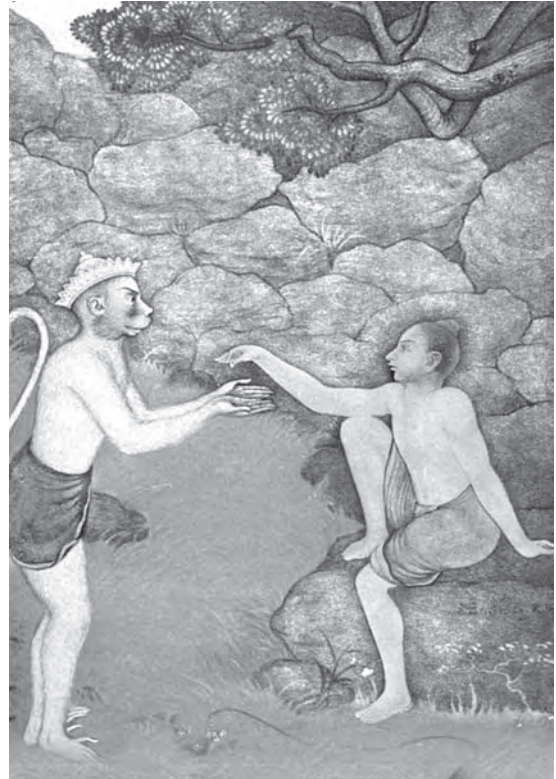
Sri Ramachandra said to the brahmanas: 'The master alone is responsible for any fault of his

servants. Therefore, please release Vibhishana. I bless him that he live till the end of this kalpa and order him to rule Lanka. He is mine. Hence, any fault of his is as good as my fault and please give me the punishment that you had intended for him. I am bound to accept it without any complaint.'

Vibhishana did not intentionally kill the brahmana, who was old and keeping a vow of silence, which Vibhishana did not know. So, the brahmanas desired Vibhishana's atonement for a crime done unknowingly. However, Vibhishana did not have to atone; Sri Ramachandra did that for his devotee.

PB

Sri Ramachandra Sending His Signet Ring



REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
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Festivals of Bharata

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560027. www.bharathasamskruthi.com.

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Festivals are to religion what rhythmic beats are to a symphony. Religion becomes desiccated and jejune without the glitter, colour, and vibrancy of festivals. The book under review is a bulky tome that is almost encyclopaedic in its coverage of its subject and meticulous in giving details. Indian festivals are dealt with under twenty-four headings. The topics dealt with, apart from the Introduction, are: 1. Ugadi, 2. Sri Rama Navami, 3. Hanuman Jayanti, 4. Akshaya Tritiya, 5. Narasimha Jayanti, 6. Prathama Ekadashi, 7. Naga Panchami 8. Varamahalakshmi Vrata, 9. Upakarma, 10. Sri Krishna Jayanti or Janmashtami, 11. Gauri Puja, 12. Ganesha Chaturthi, 13. Ananta Padmanabha Vrata, 14. Navaratra Mahotsava, 15. Dipavali, 16. Utthanadvadashi, 17. Sankranti, 18. Chaturmasya, 19. Krittika Dipotsava, 20. Subbarayana Shashthi, 21. Ratha Saptami, 22. Mahashivaratri, 23. Holikotsava, Holi Habba, or Vasantotsava and 24. Birthdays or Punya Tithis of gurus and *acharyas*.

Each festival, together with the spiritual science behind it, is exhaustively discussed. Topics such as the origin of the festival, the why and wherefore of the festival, the timing of the festival, the activities of the festival, the significance and importance of the festival, its mythological background and scriptural basis, the profile of the deity in whose propitiation the festival is commemorated, the distinctive features of the

deity and their interpretations, doubts about various matters connected with the festival and their clarifications, and so on, figure in the book in great elaboration. Profuse Sanskrit quotations from the Shrutis, Smritis, Puranas, and *Itihasas* are given wherever necessary to clarify, explain, and establish the various findings and points pertaining to the festivals. The rationale of fasting in certain festivals and feasting in certain others is demonstrated on the basis of scriptural and mythological authority. The present-day flaws that have crept into the observance of rituals and practices are censured without the mincing of words and their expulsion is strongly advocated. The rules, regulations, and restrictions governing the ritualistic practices of the festivals are stated and insisted on with cogent reasons. The derisive remarks and carping comments made by the so-called rationalists and others about certain aspects of the festivals are answered by advancing reasoned arguments supported by scriptural evidences. The methods of worship of the deities and the forms, in which the deities are to be worshipped, whether fierce or benign, are all discussed. Fables from scripture and mythology are narrated, wherever necessary, to reinforce certain points regarding the festivals.

The book is a mine of information on the plethora of Indian festivals and points out clearly that the blatant polytheism implied in the diversity of Hindu festivals is, in fact, an aid to the realisation of the one Supreme that may be conceived in terms either of a personal God or the non-dual impersonal Absolute. At the opening of each chapter dealing with a particular festival, the reader is greeted by the colourful picture of the concerned deity embossed on a soft and glossy paper.

The glossary in which the meanings of Sanskrit terms, the staple jargon of Hindu ritualism and

religion, are given, appears at the end and adds value to the book. The substantial book which has on its front outer cover, a fascinating picture mirroring the devotional fervour of a typical Hindu family, is an asset for punctilious ritualists and profound bhaktas and a useful guide and reference for others.

N Hariharan
Madurai



Ever Yours in Truth
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95060. USA. Website: www.SATRAMANA.org. 2015. v + 512 pp. \$19.95. PB.
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On the Upanishadic tree of the wisdom of non-duality blossomed, among others, three fascinating flowers: the spiritual teachings of Sage Ribhu, which he imbibed from Lord Shiva, to his disciple, the lofty message of Acharya Gaudapada as embodied in his *Mandukya Karika*, and the profound spiritual lore embedded in the massive corpus of Vedantic literature of Acharya Shankara. The colourful flowers evolved into a luscious fruit. The name of the fruit is the discipline of self-inquiry taught by Ramana Maharishi. The fruit is full of the nectarine juice of Advaita. Of the many experts skilled in extracting the perennial and immortalising ambrosia of the fruit, Nome is one of the foremost. Nome's flair for distilling the juicy essence of the fruit of Ramana Maharishi's gospel of self-inquiry and concocting out of it, multiple brews of inebriating flavour suitable to different palates is amazing. The brews may be variegated but the one basic ingredient that forms the staple material of all of them is Advaita. The book under review is a rich collection of Nome's letters to spiritual aspirants seeking counsel and clarifications on their practice of the time-tested discipline of self-inquiry upheld by Ramana Maharishi.

Ramana Maharishi's spiritual regimen of relentless self-inquiry is based on a few incontestable

truths. These truths are divinely proclaimed by Lord Shiva in his teachings to Sage Ribhu, tersely enunciated in Gaudapada's *Mandukya Karika*, and eloquently expounded by Acharya Shankara in his commentaries and other works.

The lofty ideas based on these eternal truths around which Nome weaves his letters may be stated as follows. The Self is absolute Reality and non-dual. Quintessentially, an embodied being is the eternal, immutable, free, thought-transcendent, and blissful Self which is pure Existence Consciousness Bliss beyond the sensory perception, mental conception, and intellectual comprehension and remains ever as such. The bondage of samsara—the whirligig of births and deaths—in which the jiva is implicated is solely due to the powers of obfuscation, *avarana* shakti and distortion, *vikshepa* shakti, of maya constituted of the triple gunas. The most blatant manifestation of maya is the mind in its specific poise as ego which is basically a pseudo-self with its infinite capacity for causing non-apprehension and misapprehension of Reality and for obscuring the non-dual Self and projecting the illusion of duality. Ego is the axle of delusion and has to be transcended. Ego is a divisive force making for individuation, insularity, and discord and causes cleavages in the vastness of unitary Existence. The trickeries of ego can be detected and overcome only by the ceaseless spiritual practice of self-inquiry.

This relentless search for the answer to the query, 'Who am I?', consists in negating all limitations or matter-vestures—all the three bodies, gross, subtle, and causal—as unreal and realising the Self as one's true identity. Self-inquiry is the ever-vigilant spiritual exercise of ridding oneself of one's misidentifications with one's psychophysical conglomerate and of abiding peacefully in the Self which is the Truth. Abidance in the Self is one's natural state and even the slightest deviation from that tranquil state of happiness is due to the machinations of mind manifesting as ego.

Ego is essentially unreal but, when it is not detected for what it is and allowed to have its free play, it even obscures the Self and usurps the Self's legitimate state of pre-eminence. The three letters making the word EGO may be taken to collectively

represent its vicious nature of 'Edging God Out'. The ego is as insubstantial and vacuous as an onion that is peeled and is found to be a nonentity when it is tracked down to its source. The sole panacea for the pains and perplexities of the empirical existence is the continuous practice of self-inquiry that is sure to result in one's firm abidance in the Self.

The Self is fundamentally a state of objectless awareness or non-objective awareness. It is not awareness of, but awareness per se. The self is thought-transcendent. The Self is, in the pregnant words of Dr S Radhakrishnan, 'the immutable centre of endless mutations'. Abidance in the Self cannot be experienced in a state of mental chatter but becomes a fait accompli on the cessation of all mentations. When any thought which is nothing but an expression of ego arises during meditation and self-inquiry, the unfailing salvo that should be fired against the ego-born thought is the persistent query: 'Whose is this thought?' The relentless pressing of this query to its very source precipitates the exposure of ego's utter hollowness and unreality and the dawn of Self-knowledge.

A specimen of Nome's enlightening letters would show how forcefully and clearly he drives home Ramana Maharishi's message of self-inquiry as a panacea for the turmoil of temporal existence and a gateway to the joy and quietude of abidance in the Self. An extract from his letter is as follows:

The Self which is indivisible Being is devoid of individuality or the ego. It is not a thought and no thought is required to know it, just as the present knowledge of your own existence is not thought-dependent. It is to be realized by non-objective knowledge. Inquire to know, at the same depth that you know that you exist, the Self as it truly is free of any misidentification. The Realization of the Self cannot be approached as if it were a topic of study but is revealed by an inquiry into yourself. So, when thinking of the 'impure I', inquire for whom such appears. If the existence is assumed to be individualized, such is due to imagination which is the delusive superimposition of the 'I' notion upon the real Being of the Self. If an inquiry is made into the individualized existence, only the undivided Existence will be found

to exist, completely devoid of that 'I' notion or assumption of individuality.

The present moment in the waking state is as unreal as the present moment in a dream. Make your vision non-objective if you wish to realize the Self (119).

When self-inquiry is doggedly pursued and Self-knowledge dawns, the truth of this stunning statement of *Mandukya Karika* would burst on one's experience in all its stupefying splendour: 'There is no dissolution, no origination, none in bondage, none possessed of the means of liberation, and none liberated. This is the ultimate truth' (*Mandukya Karika*, 2.32).

Elsewhere, Nome observes: 'Self-realization is not an event and does not "happen". The Realization is of the very nature of the Self that is realized. The Self is not an event. What happens ceases. What comes goes. What should occur for whom? The Self is only Being. Know yourself' (356).

Self-inquiry dissolves the travails of transmigratory cycle and confers eternal happiness and peace. The practice of self-inquiry need not be daunting as the perseverance in its practice is always matched by a copious shower of Ramana Maharishi's unbounded grace on the seeker.

This excellent book, bearing unmistakably the marks of the advanced and sophisticated book-production technology of the US, is a precious guide to the practitioners of the discipline of self-inquiry as taught by Ramana Maharishi. This book has a very useful index.

N Hariharan

(Continued from page 748)

7. *Kathamrita*, 224.
8. *Chaitanya Movement*, 20.
9. See *Kathamrita*, 631.
10. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 600.
11. *Kathamrita*, 632.
12. See 'Hridh Majare Rakhbo', performed by Bolpur Bluez <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TkwtPWTUks>> accessed 17 September 2016.

MANANA

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***The Modern Spirit of Asia:
The Spiritual and the Secular
in China and India***

Peter van der Veer

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. USA. 2014. xi + 282 pp. \$15.57. PB. ISBN 9780691128153.



THIS BOOK EXAMINES India and China and the ways in which they have been transformed by Western imperial modernity. In my understanding the onset of modernity is located in the nineteenth century and is characterized politically by the emergence of the nation-state, economically by industrialization, and ideologically by an emphasis on progress and liberation. What I call ‘imperial modernity’ is the formation of modernity under conditions of imperialism. This is a study in comparative historical sociology, informed by anthropological theory. The field of comparative historical sociology of culture was founded by Max Weber and practiced by his followers, of whom Robert Bellah and the late S N Eisenstadt are among the best known. It has been connected to interactive anthropological theory and to insights gained in ethnography, especially in the work of Clifford Geertz. However, the overwhelming increase of sophisticated specialist historical work has led scholars to limit themselves to the nation-state as the unit of analysis. Moreover, the emphasis on economics and politics in comparative work has made it hard to pursue this line of interpretive analysis. The complexities of Indian and Chinese societies and their modern transformation are vast, and our knowledge of them has increased


greatly since Weber compiled his studies. This makes a comparative project difficult, but I am convinced that in an era of increasing specialization it is important to do comparative work if it succeeds in highlighting issues that are neglected or ignored because of the specialist’s focus on a singular national society. The nation-form itself is a global form that emerges in the nineteenth century and cannot be understood as the product of one particular society. It is the dominant societal form today, and India and China have gradually developed into nation-states. For this reason, one can compare India and China at the level of nation-states, although these societies are internally immensely differentiated and the particular nation-form they have taken is historically contingent. India and China are taking on a globally available form that is characteristic for modernity, but they are following quite different pathways. These differences can be highlighted and understood through comparison. China’s and India’s nation-forms are comparable: Both are based on huge societies with deeply rooted cultural histories that have united large numbers of people over vast territories and over long periods of time. Both have taken the nation-form in interaction with Western imperialism. The comparative analysis introduced here takes

the nation-form not as something natural or already preconditioned by deep civilizational or ethnic histories, but as something historically contingent and fragmented. By focusing on the comparative analysis of the different pathways of two nation-states in a global (imperial) context, the argument goes beyond methodological nationalism.

India and China

Why compare India and China in the modern period? Contrary to what might be assumed, the reasons for comparison do not lie in a continuous long-term history of interactions between India and China. The words 'China' and 'Mandarin' derive from Sanskrit *cina* ('land of the Chin') and *mantri* ('minister'). That such principal terms of foreign reference to the Middle Kingdom (*zhongguo*) and to its learned civilization come from India suggests a long, continuous history of interaction between the two civilizations up to today. However, such a civilizational interaction was in fact largely limited to the first millennium CE. While this exchange was of great importance and continued for a millennium, it was very much limited to the spread of Buddhism. It therefore gradually ended when Buddhism more or less disappeared from India under the influence of new Hindu devotional movements as well as the spread of Islam. Buddhism in China lost its connection with India and became now entirely Chinese. This is obviously not to underestimate the enormous influence of Buddhism on Chinese thought or to deny its Indian origin. Concepts of 'belief' in Chinese (*xin*) may well be derived from Buddhist thought and thus from Sanskrit *śraddha*, which gives doctrine and the act of believing a central place in religious discipline. It follows that if we recognize this Indian influence, we may understand that the notion of belief might

be much more important in Chinese religious practice than is often assumed by those who emphasize orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy in Chinese religion. Nevertheless, while one can hear Sanskrit mantras being chanted in Buddhist monasteries in China today and every literate Chinese knows Wu Chen-En's sixteenth-century classic novel *Journey to the West*—in which a monkey king, modeled on the Hindu monkey-god Hanuman, goes to India to find wisdom—the interaction with India has long ago come to a halt.

Certainly, there is a continuous story, largely untold, of Indian, Chinese, and Arab traders plying the coasts of the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean with their goods, and one does have the inspiring narrative of Admiral Zheng He (a Muslim Chinese from South China) going to India and Africa with enormous fleets in the fifteenth century. However, while they are important, those stories do not show an interaction in terms of the expansion of empires and/or religious traditions, such as Buddhism, between India and China in the second millennium CE. One must acknowledge a universe of exchanges in the Far East in which China plays a dominant role over the centuries up to today. This universe includes countries now called Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. At the same time there is also a universe of exchanges between India and the Islamic world on the one hand and the Malay world on the other, including countries now called Yemen, Indonesia, and Malaysia. While these universes of exchange and interaction touch each other at the edges, especially in the Malay world, they do not interact in their cores. From the sixteenth century onward these exchanges and interactions come to be gradually controlled by Western maritime expansion in the entire region while connecting the region to a more global system of exchanges. 

REPORTS

News of Branch Centres

Ramakrishna Kutir, Almora celebrated its centenary on 22 May 2016. Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, addressed the public meeting and also inaugurated the new monks' quarters.

Swami Suhitananda inaugurated the renovated fourth and fifth floors of the old-age home at **Ramakrishna Math, Barisha** on 11 May.

The physiotherapy unit at the dispensary of **Ramakrishna Math, Ghatshila** was inaugurated on 11 May.

Swami Suhitananda inaugurated monks' quarters, dining hall, and office at **Ramakrishna Math, Gourhati** on 8 May.

Vivekananda Ashrama, Shyamla Tal concluded its centenary celebrations on 26 and 27 May with special worship, lectures, and bhajans. Swami Suhitananda, about 40 other monks, 80 devotees, and 900 villagers attended the programmes.

The new shrine storeroom at **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Sikra-Kuligram** was inaugurated on 26 May.

The teachers' quarters at **Ramakrishna Mission, Narottam Nagar** was inaugurated on 9 May, the holy Akshaya Tritiya day.

Eight students of the General and Adapted Physical Education and Yoga (GAPEY) faculty of **Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University's** centre on the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore campus won 3 gold, 2 silver, 3 bronze medals, and the overall national championship in the third National Youth Rural Games and Sports Archery Tournament organised by the Youth Rural Games and Sports Federation of India on 10 May.

The following centres conducted summer camps for students, that included chanting,

bhajans, yogasanas, and values education classes: **Aurangabad**: from 24 April to 1 May, 178 participated; **Chennai Mission Ashrama**: from 8 to 29 May, 50; **Hyderabad**: from 24 April to 24 May, 1720; **Madurai**: from 25 April to 11 May, 110; **Mangaluru**: from 12 April to 30 April, 225; **Nagpur**: from 29 April to 8 May, 150; **Rajamahendravaram**: from 2 to 29 May, 220; **Rajkot**: from 2 to 29 May, 350; **Vadodara**: from 7 to 15 May, 105; **Visakhapatnam**: from 2 to 16 May, 110.

A student of our Swami Vivekananda College in **Ramakrishna Mission, Fiji** won a bronze medal in the shot-put event at the National Level Athletics Competition.

Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita

Narottam Nagar centre conducted two special lectures on 23 and 25 May 2016.

Swamiji's Ancestral House held a lecture on 20 May which was attended by 250 people.

On 4 May, **Vadodara** centre held its inaugural programme to commemorate Sister Nivedita's 150th birth anniversary. Swami Gautamananda, Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, among others addressed the gathering.

Visakhapatnam centre launched a written quiz competition on Sister Nivedita for school students on 1 May. *Bhagini Nivedita*, a Bengali film dubbed into Telugu, was also released on that day.

Values Education and Youth-related Programmes conducted by centres in India

Delhi centre conducted (i) nine two-day values education workshops for school teachers from 31 March to 30 April which were attended by 518 teachers in all, and (ii) a workshop in Chennai

for school principals on 24 April which was attended by 35 persons, mainly principals.

Hyderabad Math held a personality development camp from 11 to 21 April in which 386 students participated.

Kochi Math conducted a personality development and values education camp from 5 to 10 April in which 50 students took part.

Salem Ashrama conducted a three-day residential values education camp from 24 to 26 April in which 203 students from three districts of Tamil Nadu participated.

Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign)

On 21 March, about 250 students of the polytechnic of **Chennai Students' Home** cleaned the campus of Sri Kapaleeshwarar Temple, Chennai, following an annual festival in the temple.

On 14 April, **Chennai Math**, in association with **Chennai Students' Home**, launched a yearlong programme 'Our locality, our responsibility' to promote cleanliness and hygiene in Pattinapakkam in Chennai, a seashore area, which was severely affected by the floods in November 2015. About 50 students of the polytechnic of Students' Home cleaned the area on that day.

Coimbatore Mission centre held six cleaning programmes at different public places in the city in April. Students from the various institutions run by the centre participated in these programmes.

Students of **Jamshedpur** centre's school at Sidhgora cleaned their school campus and the surrounding areas on 23 April.

Kamarpukur centre carried out its fifth cleanliness drive on 24 April in which 81 persons, including monks, employees, volunteers, and local people, cleaned Kamarpukur Bazar, Dak Bungalow crossing area, and some places in the village.


Vadodara centre held a talk on cleanliness at a school in Vadodara on 21 March. The talk

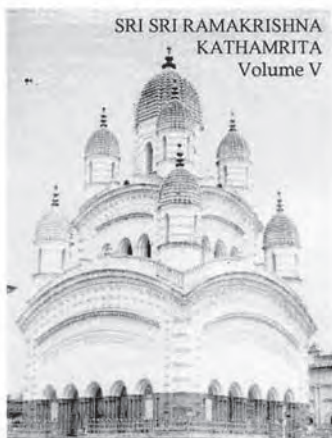
was followed by a cleaning programme in which about 500 students participated.

Relief

Drought Relief: Due to a drought-like situation in Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Telangana, these centres conducted relief as follows: (a) **Karnataka:** Belagavi (**Belgaum**) centre distributed 14,000 litres of drinking water among the affected people of 5 villages in Belagavi district from 29 May to 15 June. (b) **Maharashtra:** (i) **Aurangabad** centre distributed 26.90 lakh litres of drinking water among 23,910 people of 25 villages in Aurangabad district from 24 May to 14 June. (ii) **Pune** centre distributed 28.76 lakh litres of drinking water among 14,295 people of 5 villages in Satara and Ahmednagar districts from 20 May to 25 June. (c) **Telangana:** **Hyderabad** centre distributed 15 lakh litres of drinking water among 17,443 families of 19 villages in Adilabad, Warangal, and Karimnagar districts from 26 May to 6 June.

Flood Relief: (a) **Assam:** **Karimganj** centre distributed 1,100 kg rice, 210 kg dal, 200 packets of biscuits, 100 kg salt, 300 kg potatoes, and one lakh halogen tablets among 810 flood-affected families in 11 villages of Karimganj district from 30 May to 8 June. (b) **Jammu and Kashmir:** Following a flash flood affecting 15 villages in Kund area in Ramban and Udhampur districts, **Jammu** centre distributed 1,500 kg flour, 600 kg dal, 600 kg edible oil, 600 kg sugar, and 300 utensil sets—each set containing a vessel, a cooking-pot, a griddle, 2 ladles, and 3 plates—among 300 affected families on 27 May.

Fire Relief: (a) **Odisha:** Following an accidental fire in Gadadharpur village in Cuttack district, **Bhubaneswar** centre distributed 100 saris, 100 lungis, 50 carpets, 50 bed-sheets, 100 towels, 50 torches, 50 umbrellas, and 50 utensil sets—each set containing 2 cooking vessels, 2 buckets, a cooking-pot, a jug, a mug, a pot, 2 plates, 2 tumblers, 2 bowls, 2 ladles, a *khadika*, and a spoon—among 50 affected families from 1 to 4 June. (b) **West Bengal:** **Malda** centre distributed 5,000 kg rice, 750 kg dal, 250 kg salt, 625 litres of edible oil, 500 kg sugar, 125 saris, 125 lungis, and 125 utensil sets—each set containing a plate, a bowl, and a tumbler—from 1 to 28 May among 125 families affected by an accidental fire in 2 villages in Malda district. 



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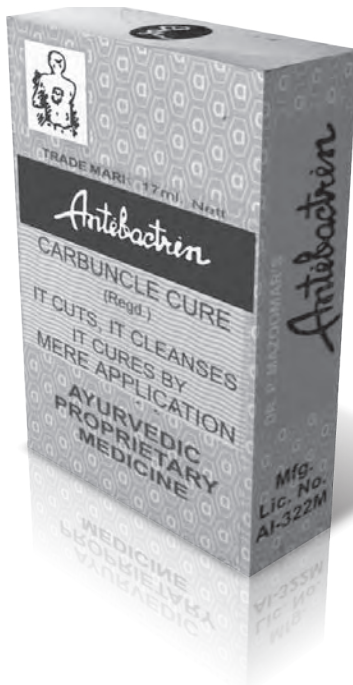


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(Headquarters : Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, (Near Kolkata)
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Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass),
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The Universal Temple of Bhagwan Shri Ramakrishna (Under Construction) An earnest Appeal for generous donations

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please accept our greetings and best wishes.

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This ashrama has taken up a new project of erecting a temple of Shri Ramakrishna. The work was commenced in December 2009 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2016. The day of inauguration has been fixed tentatively as 13th November 2016, Sunday.

The temple will be a unique and imposing monumental structure of its kind in entire Marathwada region in general and Aurangabad city in particular. It will add a cultural and spiritual dimension to the historical city of Aurangabad. It will be a great attraction and a place for worship, prayer, meditation and inspiration for the local people. It is also expected that the good number of general public visiting Aurangabad city as tourists for visiting world heritage sites such as Ellora & Ajanta and pilgrims for visiting Ghrihshneshwar Jyotirling, Shirdi, Paithan etc. will include visit to the temple in their itinerary. It is aimed for the benefit of one and all without distinction of caste, creed, and nationality.

The estimated cost of the entire project is Rs. 15 Crores. So far Rs. 11.00 Crores have been spent through public contribution. The balance amount of Rs. 04.00 Crores is needed to complete the construction of the Temple.

We earnestly appeal to you to donate generously for this noble cause. Your support will indeed go a long way in our endeavor to erect this magnificent architectural edifice in the memory of Shri Ramakrishna who was the unique harmonizer of all the religions of the world and who dedicated his life to bring peace and welfare of mankind.

We value your help and co-operation immensely.

Yours in the service of the Lord,

(Swami Vishnupadananda)
Secretary

Proposed Universal Temple of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna



Model of the Proposed New Temple

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Vivekananda Netralaya



Diagnostic Unit



Recovery Unit

Dear Devotees and Friends,

We humbly request you to contribute towards up-coming Vivekananda Netralaya Project (Eye, E N T, Dental Clinic cum Diagnostic Centre) project which we have taken up in 2011 and has reached to a remarkable stage with your help. This is a request for a place like Muzaffarpur in north Bihar where health infrastructure is very poor and our Sevashrama needs to have a better set up for continuing its medical services. Your contribution will be a real worship to Swami Vivekananda, Ma Sarada and Sri Ramakrishna who lived their life for spiritual growth of devotees and aspirants. I fervently hope by this conjoint effort of Service to the poor and needy we both shall proceed a step nearer to the ideals of Atmano Moksartham Jagat Hitaya Cha (For liberation of the self and good of the world). It will also serve the purpose of perpetuating memories and sentiments of your near and dear ones.

With Prayers to Holy Trinity for you and all yours,

**Swami Bhavatmananda
Secretary**

Kindly send your contribution by Cheque/DD or by NEFT/ RTGS to A/c No. **10877071752** IFS Code: **SBIN0006016** in favour of **Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Muzaffarpur**

Any contribution made in favour of "Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Muzaffarpur." is exempted from Income Tax u/s 80G of IT Act 1961.



We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.

Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

— Swami Vivekananda



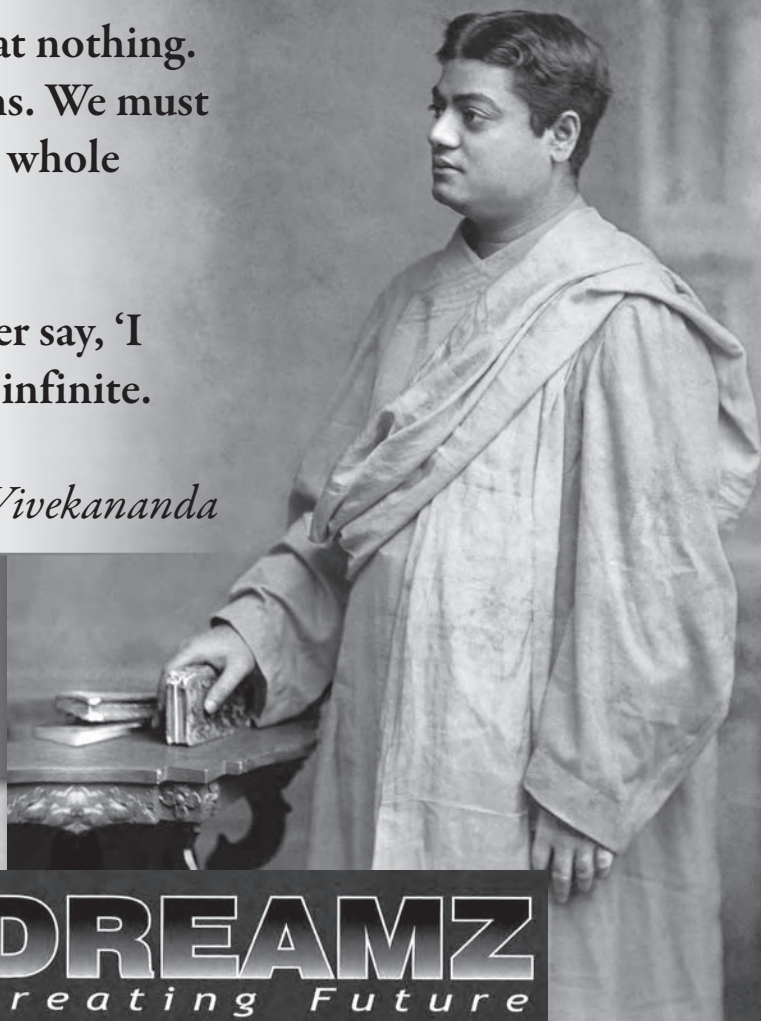
Each soul is potentially divine.
The goal is to manifest this
Divinity within.

Strength is life, weakness is
death.

Fear nothing, stop at nothing.
You will be like lions. We must
rouse India and the whole
world.

Never say, 'No', never say, 'I
cannot', for you are infinite.

—*Swami Vivekananda*



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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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