"TRUTH IS ONE, MEN CALL IT BY VARIOUS NAMES."—Rig-Veda

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The Message of the East



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THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East"
Ezekiel.

"Light shall come again from the East"
Tyndall.

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PRAYER

O Thou Infinite All-abiding Spirit!

Grant that we may learn to direct our life to the Highest.

That we may serve the Supreme Ideal with unwavering love and devotion.

Help us to fasten our heart to Eternal Truth.

Awaken in us the spirit of consecration that we may learn to live wholly for Thy service.

Give us strength, a strength that will never fail us; a strength which knows no defeat, but which overcomes all obstacles by selfless devotion.

Help us to forget our own pain and struggles and be filled only with thoughts for others.

Grant unto us such compassion and wisdom that we may be able to comfort the distressed and lift the hearts which are crushed by sorrow or despair.

Guard us from the dangers of pride and selfishness.

Make us humble and full of devotion unto Thee.

Awaken in us, O Thou Effulgent Spirit, the consciousness of Thy loving Presence.

May we never forget that Thou art all-in-all and that we are only instruments in Thy hands.

In deep humility we pour out our love at Thy Blessed Feet.

Make us worthy to be Thy children and keep us ever in peace.

— *Swami Paramananda.*

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DIFFERENT GRADES OF RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

By Swami Vivekananda

(From private letters and conversations)

All forms of religion have an essential and a non-essential part. If we strip from them the latter, there remains the real basis of Religion, which all forms of religion possess in common. Unity is behind them all. We may call it God, Allah, Jehovah, Spirit, Love; it is the same unity which animates all life, from its lowest form to its noblest manifestation in man. It is on this unity that we need to lay stress, whereas in the West, and indeed everywhere, it is on the non-essential that men are apt to lay stress. They will fight and kill each other for these forms, to make their fellows conform. Seeing that the essential is love of God and love of man, this is curious, to say the least.

Sects must gradually disappear, as liberty and knowledge increase. They are founded on the non-essential, which by the nature of things cannot survive. Sects have served their purpose, which was that of an exclusive brotherhood on lines comprehended by those within it. Gradually we reach the idea of universal brotherhood by flinging down the walls of partition which separate such aggregations of individuals. . . . In all religions one progresses from a smaller to a greater truth. The worst religions are only bad readings of the truth. One gets to understand bit by bit. Even devil-worship is but a perverted reading of the ever true and immutable Brahman (the Supreme). All phases of religion have more or less of the truth in them. No form of religion possesses it entirely.

Vedanta means the end of the Vedas, the third section or Upanishads, containing the ripened ideas which we find more as germs in the earlier portion. The most ancient

portion of the Vedas is the Samhita, which is in very archaic Sanskrit, only to be understood by the aid of a very old dictionary, the *Nirukta* of Yaska . . . All of religion is contained in the Vedanta; that is, in the three stages of the Vedanta philosophy—the *Dvaita* (dualistic), *Visishtadvaita* (qualified non-dualistic) and *Advaita* (monistic). One comes after the other. There are also three stages of spiritual growth in man. Each one is necessary. The Vedanta applied to the various ethnic customs and creeds of India is Hinduism. The first stage, that is *Dvaita* or dualism, applied to the ideas of the ethnic groups of Europe is Christianity; applied to the Semitic groups is Mohammedanism. *Advaita* or monism applied in its Yoga perception form is Buddhism. The application must vary according to the different needs, surroundings and other circumstances of the different nations. You will find that although the philosophy is the same, the various sects apply it each to its own special cult and forms.

On the monistic side, it is held that the Soul neither comes nor goes; and that all these spheres or layers of the universe are only so many varying products of *Akasha* and *Prana* (primordial substance and energy). That is to say, the lowest or most condensed is the Solar Sphere, consisting of the visible universe, in which *Prana* (energy) appears as physical force and *Akasha* (substance) as sensible matter. The next is called the Lunar Sphere, which surrounds the Solar Sphere. This is not the moon at all, but the habitation of the gods; *Prana* appears in it as physic force, and *Akasha* as *Tanmatras* or fine particles. Beyond this is the Electric Sphere, where *Prana* is almost inseparable from *Akasha* and you can hardly tell whether electricity is force or matter. Next is the *Brahmaloka*, where there is neither *Prana* nor *Akasha*, but both are merged into the mind-stuff,

the primordial energy. Here, there being neither *Prana* nor *Akasha*, the *Jiva* (individual Soul) contemplates the whole universe as the sum-total of mind. This appears as a *Purusha*, an abstract universal Soul, yet not the Absolute; for still there is multiplicity. From this the individual Soul finds at last that unity which is the end. *Advaita* says that these are the visions which rise in succession before the individual Soul, who itself neither goes nor comes; and that in the same way this present vision has been projected. The projection and dissolution must take place in the same order, only one means going back and the other coming out.

Now as each individual can only see his own universe, that universe is created with his bondage and goes away with his liberation, although it remains for others who are in bondage. Name and form constitute the universe. A wave in the ocean is a wave in so far only as it is bound by name and form. If the wave subsides, it is the ocean; and that name and form immediately vanish forever. So the name and form of a wave could never be without the water that is fashioned into the wave by them; yet the name and form themselves are not the wave. They die so soon as it returns to water. But the names and forms live in relation to other waves. The name and form are called *Maya* and the water is *Brahman* (the Supreme). The wave was nothing but water all the time, yet as a wave it had name and form. Again this name and form cannot remain for one moment separated from the wave, although the wave as water can remain eternally separate from name and form. But because the name and form can never be separated, they can never be said to exist. Yet they are not zero. This is called *Maya*. . . .

Let each one work out his own salvation. It is freedom

in every way; that is, advance towards freedom or *Mukti* is the worthiest gain of man. To advance oneself towards freedom—physical, mental and spiritual—and to help others to do so is the supremest prize of man. Those social rules which stand in the way of unfoldment of this freedom are injurious. Those institutions should be encouraged by which men advance in the path of freedom.

It is very difficult to superimpose Divinity on man, but one is sure to succeed by repeated efforts. God is in every man, whether man knows it or not; loving devotion is bound to call up the Divinity in him. I have experienced even in my insignificant life that good motives, sincerity and infinite love can conquer the world. Go on bravely. Always hold to the highest. Be steady. Avoid jealousy and selfishness. Be obedient and eternally faithful to the cause of Truth and humanity. Remember, it is the person, the life, which is the secret of power—nothing else.

THE IMPERISHABLE

From the Mundaka-Upanishad.

Effulgent, near, moving in the heart is the Great Being, the Support of all. In Him is centred whatsoever moves, breathes and winks. Know Him to be the formful and the formless, the highest, the adorable, beyond the reach of human intellect.

That which is luminous, subtler than the subtlest; That on which all worlds and their inhabitants are fixed; That is the imperishable Brahman (God); That is *Prana* (life-force), speech and mind. That is the True. That is the Immortal. That is to be hit. Hit it, O gentle youth.

Having taken the great weapon of the Upanishad as the bow, in it must be fixed the arrow sharpened by constant meditation. Having drawn it with the mind absorbed in

thoughts of Him, O gentle youth, hit the mark—the Imperishable.

Om is the bow, the *Atman* (Higher Self) is the arrow, Brahman is the mark. It can be hit only by one who is self-collected; then as the arrow becomes one with the mark, so will he become one with Brahman.

In Him the heavens, the earth and the sky are woven, the mind also with all the senses. Know Him alone as the *Atman* and speak of naught else. This is the bridge of immortal life.

This *Atman* lives within in manifold ways, there where all the nerves meet as spokes in the nave of the wheel of a chariot. Meditate on that *Atman* as Om. May you cross safely to the other shore, beyond the darkness!

The *Atman*, Who is all-comprehending and all-knowing, to Whom belongs all the glory of the universe, dwells in the sky of the heavenly city of Braham. He assumes the nature of the mind and is the controller of body and senses. He dwells within the body, being seated in the heart. The wise realize that blissful, immortal Being through knowledge.

The knots of the heart are cut, all doubts are destroyed and all the fetters of Karma are broken, when He is seen Who is both high and low.

The indivisible Brahman, pure, stainless, the highest, the light of all lights, abides in the golden sheath (the heart). They who know the *Atman* realize Him thus.

There the sun does not shine, nor the moon and the stars, nor these lightnings, much less this fire. When He shines, all things shine after Him; by His light all this is lighted.

That immortal Braham is before, that Brahman is behind, that Brahman is on the right and the left. He is below and above. Brahman alone is all that is. He is the Highest.

THE SPIRIT OF CONSECRATION

By Swami Paramananda

Without a spirit of consecration our life must invariably remain unproductive. It is not that we do not work or that we do not try to do good, but we miss our aim; because all our thoughts and actions, to bear real fruit, must be backed by something higher than our physical self. For that reason wise men have the habit of consecrating themselves in all that they undertake. There are two ways of doing everything—one, with small personal ends in view; the other, with the larger end of universal good. Each thing done can be consecrated or desecrated. A selfish aim will desecrate even the finest act. We see therefore that all this field of work provided for our development is in itself neither good nor bad. It is good if it leads us towards our object; it is bad if it makes us miss our goal. We cannot keep on revolving with the wheel of life aimlessly. We must learn to follow our higher instincts and not be distracted by the voices of the world. We must cultivate a true spirit of consecration. This may be done in many different ways; but in all we must rise above petty, selfish ends and aspire after something bigger and higher than the little self.

This world would be a very different place if we would all live up to our Ideal; for when we form the habit of consecrating ourselves in every thought and action, an exalted atmosphere of selfless love is created, which surrounds us wherever we go. All the unrest of the heart ceases when our Ideal completely fills our life; because no room is left for small trivial concerns. Therefore the wise ones, instead of making a fixed set of rules for us, merely ask us to offer everything to the Lord. When we give ourselves wholly to God and make Him our constant aim, we do not need any

special exercises. The only thing needful is to start with some lofty thought and think it again and again, until finally we move and have our being in that one thought. This is what is called having an Ideal. Then if we can learn to live our life with a genuine sense of consecration, we shall find it unnecessary to calculate and plan; because our individual will will work naturally in unity with the Universal Will and we shall move in perfect harmony with the great cosmic plan. It is always dangerous when we rely on our little ego. We must learn to walk with God and depend on Him alone. When we learn this, we may go on doing what we are doing now, but we shall do it with consecration. Although our hands and feet, our senses and mind continue to be active, they will work with a new purpose, because they are consciously connected with the Source.

At present we may not have a taste for spiritual things, because we have formed the habit of longing for the things of this world; so spiritual things are not pleasing to us. But we must try to cultivate another taste. As we have formed the habit of worldly desires, so we should form a new spiritual habit. We have lived so long in close contact with the physical world that it alone seems real and important, while the spiritual world is vague and unimportant to us. But if we will try to know more of that unfamiliar realm, we shall begin to feel its reality and our life will be transformed. Then when misfortune or even death overtakes us, we shall not be overwhelmed or forget our Ideal.

This is the purpose of all spiritual practice—to fortify us against the moments of trial and enable us to stand firmly, so that we may not lose our higher point of view and turn aside from the path. When we are able to make God a

living Presence in our life, then His light will shed its radiance even in the hours of darkness and sadness. This living consciousness of the Presence, however, cannot be forced. The veil must be torn from our mind. We must not allow ourselves to be intoxicated by unwholesome influences of the world, but we must open ourselves wholly to the more powerful influence of God. Nothing helps us to do this so much as the spirit of consecration. But we should never talk of it. It is something to be expressed silently, as the flower opens in silence and unperceived; but that silent, enduring service to God will generate a power more potent than any material force we know.

Let us humbly seek our Ideal and serve Him in every thought, word and action. We cannot form an absolute Ideal with the finite mind; but our Ideal will grow and gradually become vast and all-embracing, as the unbounded Deity within us is able to manifest more and more of Its greatness. When It fills our whole heart, all pettiness and ignorance and self-seeking will vanish; and instead of thinking ourselves great through self-importance, we shall feel ourselves great only in Him. Let us never forget that without His strength we are weak, without His support we are sure to stumble; but that if we will turn to Him whenever we have need of help, He will never fail to lead us out of the darkness and fill our groping mind with the light of understanding.

The sooner we turn to God, the better it will be for us; because as we delay, we retard our evolution and growth. He is the very essence of our being, our only Resting-place, our one safe Guide and Protector. When we realize this and offer ourselves in complete surrender at His feet, then will He take our life, bless it, consecrate it and fill it full of Divine beauty and holiness.

IS VEDANTA PESSIMISTIC?

Adapted from the Brahmavadin

The comparative study of religions reveals to us that every religion passes through the three stages of superficial optimism, pessimism, and philosophic optimism. Christianity started from the simple optimism of the Old Testament that the real world, the creation of a just and merciful God, is all good. "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good." When the prophets observed more of life and reflected upon its miseries and iniquities, on the defeat of virtue and the triumph of vice, their views of the world changed and ended in doubt and despair of Divine justice and goodness. Job, in the midst of his unmerited afflictions, tried hard to understand the ways of God towards man and gave up the problem as insoluble. To him evil was a terrible reality and misery the inevitable lot of humanity. "I will lay my hand upon my mouth and be silent, for these things are too high for me and cannot be understood." While we see in the book of Job the struggle of doubt with faith, we observe an utter despair of the just government of the world in the book of Ecclesiastes. "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean and to the unclean. So I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and beheld the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

This pessimistic view of the world soon passed away when the doctrines of redemption and atonement came into vogue. The conviction that the Son of God had taken upon Himself the sins of the world and offered Himself as a

sacrifice for the redemption of man, filled the heart of the Christian with gladness and hope and made him look upon evil as a blessing in disguise. He did not ignore that there is much evil in the world; but he learned from St. Paul to believe and to say: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God. If God be for us, who can be against us? I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet as possessing all things."

We see a similar phenomenon in the development of religion in Greece. The Greeks of the early Homeric age exhibited an extraordinary degree of superficial optimism and looked upon terrestial life as the scene of gaity and enjoyment. As has been well remarked, Greek mythology transfigured the world into an idyl, in which gods and men conversed with each other like beings of kindred nature. This cheerful view of the world was gradually transformed into the absolute pessimism of Neo-Platonism and Stoicism. The doctrine of Nemesis or Fate, which was prominent in the speculations of the later Greek philosophers, completely changed the estimate of the worth of life and made the Greeks regard the world, which had been to them once so full of joy and light, as a place of darkness and error. For them as for Job the misrelation between fate and guilt was a painful riddle. The chilling sense of an irresistible necessity presiding with stern face over the often undeserved victories and defeats of the human Soul was the inspiring motive of Greek tragedy.

While the Greeks of the early ages perceived in power and prosperity, wealth and long life, the chief joys of existence; the poets and philosophers of a later epoch saw

the supreme end of life in release from the limits of finiteness. Plato looked upon human existence as a mere shadow; while true happiness seemed to him to consist in deliverance from the realms of transmigration with all its suffering, and in entering into the community of "the divine, the pure and the true." Release from the pains of finite existence and rest in the calm glory and unchanging blessedness of eternity thus constituted to the contemplative spirits of Hellenic philosophy, in its latest and most mature stage, the highest good of life.

The story of civilization, no less than the study of the growth of religions, points to the tendency of the human mind to oscillate between the extremes of optimism and pessimism, and eventually to find a centre of repose in the inner harmony and noble purposiveness of creation. It is needless to illustrate this fact here by any detailed reference to events in the history of human progress. Even in this age of remarkable achievements the sense of tears seems to cling to all mortal things, and a gloomy spirit of world weariness pervades almost unaccountably the literature and the philosophy of modern Europe.

The discussion carried thus far will show that pessimism after all is not a special feature of the Vedanta, but is the characteristic note of religious and philosophic thought in some of its highest phases. Speculation in the sphere of religion began in ancient India with a simple and childlike belief in the beneficent powers of Nature, spreading peace and prosperity as the reward of fervent piety and virtuous conduct. To the Aryans of the Vedic age, as to the Greeks of Homeric times, terrestrial life was a bright and happy scene, in which men could hold lofty intercourse with radiant divinities manifesting themselves through the energies of Nature. This optimistic faith, characteristic of the dawn-

ing religious consciousness of the nation, could not long survive the irresistible logic of the stern realities of life. In course of time it shared the fate of similar superficial optimisms in other parts of the world. The philosophers of the post-Vedic period, with their matchless insight into the law and order of Nature, found that on the plane of consciousness the working of the world was filled with suffering and disappointment.

The problem which inevitably suggested itself to these thinkers was, Whence come this evil and suffering? They perceived in their moments of spiritual vision that the great heart of the universe was really beating with joy. They said: "Bliss is Brahman; from Bliss, indeed, all these creatures are born; when born they live through Bliss; when they depart they enter into Bliss." Hence they thought that evil could not really be anything but an accident or an illusion resulting from a false apprehension of the nature of things, and from the misleading desires engendered thereby in the weak and wilful heart of man. The sense of separateness and the illusory notion of individual independence or egoism, they declared, lay at the root of all evil and suffering. The universe, which was as much a manifestation of Divine wisdom as the aspiring Soul of man, could never really be hostile to its true happiness, unless the naturally harmonious relation between the two was grossly misunderstood. What to the physical eye appeared to be an alien power crushing the aspirations of the human Soul and placing itself in antagonism to its deeper interests, ceased to be such, nay, turned out to be a friendly power working for the common good, when viewed with the eye of reason. The wise see in the universe the embodiment of the Great God who is Truth, Intelligence and Bliss, and essentially one with themselves; while the ignorant see in it

nothing but a fearful scene of disappointment, discord, woe, and lamentations. This dual aspect of the universe is beautifully explained in the following passage from the Vishnu-Purana: "This form which is now beheld is Thy form which is essentially one with wisdom. Those who have not practised introspective meditation and devotion, look upon the world in an erroneous light. The ignorant, who do not perceive that the whole universe is an embodiment of wisdom and judge of it merely as an object of perception, are aimlessly moving hither and thither in the ocean of hallucination. But they who know true wisdom and whose minds are pure, behold this whole world as one with Divine wisdom, and as one with Thee, O Lord."

It is thus clear that he who realizes that the universe is a manifestation of Divine wisdom, passes beyond the afflictions of the world and ceases to be affected by the pains and pleasures of material existence. So long as the sense of diversity and separateness influences our thoughts and deeds, we are sunk in the ocean of ignorance and misery. Says the Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad: "From death to death goes he who here perceives any diversity"; and "whosoever looks for anything elsewhere than in the Self, he is abandoned by everything." But when we apprehend that "Self only is all this" and "Brahman only is all this, it is the best," we are freed from the trammels of matter and attain our highest end. At this stage we are not affected by sin or evil. "What trouble, what sorrow, can there be for him who beholds that unity?" "He who knows the Self overcomes grief." He fills the environment in which he lives with joy and radiance, because he has conquered his selfish individuality and lives not for himself, but for the universe.

It is a mistake to suppose that the sage who has realized this highest end, renounces everything and glories in soli-

tary retreat. The whole philosophy of the Vedanta, and the lives of the great teachers who have preached it, constitute one continuous protest against this selfish isolation and purposelessness. What is renounced by the sage, who has seen God in all things and all things in God, is not action, but the fruits thereof. The abandonment of duty and service in life is nowhere inculcated in the writings of Vedanta. On the contrary, Manu lays down the rule: "The asceticism (spiritual practice) of the *Brahmana* is knowledge; the asceticism of the *Kshatriya* (warrior) is protection; the asceticism of the *Vaisya* (merchant) is labour; the asceticism of the *Sudra* (servant) is service." The duties which our position in life impose upon us must be performed without attachment to results, and as an offering or sacrifice to the Spirit of the universe. The charge of quietism hurled against the Vedanta is utterly groundless; and the ideal preached in the Gita is a complete contradiction of its truth. Action performed in this altruistic spirit, with an absolute renunciation of all attachment to results, is proclaimed by Sri Krishna as the surest way out of the miseries of life; and such an ideal of action is indeed the necessary corollary of the essentially spiritual view of the universe maintained in the Vedanta.

The teachings of this system as to the problem of evil and the duty of man in this world are beautifully expressed in the following words of the child saint Prahlada, as given in one of our Puranas:—"He who meditates no wrong to others, but considers others as himself, is free from the effects of sin; inasmuch as the cause for it does not exist. But he who inflicts pain upon others, in act, thought, or speech, sows the seed of future birth; and the fruit which awaits him after birth is not good. Therefore wise men show for all creatures constant and unswerving love, in the knowledge that Hari (the Lord) is in all things."

This teaching is fully in accord with the true spirit of the Vedanta, and cannot be said to be in favor of any ill-considered pessimism or of an even worse quietism. The truth is that the Vedanta, like all lofty religions, looks upon the life of man, as he commonly takes it, in a deservedly pessimistic light; but recognizing as it does the inner harmony and the supreme rationality of all creation, it cannot but be joyously optimistic in its view of the goal and the destiny of the universe and the Soul of man. As Swami Vivekananda puts it: "The Vedanta system begins with a tremendous pessimism, and ends with a real optimism. We deny the sense-optimism, but assert the real optimism of the super-sensuous. Real happiness is not in the senses, but is above the senses; and it is in every man."

ANANDAM

By K. F. S.

Let joyousness be mine, O Lord.
Joy of the heart that is attuned with Thee;
Joy that knows sorrow, yet can smile
When all the world at variance may be.
Joy from within; not jesting, nor apart
From the great struggle of life's toilsome care;
Joy that enriches, gladdens, cheers,
Bringing a consciousness that God is there.
No more depression, e'en when shadows come
And darken for a time this little world of ours;
Joy that means "bliss"—*Anandam* is its name,—
Shall shed abroad a fragrance sweet as flowers.
May it be mine, O Lord. Not that I wish
To shirk the duties of relentless fate;
But, with the confidence that joy can give,
Be strong to live, and love, and wait.

SRI RAMANUJA

A Great Spiritual Teacher of India

The three philosophic systems comprised in the Vedanta, each has its special prophet or teacher. Sankara stands at the head of the *Advaita* or monistic school; Madhwa, of the *Dvaita* or dualistic; and Ramanuja, of the *Visishtadvaita* or qualified monistic. The teacher Ramanuja was born about 1017 A. D. not far from the city of Madras, in Southern India. His uncle, a worthy disciple of the great Yamuna, who was the leader of the Visishtadvaitins prior to Ramanuja, seeing that the boy was possessed of unusual intelligence and sweetness, devoted special care to his training. At the proper age (probably about ten) he received his first spiritual initiation and was invested with the sacred thread, according to the custom for every Brahmin boy. Then he was taken to the house of his teacher, Yadavaprakasa. The lad labored obediently and diligently until he came to the study of the Upanishads, when unexpected difficulties arose. Young as he was, he found his master's interpretation of the Scriptures wholly contrary to his own conception, and more than once he entered into open argument with his teacher. This led to such bitter hostility that Yadavaprakasa planned to rid himself of the boy on a journey to Benares, which he undertook with all his pupils. A cousin, however, learning of the evil conspiracy, warned Ramanuja, who struck into a by-path and disappeared.

In the forest alone, without food or knowledge of the way, the poor youth was in sore straits; but as he wandered through the thicket, he met an aged hunter and his wife, who informed him that they were going to Kanchi and would take him back with them. Gratefully he accepted their offer and all the night they journeyed together. In the morning the old man asked the youth to bring him

fresh water from a nearby well. When he returned they were gone; and he realized that they were super-earthly forms sent to his aid in answer to his earnest prayers to God for protection. Ramanuja, without fear or rancor, resumed his studies with Yadava; but as time went on, he found it more and more impossible to acquiesce in his teacher's radical monism. Relations between them grew each day more strained; and a final break came when the youthful pupil succeeded, after Yadava had failed, in exorcizing an evil spirit which possessed the daughter of a neighboring Rajah.

Ramanuja then accepted a position with a gentleman at Kanchi, where he met a wise non-Brahmin, Kanchipurna by name. So devout and holy was this humble servant of God in the Temple that, it was said, he conversed directly with the Lord. Ramanuja joyfully took a place at his feet and asked to learn of him; but always Kanchipurna shrank from any show of honor from his new pupil. Once, it is recorded, he fled to the Temple and cried out to God: "O Lord! Why dost Thou deal thus with me? The sole yearning of my heart was to spend my life as a servant only, humbly waiting upon Thee and Thy devotees. Instead, Thou art making of me a saint, honored of men. Even Ramanuja, a manifestation of Divinity, prostrates before me in lowly reverence; and today he invited me to his house, hoping to serve me. Instead of only worshipping Thee and Thy devotees day and night, Thou dost force me to accept the worship of others. What have I done, O Lord, that Thou shouldst thus punish me?"

It was during Ramanuja's sojourn at Kanchi that Yamuna, the leader of the qualified monistic school, sent his brilliant disciple Mahapurna to urge Ramanuja to come to Srirangam and formally proclaim adherence to the new

system; for at that time, the uncompromising monism of Sankara was the prevailing teaching in India. Kanchipurna, himself a disciple of Yamuna, also urged him to go. So Ramanuja set out, but as he reached the northern bank of the river Kavery, he met a large concourse of devotees moving along in funeral procession. With deep sorrow he learned that they were bearing the body of Yamuna to its last resting place. Gazing in mute reverence on the still form of the great Guru, whose blessing he could no longer hope to receive, he suddenly observed that three fingers of his right hand were firmly closed. When he asked the cause of this, he was told that shortly before he passed away, Yamuna had expressed three wishes for the work and had closed his fingers in counting them. Longing to render at least one service in death to this holy teacher, whom now he could not hope to serve in life, Ramanuja made a solemn vow to carry out these wishes. Scarcely had he spoken, when the three fingers opened; and everyone present took this as a sign that the unknown man before them was chosen to accomplish some great mission in the world.

Ramanuja returned to Kanchi, but stronger and stronger grew his desire to go to Srirangam and seek spiritual instruction of Mahapurna. Mahapurna, on his side, was already on his way with an insistent request from the members of his community that Ramanuja consent to fill the place left void by Yamuna's death. The travellers met at Madurantakam; and Ramanuja, impatient to hear without delay more of the qualified monistic teaching, carried Mahapurna back to his house at Kanchi. Happy days of devout study followed. At their close Ramanuja threw aside his householder's life; and putting on the orange robe of the Sannyasin or monk, made for himself a little hermitage

in the precincts of the Temple. Here he thought to give himself up wholly to the practice of austerity and meditation; but disciples soon began to gather round him, irresistibly drawn by the power of his saintliness and superior vision. Even his early teacher Yadava became his lowly follower.

Another call from the brotherhood at Srirangam determined Ramanuja to abandon his quiet retreat and start southward. As he neared his journey's end, hundreds of the brethren came out along the road to carry him in triumphal procession and install him in Yamuna's place. From that time Srirangam remained the chief centre of his activities; and so rapid was the growth of the work under him that, it is said, his congregation included seven hundred monks, seventy-four dignitaries holding special offices, and innumerable devout men and women who revered him as an embodiment of Divinity. It was here that his dear friend and disciple, Kuresa, joined him. Kuresa was a rich landholder who lived in great pomp near Kanchi. One day a rebuking complaint was sent to him that the loud rumble of his heavy bronze entrance gates, as they were closed at night, disturbed the worshippers of God in the Temple. Filled with a sudden shame of the noisy ostentation and vanity of his life, he distributed all his wealth to the poor; and with only the cloth he wore, he set out on foot for Srirangam. His wife asked to accompany him; but as they went on their way, he noticed that she was hiding something beneath her cloth. He inquired of her what it was, and she reluctantly confessed that she had taken with her a golden vessel to sell in case they should lack for food. "If you have so little faith, why have you taken the life of renunciation?" he said. "Rather go home and live in ease." Without a word she threw the golden vessel into

the jungle and empty-handed walked with her husband to Srirangam. There they adopted the life of mendicants, begging their daily food from door to door.

During the long years of his public ministrations, Ramanuja travelled extensively throughout northern and southern India, performing many miracles and converting thousands to his point of view. It was not a question of a new faith, but of a modified interpretation of the one already in general acceptance. As Sankara some two hundred years before had written his inspired commentaries on the Vedic Scriptures and the Bhagavad-Gita from the standpoint of rigid monism, Ramanuja now accomplished the same task, giving a qualified monistic interpretation. Sankara proclaimed that God alone existed; all else was only fleeting manifestation, hence in the final analysis unreal. He was the sole reality, while even His attributes were changing and illusory. Ramanuja and his school, on the contrary, accorded as great reality and permanence to His attributes as to God Himself. They said that God, the Soul and the universe were eternally united, but also eternally distinct; while Sankara declared them integrally one and inseparate.

It was inevitable that Ramanuja should voice in some measure the spirit of his age, but there can be no doubt that his strong appeal to the multitude of devotees who rallied round him sprang less from his remarkable philosophic acumen and vast learning, than from his deep human sympathies. He possessed a rare understanding of human nature, and proved a true spiritual physician to all who brought their weary minds and aching hearts to be healed by him. The intensity of his love for his fellowmen is shown in an incident of his early days at Srirangam. When he consented to succeed

Yamuna as the head of the brotherhood, instead of assuming the place of a teacher, he made himself the pupil of all the eminent disciples of his great predecessor, seeking out one after the other and begging to be taught of them. Thus it was that he came to Goshtipurna, who before he would initiate and teach him, compelled him as a test to travel eighteen times the long way from Srirangam to the Madura district where he resided. At last exacting a promise of strictest secrecy, he revealed to him certain profound truths, adding that whoever came into possession of them could not fail to attain salvation.

Scarcely had Ramanuja received them, when he went to a tower, called together a large crowd and loudly proclaimed these sacred truths. When Goshtipurna heard of it, he grew very angry and, meeting Ramanuja in the street, refused even to look upon his face. But Ramanuja replied patiently: "I am prepared to go and dwell in hell, having disobeyed thy command, but according to thy word all who have heard the truths you gave will attain the highest end. If thousands and thousands of men and women can thus reach the loftiest heaven by an insignificant person like myself going to hell, then I am content to have done what I have done." As soon as Goshtipurna heard these words of Ramanuja, he embraced him, saying with folded hands: "O Great-Souled One, from today thou art my Guru and I am thy disciple. He who possesses so large a heart must be an incarnation of Vishnu Himself. I can have no doubt of this. I am only an ordinary mortal. That is why I could not comprehend thy greatness. Forgive my offense." But Ramanuja bent his head in humility and, holding the feet of his Guru, answered: "O Great One! Thou art my Guru through eternity. It was because this mantram fell from thy blessed lips that it had such power. Because it

was infused with a part of thy great spirit hundreds of men and women have had their miseries burned away. And though I disobeyed my Guru's command, still I have received his embrace, which is coveted by the Devas, so am I satisfied for all time. Only give me a place at thy feet, looking upon me as thy child and thy servant. This is my heart's earnest prayer."

Ramanuja attained the remarkable age of one hundred and twenty years, and his long life was full of such acts of self-sacrifice and devotion to his fellowmen. Love, service and surrender to God were his watchwords, as knowledge was the cry of Sankara and his followers. Yet as Sankara recognized the need of devotion, so he saw the need of acquiring knowledge. "Lord, grant unto me supreme devotion, supreme knowledge and supremest love for Thee, that through these I may come to Thy Eternal Being," was his constantly reiterated supplication. Actually the metaphysical distinctions and variations in interpretation which the different Great Teachers bring, constitute the smaller part of their gift to the world. It is rather the living glow of spirituality in their lives, their saintliness and rare humility, the Divine radiance of their character, which make their coming so rich in blessing to mankind. So it is that to this day Ramanuja has stood as the ideal and pattern for thousands of men and women in India, who may not understand the intricacies of his learned commentaries, but who can read and follow the lesson of his daily life.

Blessed is he who has become an embodiment of truth and loving kindness. He conquers, although he may suffer; he is strong, although he may break down under the burden of work; he is immortal, although he may die.

— *Gospel of Buddha.*

REPORT

Throughout December the work of the Vedanta Centre of Boston moved along in its accustomed channel, except for the Christmas celebration which took place on the evening of the 24th. The windows of the house and especially that one where the altar to the Christ Child stood, were aflame with burning candles which cast a glow over the rain-swept streets outside. The storm kept many from the Service, but the chapel was well filled and everyone felt the peace and upliftment of the hour. Besides meditation, prayer and music, Swami Paramananda delivered a short address in which he said: "To truly realize the Christmas spirit we must realize it every day in the year. We must daily bring our offering to God. Christ is constantly born anew in our hearts, but we bar the way to the manifestation of His spirit. He is ever waiting to come to us and bring us joy, if we will but make ourselves ready to receive Him. His love is like a magnet and when we open our hearts to it, it seizes upon us. Then all burdens drop off and we become like little children, conscious of the never-failing care of an All-wise, All-loving, Divine Parent."

GREETING

At the threshold of this new year THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST sends out a loving greeting to all those who have found help and inspiration through it during the year just closing. It hopes to fulfill its task with the same zeal and faithful devotion to the cause of Truth as in the past, ever upholding the lofty ideals of love and tolerance. And it voices the earnest prayer that the lesson of world-wide harmony, peace and good will which it carries may unite the hearts of men in a closer bond of brotherly understanding and universal sympathy.

THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST .

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East"
Ezekiel.

"Light shall come again from the East"
Tyndall.

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CONTROL OF THE SENSES

By Swami Ramakrishnananda

What are these senses? They are nothing in themselves; it is we who have given them their power; but they have had it for ages, so they take it as their own. Now, when we would conquer them, they rise up and make us slaves. This, however, is really the fault of the man himself. When he is able to understand clearly that the senses are the cause of all his misery, then he can very easily put them down. But that realization does not come without a struggle. The man continues to linger here expecting something good, something great from this world; and so long as he thinks in this way, he will not realize that through the senses no true happiness can come. He must first learn to distinguish the real from the unreal, good from bad, and then take only the good. Thus he will gradually rise above the senses.

When you can bring your senses under your control, they can be made to lead you to God. These very energies which have led you away from the Lord, may now take you to Him. But the senses are very delusive. Even the highest man is sometimes dragged down by them to the lowest plane of sensuality. For this reason you must wage an incessant war against them. There is no other way.

For the man who wants to realize the Truth, the first duty should be to put down the senses, and fixing his mind on the Lord, to regard Him as the highest.

Why do you turn to the senses? Because you want to go where you will always be happy, and you think that your senses will lead you there. You imagine that one place or one thing will make you happiest, and you start out at once to go to it. When this idea comes and you run towards the object of your desire, nothing then can check you. Why? Because you regard that to be the highest; and the senses, you believe, will help you get it. The senses, however, merely obey you. They are not to blame. You yourself are at fault. Sri Krishna now comes and says: "My dear friend, you have seen all these things in the universe, and the universe is a place of infinite variety. Of all that is to be found here, the highest and most desirable thing is the Lord." When you can understand this very clearly by means of comparison—that He is the highest and the best—at that moment all your sense energies will rush towards Him.

The mind always aspires after the biggest, the highest, the greatest. If you put down a ten-rupee note and beside it a hundred-rupee note, it will take the hundred rupees. If beside the hundred-rupee note you place a thousand-rupee note, it will take the thousand rupees. If some one tells you that great wealth is to be found in a certain place, at once you will give up your present modest income and run there. In the same way, when you realize that nothing is so beautiful as God, nothing is so great as God, nothing is so good or so kind as God; when you grasp this as you do the value of the thousand rupees over the ten and hundred rupees, you will rush towards God. Then you will say: "Do I desire wisdom? God is my wisdom. Do I want

wealth? God is my wealth. Do I want learning? God is my learning. Do I seek a home where I shall be at rest? Then God shall be my home, my place of rest."

The moment you feel this in your heart of hearts, then even if you are a little child like Dhruva, you will be able to do great things. Because his mother told him that God was in the jungle, he entered it without doubt or fear, for a little child never doubts his mother's word. When he saw the lions and tigers, he was not afraid. He only thought that God was playing with him by coming in such strange forms, so he began to talk to them; and because he was not afraid, they did not harm him. So it is with you. If you understand clearly that the Lord is the highest, then nothing will frighten or discourage you; all your senses will run in the direction of the Supreme, and both your mind and your senses will help you reach Him.

Where is God? He is where the world is not. When after studying the universe you realize that it has come out of a great all-wise Being, then you think: "I must go to Him and get a little of that wisdom." And to go to Him you must go away from the universe. Whether He is extra-cosmic or intra-cosmic, it makes no difference; for in either case you will have to go out of the universe. You cannot take two things. You must take the one or the other. If you wish to go to God, you will have to turn your back on the world.

These senses when outgoing lead you to creation; but you wish to go to God, therefore you must indraw your senses. They must be controlled and turned in the opposite direction. He is seated in the heart, so all your sense energies, all your mental energies must converge to that one point and take you there. But this can only be done when you realize that He is the best, the highest in the

whole universe. "Thou art my Father, Thou art my Mother; Thou art my Friend, Thou art my Companion; Thou art my learning, Thou art my wealth; Thou art my all in all, my one Lord."

God's Ego, God's Spirit, God's Self are all one and the same; for they are all infinite, and there cannot be two infinities. Our *Atman* (Self) and our ego are diametrically opposed, because one is infinite and the other is finite. For this reason God is called the *Paramatman* or Supreme Self. If you would control your senses and your mind, you must look upon Him as this Supreme Self and love Him with all your heart and soul. The perverse tendency of the senses will be controlled at that moment; and instead of leading you to the outside creation and to death, they will lead you inward to God. So you see that when you regard God as the highest, you can easily learn to control the senses; when you have controlled your senses, you know who you are; and when you know who you are, you realize that the universe rests in you, that it has no basis except in you, and that you are beyond birth and death.

How does attachment come? How do the senses become outgoing? That man who makes much of sensual enjoyment, who thinks that out of sounds, forms and touches alone enjoyment can come, naturally becomes attached to these; just as when gum is on the table, if something is laid on it, the object will stick to it. A man thinks, "I want to be happy only in the world, and nowhere else can I be happy"; and out of this belief attachment for the world springs up. So long as these feelings hold him, he will be tied to the world by a strong cord of attachment and he will not be able to get away from it. As the result of this attachment desires come into existence. Then when something rises in the way and prevents the fulfilling of these

desires, he grows angry. When a man becomes angry, he loses the power of discrimination between right and wrong; and his egotism goes to such a length that he thinks nothing even of insulting his superiors or the *Guru* (spiritual Teacher) to whom he is so much beholden. Thus egotism, which in itself is such a puny thing, under the influence of anger can become greatly inflated. There is no worse delusion than this. At that time a man perpetrates the worst kind of evil without any compunction whatever. Then when that unnatural condition leaves him, he himself will have to repent. So man is the cause of his own death. But since this destruction comes through attachment, we should give up attachment.

How are we to do this? We should neither like nor dislike anything. When the senses have been freed from liking and disliking, then with their help if the man enjoys the world, they will never bring evil to him. Rather he will have a certain power, a certain satisfaction in his mind. He who has been able to bring his mind under his control by the above method, such a man will be able to realize within himself perfect peace and contentment. And what will be the result of this peace and contentment? In that contented condition of mind he will never commit a blunder. When the mind is restless, it cannot think properly and one commits all sorts of mistakes. But not so the other man. His intellectual faculties are very clear; he sees all, he knows the true nature of things, what he should leave and what he should accept, and he realizes the Truth.

This can be done only if we can free the senses from undue likings and dislikings. It is because control of the mind and of the senses will bring us peace and contentment and through these we shall attain to the realization of the Truth, that Sri Krishna tells us in the Gita that our *Buddhi*

or intellect must be clear. We commit blunders and mistake one thing for another because our *Buddhi* is confused; the mind is covered with dross. If a man wishes to achieve success in any walk of life, his intellectual faculties must be very clear. A man who has no control over his body, no control over his mind, such a man is very dull, his intellectual faculties are clouded and he confounds everything—taking a friend for a foe, the wrong for right. He cannot think relevantly on any subject for a minute. How can such a dull uncontrolled man be peaceful? How can such a restless mind be happy?

Whenever you fully enjoy any sort of pleasure, even sensual pleasure, for the time being restlessness leaves the mind and you are happy. So long as the mind is restless, it is unhappy. When there is rest, there is happiness. We must not be *ayukta* (undisciplined). We must not let the mind and senses rule over us. We must rule over them. Otherwise we can never be happy, and we shall make all those about us unhappy, too. Just as the pilot who is at the mercy of the wind is lost, so the man who is at the mercy of the senses is lost. The senses steal away all peace from a man, as the wind steals away the boat from the shore and sinks it in mid-ocean.

As long as you are held by any one of these senses, as long as you care for good food or sweet sounds or beautiful sights, you cannot hope to fix your mind on God. You will have to go out of the creation first. And when you go out of the creation, where must you go? To the Creator. The more you can take your mind and senses away from the world and fix them on God, the more you will find peace and happiness. And this can most easily be done by realizing through discrimination and experience that God is the highest and most desirable thing in this universe.

THE PRACTICE OF SILENCE

By Swami Paramananda

The best shrine man can ever create for the Supreme is in his own heart. There are places where holiness pervades, but that which makes them holy is the human Soul living in the consciousness of God. We can all create such shrines, by the practice of humility, absence of anger, compassion, forgiveness and faith. When every action is made an act of devotion, then quickly the living Presence is felt within. But we cannot feel this Presence except in the silence. That silence, however, is not so much external silence as the silence of our inner being. So long as there is any unrest within us, we cannot hope to perceive or reflect the Spirit of God. Nor can we penetrate into the innermost recesses of our being. When, however, all turbulence ceases, then we grow conscious of the Divine Presence and have a realization of the inner life.

There are two ways to practise silence. One is through absence of thought. The other through fullness of thought. The second is productive of great strength. When we try to empty the mind, there is danger of its falling into a dull negative state, which opens it to many possible weakening influences. This is often the origin of mental depression, melancholia and those forms of insanity which are due to obsession. When on the contrary we are able to fill the mind with one dynamic thought, not only does it fortify us against outer and inner dangers, but of itself it will empty the mind of all alien thoughts. Even a weak person by following this method will soon develop a certain tranquillity and strength. There are two opposite elements constantly playing on the human mind. The one, known in Sanskrit as *Tamas*, creates a state of heaviness, dullness, indiscrimination and dejection. The other, called *Rajas*, car-

ries the thought to the opposite extreme of over-activity, turbulence, noisy aggression and ostentation. At the point where these contending elements attain perfect balance, a third state known as *Sattwa* is produced. In this state only is true silence possible. In *Sattwa* we have the positive silence; in *Tamas*, the negative. The two kinds may seem to resemble each other outwardly. One overpowered by dullness may appear tranquil; but it is a very different condition from the serene stillness of *Sattwa*, where all the faculties of the mind are wide awake and full of light.

This higher form of silence, however, cannot be acquired in a moment. To cultivate it, we must master all our forces; and this means steady practice. First we must try so far as we can to have a healthy body, for any physical disturbance easily destroys the silence of the mind. But a healthy body is not all; a healthy mind is better; and when we have spiritual health, that is best of all. It being a less tangible form of health, people do not attach so much importance to it; yet without it, we can never have true health of mind or body.

Spiritual attainment requires great patience. It appears at times almost beyond our reach, because it seems to call for so much sacrifice; but we must make sacrifices for everything we earn on any plane; and in reality spiritual sacrifice is not so great because the return is so much richer and more enduring. Whenever we follow our higher instincts, instead of our lower, we humanize the animal in us and the noisier, more excitable part of our nature is quieted. The idea of silence is not merely avoiding action; it is bringing all our scattered and undisciplined forces wholly under our control. So long as our heart is agitated, our mind stormy and our nerves distracted, it is not possible for us to have unobstructed vision or the power of clear

decision. But when the moments of stillness come, we have flashes of understanding which make our path clear.

The practice of silence has to do with every part of our system. There is a silence of the body, a silence of the mind and a silence of the heart. Until all these are tranquillized, we cannot know what true silence is. The body is silent when it is free from both motion and tension. It must be wholly relaxed, yet firm and quiet. This is gained by the practice of posture, which is one of the most essential exercises in developing the power of meditation. Posture teaches us not only to hold the body still in some fixed position at special times, but at all times to avoid every superfluous motion and maintain equilibrium. Nothing helps more to conserve our physical energies than this form of silence. It also has great healing power. The mind acquires silence through the persistent practice of discriminative elimination and concentration. As it comes in contact with the external world, it learns to distinguish between vital and non-vital, real and unreal; then discarding the unreal and non-vital, it focuses itself with ardor upon the object of its attention. The heart grows still and full of gladness through meditation, which is an unbroken flow of the thought and feeling towards the Ideal. In the inner realm serenity, not inactivity, brings the sense of silence. Perfect balance and calmness never fail to generate great power throughout the whole organism. Only in this state do we see the manifestation of the highest intelligence.

Exercises in silence are like exercises given to soldiers; a sort of spiritual drill. Their effect must be seen in all that we do; because whatever we undertake with the aid of a well-disciplined mind, trained to absolute attention, cannot fail to be more efficiently done. This is why it is so needful for us to gain more and more the habit of silence and one-

pointedness. Only so can we create an island for ourselves. The sages declare that each one can make for himself an inner island, which no storm can overwhelm. This is the purpose of all spiritual practice. Thus, if a person who is distracted with thoughts of sickness, sorrow, perplexity, can sit quietly and hold thoughts of purity and Divine wisdom, very soon he will begin to feel the unbounded nature of his own Soul and of the cosmic life of which he is a part; and his whole being will be filled with strength and tranquillity. When we are disturbed by our association or environment, if we are able to practise silence, that is, detach our thought wholly from the distracting condition and hold it firmly on some higher thought even for a few moments, it will restore our equilibrium, we shall be lifted out of the condition and feel as if we had been bathed in fresh clear water. Whenever we spend even a moment in silent communion with our spiritual Ideal, we are revivified and ready to start on our way once more.

How can we hope to hear the subtle voice of the Spirit as long as we are listening to all the noises of the world? It is not possible. That is why silence is so necessary. We must close all our senses, because it is through these doors that the sounds of the world reach us. If we wish to commune with God, we must disconnect ourselves from all distracting influences. No one is nearer to us than God, but we must know it. The more we are engrossed in the world, the less do we have the opportunity to seek Him. When we are not awake and attentive on the higher plane, things of the Spirit do not touch us. Purity of heart, openness of mind, willingness to follow: these constitute the whole of the spiritual life. When we have these, God bestows on us all His choicest gifts. We must work with one-pointed devotion, with a sense of consecration, and with unde-

pressed heart. We must also cultivate the power to receive. Then nothing can hold us back. If we will but live a silent, prayerful life, striving to strengthen our purpose and to quiet the noisy voice of the ego within us, God will make our steps steady and unfaltering, infill us with His Divine wisdom, and bless us with the consciousness of His Holy Presence.

CLEAVE TO THAT WHICH UNITES

From Letters of Isaac Penington

(Quaker Mystic of England, 17th Century.)

Take heed of that which prejudices and disjoins; but feel and cleave to that which uniteth in love, life, and pure power.

There is no straitness in the Fountain. God is fullness; and it is His delight to empty Himself into the hearts of His children; and He doth empty Himself according as He makes way in them and as they are able to drink in of His living virtue.

Therefore, where the Soul is enlarged, where the senses are grown strong, where the mouth is opened wide, (the Lord God standing ready to pour out of His riches,) what should hinder it from being filled? And being filled, how natural it is to run over and break forth inwardly in admiration and deep sense of spirit concerning what it cannot utter, saying, Oh! the fullness, Oh! the depth, height, breadth, and length of the love of the Lord! Oh! the compassion, the mercy, the tenderness of our Father!

How hath He pitied, how hath He pardoned, beyond what the heart could believe! How hath He helped in the hour of distress! How hath He conquered and scattered the enemies, which in unbelief the heart was ready often to say were unconquerable! How hath He put an end to

doubts, fears, disputes, troubles, wherewith the mind was overwhelmed and tossed! And now He extends peace like a river; now He puts the Soul forth out of the pit into the green pastures; now it feeds on the freshness of life and is satisfied, and drinks of the river of God's pleasure and is delighted; and sings praise to the Lamb and Him that sits on the throne, saying, Glory, glory, life, power, dominion and majesty over all the powers of darkness, over all the enemies of the Soul, be to Thy name for evermore!

Now, my dear Friends, ye know somewhat of this, and ye know the way to it. Oh! be faithful, be faithful! Travel on, travel on! Let nothing stop you; but wait for and daily follow the sensible leadings of that measure of life which God hath placed in you.

You will find it easy to transgress, easy to set up self, easy to run into sudden apprehensions about things; but feel the power to keep down all this and to keep you out of all this.

Be not hasty, either in conceiving anything in your minds, or in speaking it forth, or in anything ye are to do; but feel Him by His Spirit and life going along with you and leading you into what He would have you or every one of you do.

If ye be in the true feeling sense of what the Lord your God would have done, and join with what is of God, ye are all in your places and proper services, obeying the blessed will and doing the blessed work of the Lord your God.

There is a time to want, as well as to abound, while we are in this world. And the times of wanting, as well as abounding, are greatly advantageous to us. How should faith, love, patience, meekness, and the excellency and sufficiency of God's grace shine, but by, in, and through the many exercises and varieties of conditions, wherewith the Lord visiteth His?

This hath been the cry of my Soul from my childhood, even after holiness, after the presence of the Lord, after union with Him, after the nature and image of His Son, after separation from what was contrary to Him, and a being brought forth in the power of His life.

And all that have felt the true cry, Oh! that they might also be taught of God, and learn aright how to wait upon Him, and to walk humbly and in fear before Him, that nothing might come between them and the cry of their Souls; but they might be led by Him into the enjoyment and possession of that, which the true birth (which is born of the Spirit, and is Spirit) naturally longs after.

This then is the way of redemption; to wait to feel the appearance of the light of the Spirit in the heart; and at its least or lowest appearance, to be turned from the darkness towards it.

BENGALEE HYMN

(Translated especially for "The Message of the East")

Upon this thirsting world, O Lord, pour out the waters of Thy peace.
With parched hearts and upturned faces Thy children stand imploring Thee.
May darkness vanish, sin and delusion have an end.
Let sorrow be no more, or dark despair.
Cleanse and purify our hearts.
Fill full our lives with strength and vigor.
Remove all barriers from our way.
Take from us pride and envy; jealousy and the deceiving sense of I-ness.
With Thy Love Divine melt the hardness of our hearts.
Unto Thee, O Lord, be glory! All glory unto Thee!

CONCENTRATION

By Sister Devamata

Concentration is a question of character. Its true practice is preventive, not corrective. It does not consist in gathering up, but in not scattering. So long as the method employed is merely corrective, we shall make little progress in attaining it. It is of small use to learn to collect our energies, if at every hour we dissipate them again. We must push farther back in our nature and deal with that which creates all this ceaseless labor for us. Our search will lead us quickly beyond the surface process of mental control, with which the idea of concentration usually is associated. It will carry us to the very tap-root of our being.

Nor will periodical exercises develop the power of concentration in us. It will come only through a habit of life. The whole course of our daily living must be centred. Every thought and action, every task and interest must have a centripetal motion. Without a centre, however, this is not possible. Hence the need of a clearly defined and unwavering purpose. When the true vocation is found, concentration becomes an easy matter. But it is even more important for the one who is without a special calling, not to permit himself an aimless hour, an aimless thought, or an aimless action. Specially should this be the case in training children. They should be guarded against the slightest idle expenditure of energy. Even their play should have some well formulated aim. We must not confound this, however, with the popular idea of "having an ambition"; for too often the ambition itself is aimless, leading to no vital end. The purpose set must be a sound and ennobling one.

The difference claimed between masculine and feminine ability is to be traced in large part to the lack of centraliza-

tion in the woman's daily living. The *Chitta* or mind stuff is sexless; the degree of concentration with which it is used determines its power. The majority of women until recently have lacked the discipline of a fixed purpose. Their forces have been used according to the chance demands of the hour, hence the habit of continuous concentrated activity has been foreign to them. Now it cannot be gained in a day. Yet wherever a woman has discovered her vocation, whether in the home or in the cloister, on the throne or in more ordinary concerns, we see her displaying an efficiency and wielding an authority to which the world pays willing homage.

No one who has not a fixed goal for his effort ever unifies his forces wholly. An occasional impulsive interest may help him to do so temporarily, and in that moment he accomplishes something worth while; but so long as there is an ebb and flow in his purpose, all attempts at real concentration will be abortive. Unless the life beneath rests on a stable basis, the thought control will always be fitful. The average person waits until he has need to fix his attention, then he makes a hasty call upon his wandering forces. The suddenness of the appeal so jars the system that his energies scatter more than ever. Dormant thoughts and sensations are shaken to the surface and begin a ruthless war on his straining mind. All sorts of irrelevant impressions stored up in his memory—a newspaper headline, an irritating word, a street accident, a forgotten duty—rise and mock him, until the object of his concentration is wholly forgotten in the struggle to concentrate. This is the experience of nearly everyone during the initial stages of meditation; and it springs in large part from the mistake of waiting until the hour of practice before turning the thought on the subject of meditation. As we prepare for

our practice, we should start our mind flowing towards it. Then there will be no sudden jarring adjustment of the thought current, and all our energy, now exhausted in drawing our attention from previous concerns, may be used in meditating.

This is an equally efficacious rule for worldly occupations. A momentary pause should precede each task in order that the thought may be shifted with proper deliberation from the preceding point of attention to the new one. There should be no overlapping. The student in concentration should train himself to shut off one line of thought and turn on another, as he would turn off and on electric light bulbs; although in reality the turning on, if done whole-heartedly, will turn off also. A good physician must completely forget the previous patient when another enters his office. A successful lawyer can have at any moment only one case in the world—the one he is considering. In recent times it has come to be regarded as a mark of cleverness for a man to carry on several lines of work simultaneously; but if we observe carefully, we shall find the stamp of mediocrity on all that he does. The efficient worker permits no division of interest, either within the mind or outside. He need not think or do the same thing always, but his thoughts move in single file.

The practice of unified attention is one which needs no special time, place or equipment. Any form of occupation offers abundant opportunity. An excellent specific exercise, however, is to memorize a verse or text; then, as we walk along the street or ride in the car, to fix a certain distance during which the mind shall not be allowed to wander from the passage chosen, analyzing and reflecting on it with resolute intentness. Or, if we are reading, it is good to read over and over the same paragraph until we have read our

whole attention into it. Another useful exercise is to refuse to respond for a brief interval to the teasing call of the senses. Now our sense gates hang loosely open and at the slightest disturbance the mind rushes out through one or the other, dragging the body after it to see or hear or taste or touch. The man who wishes to advance in concentration, however, learns to open and close these gates at will; or, if he cannot do this, at least he does not permit his mind to stand at them all day like an idle servant, but he keeps it within busy with its proper duties.

There are two essential steps in every act of concentration. The one is consecration; the other, simplification. Unless we can give ourselves wholly to the object of our attention, we cannot focus all our energies upon it; but when we have unified our interest, it follows naturally that we shall seek to eliminate whatever is not related to it. Behind the sense of consecration there must be a strong desire. No one can devote sustained thought to what does not seem worth while. This is one of the weakest points in the ordinary effort at concentration. People try to concentrate without conviction. They undertake any task or read any book which happens to come their way, then they wonder that they do it so listlessly, with their thoughts flying to the four points of the compass. They lack the sense of consecration, and still more the habit of discrimination; for there can be no genuine consecration without discrimination. We should never expend the least thought, strength or time without first determining by careful analysis and reasoning whether the object or act deserves our attention. Every hour of life, every ounce of energy, is given us in trust. We are answerable for its use to the great Cosmic Being. What right have we then to use it thoughtlessly and to small ends? If we have a desire to do so, our values

are false and we must begin our practice of concentration here. It is impossible for us to give ourselves fully to what is not vital, for the real part of us will lag behind, dragging on our wayward energies. Only as we move towards the vital and eternal shall we go as a unit, because then our Soul goes with us.

The primary lessons in concentration, therefore, are lessons in right analysis, which will cultivate in us a correct sense of values. As soon as we have persuaded ourselves by a preliminary act of discrimination that a certain line of conduct will bring us the highest return, we shall have little difficulty in focusing our energy on it. No one cares for the false and unreal. What man will labor to amass a fortune of counterfeit coin? It is because our conviction is vague and faltering as to what is or is not of value that our forces are so scattered. We are a house divided against itself—one part seeking the real, the other coveting the unreal. But let our desire for the real be stimulated sufficiently, at once our interest and effort will gather to a point about it. All extraneous concerns will be cast aside; our mode of living will grow simpler; a large amount of energy will thus be released to focus on the central aim; and we shall find ourselves possessed of a power far greater than we imagine possible. The properly trained mind is always concentrated; it has only to shift at need its point of attention. Nor does this mean an abnormal, strained condition. Concentration is its normal state, as it is natural for the muscles of an athlete to be always firm and strong.

This comes, however, only after long and steadfast effort. Yet it can be attained even by the most turbulent "through practice and dispassion," Sir Krishna declares in the Bhagavad-Gita. Dispassion is an essential factor in

developing the power of concentration. Until we are completely detached and free, we cannot have full use of all our faculties and forces. Let us be tied by the finest thread, and that thread may pull and set the whole mind in motion just when we have succeeded in bringing it to a state of stillness. Clear judgment, balance, resolution, moral rectitude, genuine love, all these fruits of concentrated thought are possible only in a state of freedom; and freedom implies detachment. Unless we have entire possession of our forces, how can we focus them? They must be wholly at our command to give or withhold, to loose or restrain. The method by which this is accomplished, we are told again in the Gita, is by governing our desires and aversions. "Let none come under the sway of these two," it says, "for they are his enemies." The thoughtless man attaches himself to his desires and detaches himself from his aversions, but the wise man reverses the process. He moves away from his desires and towards his aversions and in this way keeps to a firm middle path. As a frightened horse is led up to the electric cars or the locomotive engine again and again until its fear is conquered, so whenever his system recoils from any condition or experience, he turns and faces it with firm determination until it ceases to cause any reaction in his mind. If a desire arises, in the same way he looks it over and over with calm dispassion until its power dwindles and dies. Very few of our desires can bear close scrutiny, save those which are better classed as aspirations.

Unless these multiple reactions of our mind which we call likes and dislikes are controlled, absolute concentration is out of the question. Nor is it possible to have a fixed purpose and serve it. This is why the practice of dispassion is so important. It is also an incalculable aid

in removing the numberless non-essential concerns which now distract our thought and consume our strength. True concentration cannot be had in fragments; it must cover the whole of life. The man who would develop it, first must determine his centre and then move towards it with unswerving resolution. His reading and study, his association, his work and his play, must all carry him to that specific end. So long as the goal set is a material one, however, there cannot be complete one-pointedness; for the aim cannot be steady when the mark is shifting. And no created thing can be wholly stable. It is for this profound reason that the Vedic teachers reiterate their yearning appeal to make God the final aim of all our effort; for in Him alone shall we reach a state of perfect unity.

"He who works for Me, has Me for his supreme goal, is devoted to Me, is free from attachment and bears enmity towards no creature:" in this short rule lies the whole secret of concentration. When our life flows in undivided current towards that ultimate Centre, then not only will our individual forces be unified, but they will enter into union with the supreme cosmic force and act in harmony with it. We are not isolated factors in the universe. As by the circumstance of our existence on this earth, we must swing with it in its orbit and partake of all the conditions of its life; so are we parts of a vast cosmic system, subject to a mighty cosmic law. If we strive to describe an orbit of our own and revolve according to an individual plan, our energies cannot fail to be broken and scattered by constant clashes with the cosmic force moving in an opposite direction.

When, however, we have made the Centre of that great system our Centre and have adjusted our motion to its universal rhythm and direction, the centripetal momentum

of that larger force will of itself draw all our energies to a focus and drive them with a power and penetration which cannot be checked or hindered. Then wherever we turn our attention, we shall see with unified vision and act with one-pointed directness; serene and unshakable in the consciousness that our life is fixed in God, hence nothing on earth or in heaven can move it from its Eternal Support and Centre.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VEDANTA CENTRE OF BOSTON

On January 2nd The Vedanta Centre of Boston celebrated the Tenth Anniversary of its establishment. At all the lower windows were hung red vigil lamps, encircling the house with a garland of light. The Chapel also was bright and fragrant with flowers. Although the weather was very inclement, nearly one hundred friends and members gathered to offer their good wishes to the Centre. The Service began with an organ prelude, after which there was a violincello solo by Miss Colby. The Swami then welcomed his guests, saying in substance:

"We are on the threshold of a new year and it seems only fitting that we should begin it with our friends. Our Chapel bears a foreign name, just as in India the name of your church is foreign; but we do not deal with names and forms. We deal with the Spirit, and we recognize that in Spirit we are all one. Our work may not seem to grow rapidly; but we do not ask to grow in numbers, although we are happy to see many come with yearning spirit. All we ask is to serve those who come humbly and lovingly—not by binding them to any special set of ideas, but by broadening their views and breaking down all barriers of difference. We may not have accomplished much as yet; but we hope to do more in the future. The only way, however, that

we can accomplish anything is through your coöperation and sympathy, uniting our hearts with yours in common prayer—not only for the welfare of this special work, but for all people. So long as we pray for our own selfish interests, our prayers are of little avail. We must send up our united prayer for the good of all. The size of our work may be small, but the Ideal which it embodies is not small. Ideals, however, are not realized through big organizations; their realization comes in individual human hearts full of sympathy and tolerance."

The Swami then called upon Sister Devamata to give a brief report of the year's work. "The nearer we come to the eternal facts of life," she began, "the simpler the record grows. In the physical world, there are many variations to tell of. Social and political changes follow one another in longer wave, but still there are many. When, however, we turn to the spiritual life of mankind, the variation appears so slight that it must be dealt with in epochs rather than in years. So with our work, there seems little to record from one anniversary to another. The modest stream which started some ten years ago when Swami came to Boston, has not changed its course. It still flows with the same undeviating directness straight on to the throne of Truth and God, each twelvemonth marking a deepening and broadening of its current. A gratifying and unexpected extension in the Centre's life came last March when the Swami paid a visit of two weeks to Seattle in response to an invitation of long standing. During his fourteen days there, he delivered eleven public lectures and held numerous classes. The halls were always overcrowded at the meetings, on some occasions large numbers being turned away; and he was obliged to decline various requests to speak in nearby places. The sale of literature was so large

that it was impossible to keep a supply to meet the demand. From Seattle the Swami went to Portland and then to our branch Centre in Los Angeles. . . .

"The greatest activity of the year has been in the publishing department and many thousands of books have gone into circulation—not only throughout this country, but in India, Australia and many other distant points. Also five new titles have been added to our book list. The Swami's translation of the Bhagavd-Gita and his 'Way of Peace and Blessedness' have gone into their second edition, and his 'Path of Devotion' into its fifth. Besides these, several of the smaller books have had to be replenished, making a total output of ten thousand volumes in the year. Our publication, 'The Message of the East,' also has carried to distant and often unknown friends each month new lessons in practical spiritual living. It is undoubtedly through the printed page that we reach the largest public; but because of this, we can never measure the extent of the Centre's influence or count the number of its adherents."

In commenting on the year's activities, the Swami said again: "I have made my home in this country for twelve years and I have never felt lonely. I have always regarded it as a great privilege, rather, that I have been able to bring you certain lessons needed in this busy occidental life—lessons in poise, tranquillity and consecrated practice of spiritual ideals. . . . Vedanta strives above all to enlarge the vision and unite the hearts of men. God is One and we worship Him as our common Father. There is no need for intolerance. If we can spread this spirit, then our religious life will rest on a solid foundation. It is through understanding that love and unity are realized. Lack of understanding gives rise to doubt and opposition. I sincerely hope and pray that there may come a day when the

children of God in East and West, North and South, will reach a deeper understanding of one another and exchange their gifts freely for the enrichment of mankind."

After a prayer and benediction, the formal exercises were brought to a close. Refreshments were then passed and the rest of the evening was spent in listening to music and in talking with friends.

REPORT

On January 19th Swami Paramananda was asked to speak at the First Unitarian Church of Ayer. "A large congregation of civilians and soldiers heard the Swami last Sunday evening at our church," the minister, Rev. F. B. Crandall, writes. "The worshipful surroundings of the beautiful new church and the spirit of the man himself produced a harmony which left a deep impression. Before speaking, he conducted a meditation as in his own Services at the Chapel of The Vedanta Centre. In his sermon he held his hearers in close attention as he outlined the common ground of all true ethical and spiritual faiths, whether Eastern or Western. He lifted all to a new and higher plane of thought and feeling. That was the secret of the power of his discourse. 'The people heard him gladly.' My own great surprise was to find how many there are, who in the depth of their hearts yearn for the larger vistas in religion and the purer air of the region where such men as Swami Paramananda abide. Almost the whole congregation remained and reassembled in the church social hall for an informal reception which lasted until the hour of the last train to Boston."

* * *

A limited number of bound volumes of THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST for 1918 will be ready by the end of February. (Price $2.00. Postage extra.)

THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East"
Ezekiel.

"Light shall come again from the East"
Tyndall.

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THE HARVEST FIELD OF LIFE

Lecture by Swami Paramananda

The great problem of uplifting humanity is not merely one of transplanting a person who is suffering or degraded to a place where he may live in comfort. It is a deeper problem. He must be taught first how to make the best of himself. That is much more vital than merely supplying his material needs. We may give people certain opportunities and powers, but we cannot always give them the mind or the desire to utilize these to their advantage. Yet this is the most needful thing to give. Education is the only way of salvation. This education, however, is not only a superficial secular education. It is an education of the deeper nature, awakening a man's inner consciousness, giving him understanding and then letting him work out his own destiny. If we can start a man on the right way and inspire him with the desire to follow it, he will do the rest.

No one has ever yet found a social or national basis upon which all men and women can stand on an equal footing. In a large sense we are all equal. As human beings, for instance, we are equal; as Souls also we are equal; but when we begin to compare the various degrees of power manifesting through these Souls, we find moun-

tains of difference. In philosophy both unity and variety are taken account of. There is no reason to destroy the diversity. We cannot and should not try to do so. The best way is to give a man the understanding that he himself determines his own level and condition in life; that he cannot reap what he does not sow, nor can he be cheated of what he earns. Just this simple law, if generally recognized, would mould the destiny of mankind in a wonderful manner. Even crime would diminish. When a man realizes that all his suffering is nothing but a direct result of what he himself has done; that no one is keeping a record of what he does, but that he keeps his own record in his consciousness and character, he begins to be more thoughtful about his actions.

The law of just compensation gives us a vital foundation for all our activity. It enables us to understand why certain things happen; and when we understand, we never rebel. If we can instill this idea into the minds of those who are depressed and overpowered with suicidal tendencies, and make them realize that if they will direct their forces correctly today, they will regenerate themselves tomorrow, at once we shall set their mental and physical forces to working on a constructive basis. Even among the most illiterate classes in India we find a general acceptance of this fundamental law. It is firmly rooted in their minds that no one is punishing them, no one is robbing them; that it is they themselves who are responsible for all their suffering. Therefore, instead of rebelling or finding fault with others, they look to themselves.

Nothing happens by chance. We may not always see the working of the law, because our view of life is so limited; but if our thought can go deep down beneath the

surface, we shall find a cause for every happening. This life is called a harvest field (*Karma-bhumi*). We are entrusted with it to plant and cultivate; if we neglect it, we shall reap a bad harvest or no harvest at all. We may rebel and grieve over our failure, but that will not alter anything. Our life will still remain unproductive. People who have proper discrimination work diligently and reap a good harvest. Even our work in the world can be so consecrated and ennobling that we shall not need to have anything else for salvation. Work is worship, say the sages. It is through work that we form our character. It is through work that we uplift ourselves. It is through work that we purify our life and remove all evil. What we see as evil is nothing but what we have brought upon ourselves through our actions. It is impermanent, and all impermanent conditions can be eliminated by thinking of the permanent.

It is the motive which counts. We can do a thing either with the thought of what it may bring immediately to us for sense gratification; or we can do it thinking of the Soul and our eternal life. As a man thinks, so is he. As our motive is, so is our action. We must reflect. We must think, and think such thoughts as will enable us to express the deeper nature of our Soul. We must no longer be content to think those things which have been thought and followed by the masses. What I mean by this is that often we form the habit in our life of merely travelling along the paths which have been tread by others; and we believe that to be the best way. It may be from the worldly standpoint, but it does not always prove true in the higher problems of life. For instance, in regard to religion, it is very seldom we can copy the ideals of others. If we try to copy, we misrepresent. We must unfold our

own ideals. What our forefathers have done or what the sages have taught may inspire us; they may start our mind to thinking, but we must work out our own salvation. This means contemplation; it also means freeing our inner nature. Now our spiritual nature is held down by our physical habits and uncontrolled emotions. In order to control our lower instincts and express our higher Self, we must take the problem in our own hands. When we do this, at the same time we must ask God's blessing, because it is very dangerous for us to attempt anything without the sense of consecration, that we are doing it for the sake of God.

Our work becomes constructive and full of blessings only when we have the sanction of God. Do we see the hand of God everywhere? Are we conscious of His will? Do we feel ourselves a part of the Divine Cosmic Being? If not, then our circle of activity is very narrow and our harvest will be a small one. The really intelligent human being is not satisfied to work for himself only, or for those directly connected with him. Such work would seem drudgery. He works for the universe. It is not for our own self-gratification that we are living. It is for a very vital purpose, and that is to express the God in us. This is the greatest work in human life. It is true that we express Him now through everything that we do and think, but we are not conscious of it. When we grow conscious of it, our life becomes one of active devotion to Truth. Then there is nothing we do which is not productive and fruitful. The nature of the work does not matter. It is the motive and our attitude in regard to it which count; and it is according to these that we reap. We always reap according to the thought which prompts our action. If we sow good seed on the field of life; that

is, if we sow noble thoughts and unselfish actions, we make our harvest a rich one, full of blessing not only for ourselves, but also for others. A good life is a very great blessing, and it sends its blessing far and wide.

Many of us have the idea that unless we are outwardly active, we are doing nothing; but when we begin to serve a spiritual Ideal, we realize that we must give more time to reflection; as much at least as to action. There must be an absolute balance. Rushing headlong into countless external occupations does not necessarily mean a productive life. Sometimes we get into a serious tangle because we do not allow ourselves the time to think out what is the best way to perform our tasks. Reflection must always come first. No action can be productive without reflection. We must be fully aware that by each act we are sowing a seed which must spring up and bear fruit. We all have the privilege of making the best of life. Yet we must not be discouraged if we have neglected our opportunity until now. We can still connect ourselves with the Divine Source and ask for strength and guidance. There is no eternal perdition. Even if we have made innumerable mistakes, we cannot suffer eternally, because for a finite action there cannot be an infinite punishment, since action and reaction must always be equal.

All reward and punishment are only the natural reactions of our own actions and wholly determined by us. We reward and punish ourselves. There is no arbitrary being waiting to punish or reward us. It is we who supply the materials out of which our destiny is shaped. We cannot inherit the kingdom of happiness or the kingdom of unhappiness by accident. We move towards one or the other according to the momentum we create by our habits of life. We cannot get something for nothing, nor can we

stay where we do not belong. We may imagine that we would be very happy in a heavenly region; but if we have not made our life here a heavenly life, we shall find ourselves out of place and full of unrest and we shall want to go away. If, on the contrary, our life here is full of lofty attributes, every place will seem a heaven to us. There is no injustice except in our own mind. Perfect law and order reign everywhere. If we recognize this, then even if apparently undeserved misfortune comes, we do not grow rebellious. This life sometimes feels like a consuming fire, but if we can stand its burning flame, like gold we come out purer. As long as we are afraid of a little disappointment or of losing a little earthly happiness, we can accomplish nothing. We must have constant optimism. Many times we may fail, or we may wait a long time before we reap any harvest, yet we must know that there can be no loss and no unfair return. What we deserve is bound to come to us; and what we do not deserve, even if we try to gain it by some crooked way, will not stay with us.

Whenever we see anyone suffering, however, our attitude should not be to stand aside and let him reap what he has sown. Knowledge of the law of just compensation should not make us indifferent or lacking in sympathy and charity. True understanding never robs us of love or sympathy. It is rather lack of understanding which takes from us many possibilities of doing good to others, which is also the best way to do good to ourselves. In Indian philosophy we are told that whenever we are able to help another, instead of expecting gratitude, we should be grateful; because we have been given an opportunity to elevate ourself. Do we not receive a greater spiritual blessing when we render service without selfish motive

than when we receive service? Does it not always enlarge our heart and vision?

This law of compensation should be universally understood. It is not peculiarly an Eastern doctrine, as many think. It concerns everyone, whether he lives in the East or the West; whether he is Christian or Mohammedan, Buddhist or Hindu. No one can get away from it. Every living being must reap what he sows. And the greatest way to help people is to introduce this larger idea. Let their mind be filled with it and they will uplift themselves. The only bondage is ignorance, which separates us like a veil from Godhead; and when that veil is torn from our mind, we are free. Life is indeed a harvest field, but it is not a good harvest field for those who are asleep. It promises an abundant harvest, however, to those who are awake and who constantly ask God's guidance; because without God's help and protection we cannot do anything. We must work diligently and prayerfully and always remember that in this universe there is no such thing as chance or injustice. We must be wakeful in everything we do. It is through wakeful, prayerful efforts that we tear the veil of ignorance. When it drops, His light shines in the innermost part of our being; and only when the Sun of Divine Wisdom sheds its radiance upon us, as we labor in the field of life, do we reap a perfect harvest.

Having realized Him by means of the highest religious practice, with a pure mind and sincere heart, the wise will never meet with death. Hence the Sages declare that giving oneself wholly to the Lord is superior to all other forms of austerity. —*Taittirya-Upanishad.*

THE WAY OF HAPPINESS

By Kaibara Ekken

(Japanese Philosopher and Teacher, 17th Century)

Keep your heart serene and calm; enjoy your leisure and haste not. Time flies as swiftly as an arrow, and the seasons pass as quickly as a stream. The older one becomes, the quicker the time seems to pass. Looking back on the first fifty years they seem short indeed. Yet if one lives long enough and looks back on the second fifty, they seem shorter. Take care then of your precious minutes and hours, ye men of old age, and enjoy a day as if it were a decade.

Keep an even temper, and avoid rashness. Even when busy do not lose the harmony of your heart; for if your heart is not calm, you will make mistakes in your actions. Do not be irritated, nor speak harsh words, even when you are being insulted by others. To lose the calmness of your heart is to lose pleasure.

There is one way to prolong life, said Hakurakuten: "If we keep our peace of mind, then years and months are long." A day for a man whose heart is calm seems as two days, seventy years as two hundred and forty. Consequently, even busy men should find time for repose and nourishment of the mind; but to avoid labor and seek ease continually is evil.

To sit quietly in solitude is pleasant; its serene joy is far superior to that of a noisy banquet. To receive no callers is better than to receive visitors with whom we have nothing in common. Yet to show signs of displeasure in the face of an unwelcome visitor is impolite.

There is a happiness called pure happiness, and it is enjoyed by him who has neither too much nor too little. Though he is not recognized by the world and possesses

neither position nor wealth, yet he enjoys his peace of mind and leisure hours. He lives in a house which is sufficient to protect him from wind and rain. He wears cotton cloth, and enjoys simple vegetable food. He reads books quietly, and enjoys poetry. To follow the teaching of the sages is his delight; to see and feel the beauty of Nature, his joy. Friends he has also who share with him this pure and simple pleasure in life.

From ancient times there have been men of exalted position and great wealth; yet few amongst them have enjoyed peaceful lives, for position and riches are oftentimes hindrances to peace of mind. Fortunate are they who enjoy pure happiness—their enjoyment is superior to that of the exalted. Yet many of us who are in a position to enjoy this simple happiness do not realize that its blessings are at our gate. We are like men living on a treasure mountain, yet failing to find the treasure.

Again, there are men who understand what pure happiness means, and yet are unable to enjoy it because of their extreme poverty. Thus the blessing of true happiness only falls to the few who both understand what it is and are in the position to enjoy it. A tree which has beautiful flowers never bears good fruit. He who is enjoying this great happiness must never envy others. For as soon as his heart turns towards wealth, his pure happiness will depart; for Heaven and Earth will no longer permit him to enjoy its blessing.

The longer we live in this world the more things we find which do not please. Even riches cannot buy health or freedom from care. If we realize this, we shall enjoy our life, whatever our lot. The poor man who is content is far wealthier than the rich who cannot find satisfaction in his possessions. Those who have wealth and position

are not always the most endowed with wisdom. Nor do the poor and humble of necessity possess inferior minds; on the contrary, there are more men of talent among the humble than among the exalted. Well said the ancient poet: "The useful oxen which plough fields have no possessions; but rats live where food is plenteous." It is neither a disgrace to be poor, nor an honour to be rich. All our shares are not the same, let us therefore be content with the share we receive from Heaven and Earth, and envy not others. To envy others is to invite misfortune; no greater folly is there than to lose our own happiness by coveting things we have not.

If one is not content with Destiny and does not trust in the will of Heaven, when the end approaches, great will be his grief. The end is important, let us then endeavor to uphold our principles until the last moment. Man's body is neither gold nor stone, and consequently it must perish. Let us then enjoy our life while it lasts, for the years which are allotted to us are not many. From henceforth let every day of our lives be spent in happiness and joy. Our lives are well worth the living, provided we spend them in doing good and enjoying the true Path.

The lots of men are not the same; some are born to be rich, some are born to be poor; some are destined to live long, others to die young—let each be content with his lot. Let the rich spend his life in doing good and kindly acts; the poor his, in being content.

There are many in this world who have not enough to eat, nor sufficient clothing to cover themselves. They are to be pitied, while we should help them in their distress. To give them pleasure is to make ourselves happy, for there is no greater happiness than doing good.

To spend money on useless things is folly. If the rich were to lay aside the expenses of one day and devote them to assisting the unfortunate, they might assuage the hunger of thousands. To help a hundred is within the power of even the passing-rich. If one is so inclined, he can always help others; if he does not, it is because he will not, not because he is unable. Not only do men love and respect the man who is benevolent and merciful; but even plants seem to lean towards him in friendship.

The word "patience" is popularly used for the word "forgive"; but the word signifies forbearance and suppression of selfishness and anger. If one suppresses evil desires and anger, and keeps the heart tranquil, he can enjoy a life free from shame, distress and misfortune. All good things spring from a patient attitude, and all evil from its reverse. There is an old saying that patience is the gate of goodness.

The essential quality of the *Samurai* is courage; only, courage must not be exhibited vainly, but should be kept within one's heart. A brave man is always gentle and kind. "The great courage," says an old proverb, "resembles cowardice." Chorio was a man of great courage, but he is said to have been as gentle as a woman. True courage is to conquer one's desires, and to perform righteous deeds wherever one sees them; a truly courageous man is always calm and happy.

Heaven and Earth do not lose their sublime harmony because of the thunder or storm; so, likewise, men should not lose their calmness and content because of misfortune or hardship. Though one may lose his position and wealth, and be forgotten by the world, nevertheless let him not lose his peace of mind, but believe that all is Heaven's will.

LAST TIDE

By G. O. W.

My beating will has ebbed.
As a wild out-reaching tide
Turns home at last—to hide
Within the waiting sea.

No one will find me now.
Heart's writing on the shore
Effaced for evermore,
For I am drowned in Thee.

Great Ocean! Doth Thy Deep
Impassive, far, withdrawn—
Thy Silence, never torn
By stormy bliss or pain,

Know what my will once graved
On unforgotten land,
Upon a shifting sand?
* * * * * *
That brooding Quiet still.

Serene, profound, immense—
And naught replies.
Yet in that Silence lies
All that I asked . . . . and more.

By what path do we go forth to seek the Lord? By the way of perfect likeness and fullest union. Every good deed, however small, if it be directed to God by simplicity of intention, increases in us the Divine likeness and deepens in us the flow of eternal life.

—*John Ruysbroeck.*

KNOWLEDGE AND REDEMPTION

By S. E. Waldo

The fundamental teaching of Vedanta is that every soul is Divine and must eventually realize that Divinity; and that this can be accomplished in a variety of ways;—nay more, that it must and will be accomplished. There are no lost souls and no sinners in the Vedanta. It is often objected that Vedanta lays too much stress upon "knowledge," and seems to ignore what we are accustomed to call "ethics." I think it can be shown that this objection is largely founded on a misconception of just what is meant by the knowledge which can bring man liberation or realization of the Divine; and a forgetfulness that the only possible gateway to this knowledge is found in the loftiest morality.

The knowledge which leads to salvation has no reference whatever to book-learning or to any amount of information about the things of the external world. It refers entirely to knowledge of the real nature of man, as embodied in the old adage—"Know thyself." The Vedanta philosophy is the record of the carefully formulated teachings of those sages and seers who thousands of years ago succeeded in carrying out this injunction. It is the work of human beings like ourselves, who by patient, long continued effort were able to go beyond the sense-world and identify themselves with that Infinite Ocean, from which all this universe is but an infinitesimal projection. These great ones make no claim for themselves, their very names are lost; and they live only in the grand results of their labors, results so great and glorious that they have survived all these ages and will never die. As I said before, the Vedanta knows no lost souls and no sinners. How can it? How can the One Soul be lost? And that One Soul is the

essence of every apparently individual Soul; only apparently individual as yet, because only when the Soul recognizes what it really is, does it attain any true individuality.

How can there be any sinners, in the sense in which Western theology uses that word? Everything is on its upward way, because good is the final goal of all; and what we usually call "sin," is regarded by the Vedanta as merely a mistaken effort to attain that goal. All these efforts give experience and will eventually lead the Soul to the discovery of its real nature. Do not imagine from this that the Vedanta encourages sin. It most emphatically does not, and it makes every effort to show man the better way. Only, it does not take that hopeless view of these mistakes which would condemn those making them to eternal damnation. It sees plainly that ignorance alone is the cause of these so-called "sins," and it seeks to remove this ignorance by the light of knowledge.

In India the universal acceptance of the doctrine of Karma and Reincarnation gives rise to the idea that delay in seeking salvation, though a great mistake, is not necessarily fatal. This one little life does not represent the only chance a man may have; nor does he who fails here and now to attain the goal "perish everlastingly." The Vedanta philosophy clearly recognizes that man is in a state of evolution; and that only those who have developed to the spiritual stage, are ready to accept its final conclusions and strive to reach liberation from the endless wheel of birth and death. Around and around this wheel we must go until our own effort releases us. No one can do that for us, the greatest Teachers can only point the way. Thus the Vedanta appeals to our strength and not to our weakness. It tells us to help ourselves and be free. We have by our own actions woven the web that holds

us, and only by our own exertion can that web be thrown off. It is useless to expect any being to do this for us. But the Vedanta tells us plainly and clearly that this is no impossible task; that it has been done, and that it can and will be done again and again by those who work hard enough, and have sufficient strength of purpose to persevere in their attempts until they reach the goal.

For the very weak and for those who are still content to seek only material satisfaction either here or hereafter, the Vedanta has no condemnation; it only tells them, as a loving mother tells her little children: "By and by you will be wiser, you will grow up and then you will naturally forsake childish things." No mother would dream of telling her little one that he was naughty or that she would punish him, because he preferred a toy to a treatise on teleology. So with the Vedanta. It has a place for those who cannot yet rise to the loftier heights. This wise philosophy leaves these "children of a larger growth" the toys of material pleasures which now so delight them, and says to them: "Through trying these and finding out for yourselves their transitory and unsatisfactory nature, you will come to desire that which is eternal and all-satisfying; and so desiring, you will seek and find that One Existence, your real Self."

It is perfectly true that the essence and flower of the Vedanta, which is called *Adwaita* or pure monism, will ever be adopted by the few rather than by the many; and this, not because of any exclusiveness in the teaching, but simply because, as the majority of mankind are constituted today, they prefer a more concrete form of philosophy or religion. The *Adwaita* is the topmost pinnacle of the vast edifice, and to many seems a height too dizzy to be attempted. To such the Vedanta says: "You are quite right,

choose the way best adapted to you; all ways are but so many radii leading to a common centre." But it adds this warning: "Take no step blindly. Understand what you are doing and why you do it. Set the goal clearly before you and then strive to reach it as best you can. Do not wander in darkness, following in the footsteps of others you know not why. Enquire, search for yourself, and then faithfully persevere in the endeavor to reach the highest."

While laying great stress upon the knowledge of our true nature, the Vedanta also inculcates a rigorous system of morality—not as an end, but as the indispensable means of gaining that knowledge which alone can make men free. That only the pure in heart can see God is asserted over and over again by the Vedanta. In fact, until purity and right action have become perfectly natural and desirable to a man (even though he may often fail in the attempt to live up to his ideal), he is not ready even to make the attempt to realize his true nature or to discover his oneness with the Divine. Sin, which the Vedanta calls ignorance, creates the veils which hide the Self; and until the heaviest and densest of these veils, caused by lack of self-control and indulgence of the animal propensities, have been removed, we do not catch a glimpse even of that higher Self which is our real nature. We have first to rise above the animal plane and attain a certain degree of unselfishness and of illumination, which only this purification can bring, before we can even desire to reach something higher and better.

That is why trouble and sorrow are such great teachers. While we continue to find satisfaction in material things, it is not likely that we shall seek spiritual things. But when, by having them suddenly removed from us, we learn

the temporal character of these material delights, we are often led to enquire after the things which are eternal. As St. Paul says: "First the natural, then the spiritual;" and this applies to the whole human race.

Only by fulfilling all the demands of morality until it has become, as it were, our very nature to do right, can we rise to that higher plane where law ceases to bind us and where we become "a law unto ourselves." When a man has reached that plane, it is positively certain that he will never use his freedom in defiance of the moral law which he has transcended, any more that a naturally honest man would steal, even though no penalty were attached to such action. Seeing only the good, the man who has realized his true nature cannot even see what we call wrong, much less can it have any temptation for him.

DIFFERENT CLASSES OF MEN

From the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

In God's creation diversity is the general rule. Hence there is evil as well as good. Again, there are various kinds of objects—animals, plants, minerals. Among beasts again, there are those which are gentle and inoffensive, and those who like the tiger are ferocious and live upon other animals. Some trees bring forth good fruit, sweet as nectar; while others bring forth poisonous fruits which cause death. Likewise there are good men and bad men, holy men and those that are sinful; just and devout men and those who are attached to the world.

Men may be divided into four classes:—Worldly men (those that are bound by the fetters of the world); the seekers after liberation; the liberated; the ever-free. The ever-free! Narad, the holy Sage, and others: these abide in the world for the good of other men, to teach the Truth

unto others. The worldly are those who are attached to the little things of this world—money, honor, titles, sensual pleasures, power. They forget God and never give a thought to Him. The seekers after liberation do their best to avoid the world, made up of lust and gold as it is. And it is given to a few amongst them to find what they seek, liberation. The liberated are those who are not attached to either lust or gold. Holy men are examples. In their mind there is not a trace of attachment to things of this world. They meditate always on the Hallowed Feet of the Lord.

Suppose a net is cast into a pond. Some of the fishes are much too clever for the fisherman and take care never to be caught in the net. These may be counted on one's fingers, and to these may be likened the ever-free. Most of the fish, however, are caught in the net. Of these some try their best to make their escape. These are the seekers after liberation. But of these a couple or two only are able to leap out of the net into the water. We often see such fishes; they leap out with a splash, the fisherman as well as others shouting, "Look! Look! there is a big fish getting away." The greater part of the fish are not able to get out of the net. And what is more, they do not care to get out! They would rather rush into the mud at the bottom of the pond, head foremost, entangled in the net as they are, and there lie still, thinking all the while: Now we are quite safe and secure and need not fear any longer. The poor things know not that the fisherman will in a short while draw the net to land full of the fish. To these last may be compared the worldly. They feel secure in their muddy homes; but, alas, they are entangled in the meshes of the world, to be soon deprived of the Water of Life and hauled up to land to be killed!

The bondage of the world is the bondage brought about by lust and gold. Worldly men are bound hand and foot. They think they will find peace and rest and security in the mud at the bottom of the pond—in lust and gold. They know not that it is these which cause the death of the Soul. The worldly man thinks not of God. If there is time at his disposal and he has nothing to do, he will either talk empty twaddle or do things which are of no use to anybody. Upon being asked, he says: "To sit still I am not able. Hence am I setting a hedge." Time hangs heavy on his hands; so he must play at cards or at dice!

Revered Sir, a man of the world—how may he be saved? Is there any remedy for him?

Certainly. Let him seek the company of holy men. Let him from time to time go into retirement in order to meditate upon the Lord. Let him practise discrimination. Let him pray earnestly unto the Divine Mother, saying, Oh! Mother, grant unto me love and faith. Once you get faith, your work is done. There is nothing higher than faith.

Let one have faith in the Lord and depend upon it, he will get salvation;—no matter if he has committed the vilest sins. Let him but say "Lord, I shall not do so again," and take his Hallowed Name.

The ever-perfect are never bound in the fetters of the world. When they get a little older in years, they feel an awakening within their heart and they walk Godward at once. They come down into the world as teachers of mankind. They love not the things of this world, their mind never goes after lust and gold. There is mention made in the Vedas of a bird called "Homa." It lives high up above the clouds away from the din and bustle of this world. There it brings forth its egg, which begins to drop as soon as it is layed. For days together it goes on falling; and it

is hatched during the fall. Such is the height that the young which comes out of the egg continues to fall until it gets the use of its wings and eyes! Then it comes to know that it is plunging down with tremendous force and that the mere touch of the earth will bring it death. Afraid of being thus dashed against the ground, it shoots upward in quest of its mother, who lives high up above the clouds.

The parent-bird is the Divine Mother who abides with the Infinite—high up above and beyond the world of the senses. Those of Her children who are nearest to Her are these pure young Souls, to whom life continues to be a mystery until their eyes are opened and their wings unfolded. When their eyes are opened, they see clearly the death that is before them if they touch the world and the things which are of the world,—money, honors, sensual pleasures. Therefore as soon as their eyes are opened, they change the course of their life and turn Godward, knowing that their Divine Mother is the only Reality, in whom they live and breathe and have their being, and to whom they must always look for light and life.

Shall we then give up all worldly affairs?

No. You may attend to them; but do not seek more work than you can well manage. If you do, you will lose sight of the Lord. Go to the Shrine of the Mother of the Universe. On your way to the Shrine, before you see the Holy of Holies, you may stop to give your alms. But if you continue until late in the evening when the doors of the Temple have been closed on all pilgrims, you will not see the Mother. Wise people first see the Holy Mother, pushing through the multitudes assembled at the Temple gates; then after seeing Her, they turn their attention to alms-giving. First see God and then talk serlously of your duties.

PARABLES

From the Teachings of Buddha

THE TRUE PLOUGHING

Bharadvaja, a wealthy Brahmin, was celebrating his harvest-thanksgiving when the Blessed One came with his alms-bowl, begging for food.

Some of the people paid him reverence, but the Brahmin was angry and said: "O Shramana, it would suit you better to go to work than to go begging. I plough and sow; and having ploughed and sown, I eat. If you did likewise, you too would have to eat."

And the Tathagata answered him and said: "O Brahmin, I too plough and sow; and having ploughed and sown, I eat."

"Do you profess to be a husbandman?" replied the Brahmin. "Where, then, are your bullocks? Where are the seed and the plough?"

The Blessed One said: "Faith is the seed I sow: good works are the rain that fertilizes it; wisdom and modesty are the plough; my mind is the guiding-rein; I lay hold of the handle of the law; earnestness is the goad I use; and exertion is my draught-ox. This ploughing is ploughed to destroy the weeds of illusion. The harvest it yields is the immortal fruit of Nirvana, and thus all sorrow ends."

Then the Brahmin poured rice-milk into a golden bowl and offered it to the Blessed One, saying: "Let the Teacher of mankind partake of the rice-milk, for the venerable Gautama ploughs a ploughing that bears the fruit of immortality."

THE POWER OF FAITH

When the world-honored Buddha had left Shravasti, Shariputra felt a desire to see the Lord and to hear him preach. Coming to the river where the water was deep

and the current strong, he said to himself: "This stream shall not prevent me. I shall go and see the Blessed One;" and he stepped upon the water which was as firm under his feet as a slab of granite. But when he arrived at a place in the middle of the stream where the waves were high, Shariputra's heart gave way and he began to sink. Then rousing his faith and renewing his mental effort, he proceeded as before and reached the other bank.

The people of the village were astonished to see Shariputra, and they asked him how he could cross the stream where there was neither a bridge nor a ferry. And Shariputra replied: "I lived in ignorance until I heard the voice of Buddha. As I was anxious to hear the doctrine of salvation, I crossed the river and I walked over its troubled waters because I had faith. Faith, nothing else, enabled me to do so; and now I am here in the bliss of the Master's presence."

The World-honored One added: "Shariputra, thou hast spoken well. Faith like thine alone can save the world from the yawning gulf of migration, and enable men to walk dryshod to the other shore."

Hearing the words of the Blessed One, the villagers were filled with joy.

THE END OF SUFFERING

And Buddha said: "What, my friends, is evil?

"Killing, my friends, is evil; stealing is evil; yielding to sexual passion is evil; lying is evil; slandering is evil; abuse is evil; gossip is evil; envy is evil; hatred is evil; to cling to false doctrine is evil; all these things, my friends, are evil.

"And what, my friends, is the root of evil?

"Desire is the root of evil; hatred is the root of evil;

illusion is the root of evil; these things are the root of evil.

"What, however, is good?

"Abstaining from theft is good; abstaining from sensuality is good; abstaining from falsehood is good; abstaining from slander is good; suppression of unkindness is good; abandoning gossip is good; letting go all envy is good; dismissing hatred is good; obedience to the truth is good; all these things are good.

"And what, my friends, is the root of the good?

"Freedom from desire is the root of the good; freedom from hatred and freedom from illusion; these things, my friends, are the root of the good.

"And what, O brethren, is the origin of suffering?

"It is lust, passion, and the thirst for existence that yearns for pleasure everywhere, leading to a continual rebirth! It is sensuality, desire, selfishness; all these things, O brethren, are the origin of suffering.

"And what is the annihilation of suffering?

"The radical and total annihilation of this thirst and the abandonment, the liberation, the deliverance from passion; that, O brethren, is the annihilation of suffering.

"And what, O brethren, is the path that leads to the annihilation of suffering?

"It is the holy eightfold path that leads to the annihilation of suffering, which consists of right views, right decision, right speech, right living, right struggling, right thoughts, and right meditation.

"In so far, O friends, as a noble youth thus recognizes suffering and the origin of suffering, as he recognizes the annihilation of suffering, and the path that leads to the annihilation of suffering, radically forsaking passion, subduing wrath, annihilating the vain conceit of the 'I-am,' leaving ignorance, and attaining to enlightenment, he will make an end of all suffering even in this life."

REPORT

On the invitation of the rector, Rev. Wm. Norman Guthrie, Swami Paramananda spoke at St. Mark's in-the-Bouwerie, New York, on Sunday, February 9th. At the regular Vesper Service which preceded his address, Dr. Guthrie read some Persian poems and prayers in order to lead his hearers gradually Eastward to "the great land of mystery," as he put it, "whence the Occident has drawn so much of its inspiration." The subsequent meeting took place in St. Mark's Hall, which was crowded to the doors. A distinguished young Arab poet, Kahlil Gibran, first read some of his own poems. "After Mr. Gibran concluded," Dr. Guthrie writes in a letter telling of the afternoon, "Swami Paramananda, the founder of the Vedanta Centre of Boston, arose and calmly spoke on the genius of mystic poetry in India, captivating all, even those who may have come with some degree of prejudice against his special message. He struck and held the universal note in an Oriental way, which had been struck in the Church in an Occidental way. The Swami winsomely and sagaciously indicated the great preciousness of the permeating sense of unity, of identity. His use of typical Indian chants imparted a certain mystic solemnity to the meeting; and one felt that he had closed the programme with a truly catholic benediction, under the beautiful Della Robbia Annunciation, before which nine candles were lit, in a manner that will make the afternoon ever memorable to all those who had the good fortune to participate. Many of the audience could not leave for half an hour or more, talking in groups and expressing their joy at the rare quality of the occasion, and hoping that at some early opportunity the thrilling experience might be renewed. Hopes were expressed that Swami Paramananda might open up a branch work at St. Mark's."

THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East"
Ezekiel.

"Light shall come again from the East"
Tyndall.

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SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

By Swami Paramananda

Freedom is the goal of every living creature. The whole world, consciously or unconsciously, is striving for freedom—freedom to express that which is within the Soul; and when anything stands in the way, there is an instinctive tendency to struggle against it. All discoveries, all human achievements have this for their end—to increase man's freedom of body and mind. For some people physical freedom—the desire to shake off whatever curbs their individual action—is the highest ideal; others look upon social and political freedom as the goal; while still others recognize that until man is spiritually free, he cannot enjoy true freedom, because all other forms of freedom are temporary and relative. Today they appear to give a man greater liberty and tomorrow the new conditions have created a new bondage. Thus we see men and women struggling for material possessions in order to have a freer life, but when they have realized their dream, we find them oppressed by the very things which they have worked so hard to acquire. Also when a man has attained social and political freedom, he may still remain a slave to his own uncontrolled nature. His animal appetites may still bind him.

Slavery does not consist in being under the command of another; it consists in ignorance of our higher nature, of our true Self, of the God who abides within. So long as we remain a slave to our passions; that is, so long as we serve the Mammon in us, we can never know our God-like nature; and until we are able to manifest that in our thoughts, words and actions, no one can liberate us. All spiritual teachers unanimously declare that no one can give us freedom until we have the power to assert the Divinity in us. Nor can any one hold us under his control when we have realized our Divine birthright. Each Soul is potentially free. Then you may ask: Why is it that we cannot do everything we want? Why is it we suffer? Why is it we fear? Because our consciousness has become one-sided. We see only one aspect of our life. We do not see the Soul, the real part of our being. We do not try to foster the vital principle within us. Our understanding has become deluded because we have over-balanced on the physical side; and until we are liberated from the meshes of mere bodily existence, we are not worthy to enjoy freedom.

No one is holding us down, it is our own self-created fetters which are binding us, and we are the only ones to shake off these fetters. We must strive to know the Real, then the unreal will vanish. Whenever we have a revelation of Truth, the untrue vanishes, just as darkness vanishes before the light. "Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free," are Christ's words. All the Scriptures declare the same thing: If you desire true liberation, first of all you must find your relationship with the Infinite Being. When we turn from this Fountain of all joy and wisdom and rush madly after worldly satisfaction, we create more and more bondage. It is useless to look

for either happiness or freedom on the outside. All physical or material freedom can last only for a limited period; but when man has attained spiritual freedom, which comes through knowledge of the Absolute, he has broken his chains forever. Nothing ever again can bind him.

Spiritual freedom includes all other freedom. When a man has found his true nature, it makes little difference whether you place him on a throne or in a hut; whether he is moving in a crowded street or dwelling in a quiet cave. He enjoys perfect serenity and happiness wherever he is. And this is the highest form of freedom. Man may gain physical freedom by killing his enemies; but more terrible enemies may spring up from within himself in the form of ambition, desire, anger, and he cannot kill these with sword and gun. For such enemies he needs a mightier weapon than any human hands have yet invented. He needs the weapon of knowledge. If you have realized that you are a free Soul, wherever you go, no enemy can overwhelm you. A ruler may throw you into prison, but he cannot bind that which dwells within; he cannot destroy or disturb your happiness, for it is unconditioned and unbounded.

There will always be different ideals of freedom. Men will invariably begin to look for it on the physical plane; but after they have done their utmost to realize it there, they will find that they have not destroyed the root of their bondage. Then they will begin to seek it elsewhere. Thus they will march onward and onward, for they cannot stop. So long as they live they must struggle for freedom. Every human being wants to be free from disease and death; he wants to be free from the countless obstructions which interfere with his liberty. At first he imagines that these are all in the outside world and he tries to remove them

there. Little by little, however, he discovers that until he is able to remove the obstructions which hide his Soul-nature within, he cannot hope to attain liberation.

This is the condition of the freedom of the Soul: Each one must realize his true nature and become established in that. Yet in order to gain this higher Soul-consciousness, we do not have to lose our ordinary consciousness. It means only that this consciousness which now binds us to material and physical things must be enlarged and exalted. The sense of I-ness clings persistently to every mortal; but we limit it by attachment to names, forms, possessions and all those things for which men fight and struggle. A few people connected with us by blood we call ours; others are not ours. All such distinctions are made through a false perception of the ego, and they limit our blessings and our knowledge. The more we bind ourselves with such small ideas, the less we partake of the great blessings of the Infinite Life. Therefore, through discrimination we must eliminate as far as possible this false idea of ego. What relief, what a sense of freedom comes when it is removed from us. The untrained, unripe ego, which believes itself separate from the universe, creates constant unhappiness. It is this which makes us angry, impatient, resentful, despondent; but when we can enlarge our sense of ego and feel ourselves one with the whole, at once we grow calm and happy.

As a man detaches himself from the petty side of life and thinks more of the cosmic side, his character expands, he becomes a bigger man and begins to think bigger thoughts. Instead of holding to what is small, material, changing, through contemplation and spiritual perception he becomes more and more related to the Cosmic Essence; and this enables him to transcend the limitations of bodily

life. Then he learns that although he may live in this active world and his life may be crowded and full of unrest, yet beneath there flows a calm, serene current; and it is this undercurrent which is the real current of his life. When we realize this, we become well satisfied with our life as it is. Instead of feeling it a burden, it seems to us full of blessing; because we have a living spiritual sense that it is part of a great Divine Life and that in all our undertakings we are sustained by a mighty Power. This is the true spiritual life—a life within a life: within this active life, a life of spiritual peace; within this life of variety and change, an unchanging life; within this life of binding duties and responsibilities, a life of perfect freedom.

No greater blessing can come to us than to feel ourselves at every moment one with God; for there can be no freedom apart from oneness. When we fully realize that we exist in the Absolute, then we cease to be afraid that some one may interfere with us. We all know in a simple way how free we feel when we are alone in our room; we have nothing to fear, no one to consider. Similarly when all the consciousness of duality or separateness vanishes from the Soul and we are able to see the One only, at once we experience a sense of freedom. This is the ideal of Vedanta—to make a man realize his infinite nature in order that he may be liberated from the bondage of the finite. If we can free ourselves from the consciousness of the physical side of our being, then we shall enjoy true freedom, a freedom which nothing can destroy and which will accompany us through all the varying experiences of life.

The highest power of man lies in his Divinity, but at present we are not conscious of our Divine nature. At every moment we are surrounded by these two forms of life—the physical and the spiritual; but we put first what

should be second. People fear that if they put the spiritual life first, their physical life will be impoverished; so they give first thought to their physical needs, and that is why they are so poverty-stricken in spiritual things. It is this which makes disease and death so frightful to us. Everyone should cultivate his spiritual sense and carry it with him wherever he goes. The world may think us peculiar because we are directing our forces in unaccustomed channels; but out of this peculiarity we shall rise to such power that we shall be of universal help.

We misrepresent ourselves when we give ourselves to little things. All our difficulties arise from extreme bodily attachment. We must learn to discriminate between body and Soul. It is through such discrimination that we become free and immortal. The body is the dwelling-house; but when the house is taken for the master, our whole basis of life must be wrong. We have let ourselves be so influenced by the physical world and have given it such importance that it is not easy for us now to stand up and face the truth. But we must have larger ideals and we must not stop until we have realized those ideals. When we become imbued with the larger ideals of the Soul life, we cannot be betrayed by the small temptations of the physical world.

Within every mortal is a latent consciousness of freedom, and this will not let us rest satisfied in our bondage. Until we have gained complete victory over all our lower appetites and are no longer slaves to anger, selfish ambition, desire and greed, we shall not find peace. We are told in the Bhagavad-Gita that only when the understanding becomes firmly established in the Absolute Infinite Being and the mind remains unmoved by the external contacts of the senses will a man find true bliss and freedom.

"He whose joy is within, whose satisfaction is within, whose light is within, that self-subjugated illumined Soul being well established in God attains to absolute freedom. The wise ones whose sins have been washed off by knowledge, whose doubts have been destroyed by the eternal light of wisdom and who are ever intent on doing good to all beings, attain supreme liberation."

PRAYER

O Thou Supreme Spirit! Make Thy Presence felt in my heart, in my thought, in my whole being;

That I may be filled with Thee, leaving room for naught else.

Thou art the giver of all joy and all blessing.

Thou art ever unchanging; without beginning or end.

Thou art all-pervading, all-seeing. Thou perceivest my innermost thoughts.

Thou knowest all my imperfections, all my shortcomings; but Thou art full of love.

Through Thy love and compassion, do Thou kindle in my heart the true fire of spiritual devotion;

That all my impurities and unworthy feelings may be burned to ashes.

Help me to lift my thoughts from fleeting things and fasten them to the Infinite, All-abiding Spirit.

Free my heart from the weight of worldly cares and make it so pure, so full of love, that it may be a fitting altar unto Thee.

Free my mind from all doubt and delusion, that it may learn to trust wholly in Thee and to abide by Thy will.

O Thou Infinite Being! Reveal unto me Thy reality and grant that I may never lose sight of Thee.

Thou art the Source of all strength and wisdom, and in Thee alone shall I find true peace and freedom.

THE PATH OF VISION

From "Blest Fruit of Grace" by Umapati

(Tamil philosopher of South India, about 1300 A. D.)

The body lives by union with the Soul; the embodied Soul itself lives by union with pure Thought.

The path of vision is easy; but unless there be a light between eye and Soul, there is no vision.

Conceive thine own work as the Lord's work, like unto the workings of the senses which act in menial service.

Search not, rest thine imagination upon naught (abandon finite conceptions); see not thyself in the foreground. See That which seeth thee.

Think of that bliss as a great sense experience (as vivid and definite as outer sensations); and hide thyself from all other light in the light of knowledge.

See as thou hast seen, see not the not-seeing (the ego); as thou hast been taken (by the Lord), so abide.

MEETING OF THE SOUL WITH GOD

By John Ruysbroeck

(Flemish Mystic, 14th Century)

United to the Spirit of God we are given power to go forth to meet Him Who has called us; and with Him and in Him we shall possess healing and joy.

The interior man turns towards God in adoration, offering himself as a sacrifice upon the high altar; and God comes to meet him with or without intermediary, bestowing the gift of wisdom. This wisdom is the source of all the virtues, the spur in the quest of perfection; arousing the man and urging him to the practice of effective virtue. In the interior man it becomes a consuming flame, that not all the gifts of God can extinguish. All that God bestows, save only the gift of Himself, appears all too small and mean; and desire increases and longing deepens.

Then the man becomes aware of a central point within the depths of himself, the birthplace and haven of all goodness. Within this sanctuary dwells love, and within it the man offers up all his activities to God. And this hunger and thirst after God grow so immeasurably that he feels he must faint from the extremity of his longing. At each lightning flash from God that strikes into the depths of his Soul he is enkindled and enflamed anew; he dies in life and arises again in death; for it is a loving ardor that possesses the likeness of that Unity which is the object of his search; and the hunger and thirst are perpetually renewed.

This action is more effective and more sure than the first; for the intense burning activity of desire and of love is the source of supreme peace. Activity precedes, accompanies, and follows peace, its certain consummation. Without the deeds of charity none may conquer love nor obtain God, neither keep love once conquered. The rest and delay that a man may find within the creature are the real obstacles for the spiritual man: for God alone can satisfy the hunger which consumes him.

When we have learned to open our eyes in the interior light, we can contemplate in joy the continual coming of the Bridegroom. It is a perpetual genesis, an ever-recurrent dawn that knows no setting. The abyss whence this radiance shines forth is living and life-giving, it is itself the radiance forever dawning and never setting upon the dweller in the sanctuary. In that holy place there is no activity save a ceaseless beholding of the light, sustained solely by the operation of the light.

The Bridegroom meets us with His gifts; but according to the mystery of Divine activity He comes perpetually and by a perpetual first coming. For this advent, which

is outside time, operates in an eternal now; and the sleepless longing for Him ceaselessly renews the joy of this encounter. His gifts are boundless and infinite, for they are Himself. The eye of the spirit opens wide to behold the face of the Bridegroom till it has neither limit nor measure, nor ever closes on the mystery of God. The capacity of the Soul, increased by the arrival of the Bridegroom, seems to transcend its own boundaries in entering into the magnitude of Him Who comes.

God in the depths of us receives God Who comes to us; it is God contemplating God; God in Whom dwell healing and peace. . .

The summit of the mountain is the steadfast dwelling of the Soul in righteousness, in virtue, and in the strength of God. Pure love makes the spirit pure, and the man who yields himself to it is delivered from the bondage of creatures. He enters into peace. For pure love frees a man from himself and his acts, and confirms his spirit in the peace of that possession wherein is consummated the Divine union.

If we would know this in ourselves we must yield to the Divine the innermost sanctuary of ourselves, petition a like return from God, and cast out our own powers. Our love must outweigh all else; and sinking into the very substance of the creature must find no resting-place till it meets God in the abyss where He dwells alone.

It is here that the intelligence is fulfilled with eternal truth as the air is suffused with the radiance of the sun. Here Divine love enters into us as fire enters iron. Here is the kingdom of God. From here comes the impulse and urgency towards active righteousness and virtue, for love cannot be idle.

The Spirit of God, moving with the powers of the man,

urges them outwards in just and wise activity. It makes of us a holy tabernacle, then ebbing back it draws us within the interior life. It opens our eyes upon the glory of God and makes of us, alike in our substance and our activity, a single, sublime sacrifice. And the stability of righteousness remains in us.

But when we experience simplicity, possessing all well-being in the super-essential Love, we dwell in the depths of ourselves, in the peace of the Essence, established above all objects, in the higher unity. This experience is ours when we enter, free of all our burdens, into the simplicity of essential Love. Here we taste eternal joy, that joy which can say, "I have no end."

THE FINITE AND THE INFINITE

By Swami Vivekananda

Whichever way we turn in trying to understand things in their reality, if we analyze far enough, we find that at last we come to a peculiar state of things, seemingly a contradiction: something which our reason cannot grasp and yet is a fact. We take up something; we know it is finite; but as soon as we begin to analyze it, it leads us beyond our reason and we find no end to all its qualities, its possibilities, its powers, its relations. It has become infinite. Take even a common flower, that is finite enough; but who is there who can say he knows all about the flower? There is no possibility of any one getting to the end of the knowledge about that one flower. The flower which was finite has become infinite. Take a grain of sand. Analyze it. We start with the assumption that it is finite, and at last we find that it is not, it is infinite; yet we have looked upon it as finite.

So with all our thoughts and experiences, physical and mental. We begin, we may think, on a small scale and grasp them as little things; but very soon they elude our knowledge and plunge into the abyss of the infinite. The greatest and the first thing perceived is ourselves. We are also in the same dilemma about existence. We exist. We see we are finite beings. We live and die. Our horizon is narrow. We are here, limited, confronted by the universe all around. Nature can crush us out of existence in a moment. Our little bodies are only just held together, ready to go to pieces at a moment's notice. We know that. In the region of action how powerless we are! Our will is being thwarted at every turn. So many things we want to do and how few we can do! There is no limit to our willing. We can will everything, want everything, we can desire to go to the dogstar. But how few of our desires can be accomplished! The body will not allow it. Nature is against the accomplishment of our will. We are weak. What is true of the flower or the grain of sand, of the physical world and of every thought, is a hundredfold more true of ourselves. We are like waves in the ocean; the wave is the ocean, and yet not the ocean. There is not any part of the wave of which you cannot say, "it is the ocean." The name "ocean" applies to the wave and equally to every other part of the ocean, and yet it is separate from the ocean. So in this infinite ocean of existence we are like wavelets; at the same time, when we want really to grasp ourselves we cannot; we have become the infinite.

What is this? Where is weakness? Who is strong? What is great and what is small? What is high and what is low in this marvellous inter-dependence of existence, where the smallest atom is necessary for the existence of

the whole? It is past finding out! And why? Because none is great and none is small. All things are interpenetrated by that infinite ocean; their reality is that infinite; and whatever there is on the surface is but that infinite. The tree is infinite; so is everything that you see or feel; every grain of sand, every thought, every Soul, everything that exists, is infinite. Infinite is finite and finite, infinite. This is our existence. Now that may be all true, but this feeling after the Infinite is at present mostly unconscious. It is not that we have forgotten that infinite nature of ours: none can ever do that. Who can ever think that he can be annihilated? Who can think that he will die? None can. All our relation to the Infinite works in us unconsciously. But we forget our real being and hence all this misery comes.

This is, therefore, true knowledge: that the Soul of our Souls, the Reality which is within us, is That which is unchangeable, eternal, ever blessed, ever free. This is the only solid ground for us to stand upon. This, then, is the end of all death, the advent of all immortality, the end of all misery. He who sees that One among the many, that One, unchangeable in the universe of change: he who sees Him as the Soul of his Soul, unto him belongs eternal peace —unto none else. In the midst of the depths of misery and degradation, the Soul sends a ray of light, and man wakes up and finds that what is really his, he can never lose. No, we can never lose what is really ours. Who can lose his being? Who can lose his very existence? If I am good, it is existence first, and then that becomes colored with the quality of goodness. If I am evil, it is existence first, and that becomes colored with the quality of badness. Existence is first, last, and always; it is never lost, but ever present.

Therefore there is hope for all. None can die; none can be degraded forever. Life is but a play-ground, however gross the play may be. However we may receive blows and however knocked about we may be, the Soul is there and is never injured. We are that Infinite. Thus sang a great Teacher of Vedanta: "I never had fear nor doubt. Death never came to me. I never had father or mother; for I was never born. Where are my foes? for I am All, I am Existence and Knowledge and Bliss Absolute. I am It. I am It. Anger and lust and jealousy; evil thoughts and all these things, never came to me; for I am Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute. I am It. I am It."

That is the remedy for all disease; the nectar which cures death. Here we are in this world and our nature rebels against it. But let us repeat: "I am It. I am It. I have no fear, nor doubt, nor death. I have no sex, nor creed, nor color. What creed can I have? What sect is there to which I should belong? What sect can hold me? I am in every sect!" However much the body rebels, however much the mind rebels, in the midst of the uttermost darkness, in the midst of agonizing tortures, in the uttermost despair, repeat this, once, twice, thrice, ever more. Light will come gently, slowly, but surely it will come.

Many times I have been in the jaws of death, starving, footsore, and weary; for days and days I had had no food, and often could walk no farther; I would sink down under a tree and life would seem ebbing away. I could not speak, I could scarcely think, but at last the mind reverted to the idea: "I have no fear, nor death; I never hunger, nor thirst. I am It! I am It! The whole of Nature cannot crush me; it is my servant. Assert thy strength, thou Lord of lords and God of gods! Regain thy lost empire! Arise and walk and stop not!" And I would rise up, rein-

vigorated, and here I am, living, today. Thus whenever darkness comes, assert the reality and everything adverse must vanish. For after all it is but a dream. Mountain high though the difficulties appear, terrible and gloomy though all things seem, they are but *Maya*. Fear not, it is banished. Crush it and it vanishes. Stamp upon it and it dies. Be not afraid. Think not how many times you fail. Never mind. Time is infinite. Go forward; assert yourself again and again, and life must come. You may pray to everyone who was ever born, but who will come to help you?

And what of the way of death from which none knows escape? Help thyself out by thyself. None else can help thee, friend. For thou alone art thy greatest enemy, thou alone art thy greatest friend. Get hold of the Self then. Stand up. Do not be afraid. In the midst of all miseries and all weakness, let the self come out, faint and imperceptible though it be at first. Thou wilt gain courage and at last like a lion thou wilt roar, "I am It! I am It!" "I am neither a man, nor a woman, nor a god, nor a demon; no, nor any of the animals, plants, or trees. I am neither poor nor rich, neither learned nor ignorant. All these things are very little compared to what I am; for I am It! I am It! Behold the sun and the moon and the stars: I am the light that is shining in them! I am the beauty of the fire! I am the power in the universe! For I am It! I am It!"

"Whoever thinks that I am little, makes a mistake, for the Self is all that exists. The sun exists because I declare it does, the world exists because I declare it does. Without me they cannot remain, for I am Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute; ever happy, ever pure, ever beautiful. Behold, the sun is the cause of our vision, but

is not itself ever affected by any defect in the eyes of any one; even so am I; I am working through all organs, working through everything, but never does the good and evil of work attach to me. For me there is no Law; no Karma. I own the Laws of Karma. I ever was and ever am.

"Happiness and misery, good and evil, may envelop me for a moment, veiling the Self, but I am still there. They pass away because they are changeable. I shine, because I am unchangeable. If misery comes, I know it is finite, therefore it must die. If evil comes, I know it is finite, it must go. I alone am infinite and untouched by anything. For I am the Infinite; that Eternal, Changeless Self." So sings one of our poets.

Let us drink of this cup, this cup which leads to everything that is immortal, everything that is unchangeable. Fear not. Believe not that we are evil, that we are finite, that we can ever die. It is not true. "This is to be heard, then to be thought upon, and then to be meditated upon." When the hands work, the mind should repeat, "I am It! I am It!" Think of it, dream of it, until it becomes bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh; until all the hideous dreams of littleness, of weakness, of misery, and of evil, have entirely vanished. No more then can the Truth be hidden from you even for a moment.

For I go about doing nothing else than preaching to young and old among you that it is not the duty of man to take care of the body and of riches so much as to look after the Soul, how it may be made unto the most perfect state; telling you that virtue is not acquired by riches, but men derive riches and every other blessing, public and private, from virtue. —*Socrates in Plato's Apology.*

THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION

By Sister Devamata

The essential oneness of humanity implies a oneness in human experience and human expression. Man touches man everywhere in his fundamental life; and each new revelation of historic research brings to light fresh proofs of this unity. Time was when the chief incidents of Christian narrative were regarded as unique, having been recorded of Jesus alone. Today we find that they have been repeated down the centuries and have clustered about the Saviours of every race and nation. Yet why should this shake our faith in the actual existence of Christ or in Christian teaching? We feel no doubt regarding the veracity of our own language when we find the same root words in other tongues. Nor do we question our reality as human beings when we learn that beneath the strange dress of Chinese, Arab, Hindu or Persian there is the same physical organism following the same functional laws as our own body in its more familiar dress. Only the insular mind imagines itself different from every other and rests its superiority on its peculiarity. The intelligent man rejoices in each new point of contact with the universal world life, and finds his faith deepening as he sees that his experiences and beliefs are the common property of all mankind.

Nature is everywhere the same and leads men by her daily lessons to the same vision regarding the graver facts of life. Who can tell what Soul, in watching the sudden bursting into blossom of a bare winter-darkened earth, first awakened to a sense of its own immortality, lighting a sacrificial fire and voicing a simple hymn of praise and thanksgiving? When that first vernal festival was held none can know. It was the cosmic Feast of the Resurrec-

tion, celebrated by the Great Mother, Nature, and gradually taken up by all Her children. Every event which precedes and follows the Christian Easter gathers round it. For all the World's Redeemers the same claim is made, —that they descended into hell, after three days and three nights rose again and ascended into Heaven. Samuel Johnson in his *Oriental Religions* tells us that the Indo-Aryan Incarnation Rama at the close of His earthly mission "ascended to heaven," "resuming his Divine essence." The Chinese declare that their virgin-born Lao-Kuin, when his work on earth was finished, ascended bodily into the Paradise above. A like ascension closed the mission of Zoroaster, according to the accounts of his followers.

The Greek Saviour, Aesculapius, after having suffered death, rose from the dead and was called "The Resurrected One." The Egyptians celebrated in the early spring each year the resurrection and ascension of their chief Saviour, Osiris. Preceding the feast, his images in the Temples and in processions through the streets were covered with black veils, which were removed on March 25th, when his resurrection was joyfully proclaimed. Atys, the Phrygian Redeemer, was also put to death and rose again. On the eve of March 25th Persian priests, we are told, kept vigil in dense darkness about the tomb of the widely-worshipped Saviour, Mithras, lamenting his death with loud cries. Suddenly, after midnight, lights burst forth on every side and the officiating priests called out: "Rejoice, O sacred Initiates, your God is risen. His death, his pains, his sufferings have worked our salvation."

In Greece, in Egypt, in Syria, in Phoenicia, the resurrection of Adonis or Tammuz was annually commemorated with impressive rites. Julius Firmicius, who lived during the reign of Constantine, thus describes it: "On a certain

night an image was layed upon a bed and bewailed in doleful ditties. After they had satiated themselves with fictitious lamentations, light was brought in; then the mouths of all the mourners were anointed by the priests, upon which he with a gentle murmur whispered: 'Trust, ye communicants: the God having been saved, there shall be to us out of pain, Salvation.'" Mons. Dupuis, in his *Origin of Religious Belief,* says: "The obsequies of Adonis were celebrated at Alexandria (Egypt) with the utmost display. His image was carried with great solemnity to a tomb. . . . Before singing his return to life, there were mournful rites celebrated in honor of his suffering and his death. The large wound he had received was shown, just as the wound was shown which was made to Christ by the thrust of the spear. The feast of his resurrection was fixed at the 25th of March."

The Egyptian deity Memnon is put to death and rises again, proclaiming immortality. His mother Eos weeps bitter tears over her dead son as Mary, the Mater dolorosa, weeps over the lifeless form of Jesus; and it is her mother prayers which bring him back from the shadowy realm to dwell forever in Olympus. The Scandinavian Saviour Baldur, having suffered death, descends into hell. Then Hela (Death) says to the mourning Hermod: "If all things in the world, both living and lifeless, weep for him, he shall return to the Aesir (gods)." Messengers were sent throughout the world, calling on all to mourn. Every living being harkened, wailing was heard in all the quarters and Baldur the Good returned to life. The ancient Druids also celebrated in the British Isles the feast of the resurrected Bacchus; and Mexican hieroglyphics tell us of the rising from the dead of their Divine Saviour Quetzalcoatl.

The observance of the Christian Easter, as also the name itself, are traceable chiefly to the ancient feast of the Saxon Deity, Eostre or Eastre, the Anglo-Saxon name for the month of April being Easter-Monath. Even so late as the beginning of the 19th Century this Saxon festival was celebrated in Northern Germany by the kindling of bonfires and other rites. The tall Easter candle beside the Christian altar is no doubt the substitute for these blazing fires. The Easter egg is also of very ancient origin. The idea was familiar to Greeks and Romans. Dyed eggs were used as sacred Easter offerings in Egypt; the Persians "when they kept the festival of the solar new year (March) presented each other with colored eggs"; and the Jews used eggs in their Passover.

As from lip to lip down from remotest ages have passed the cradle tales of our nurseries, so from heart to heart have passed the sacred rites of our Temples, born of a common need and a common aspiration. Redeemers have come in countless numbers to heal the aching wounds of erring men; and in their wisdom they have taken men's lives as they found them and into their time-hallowed traditions have infused a new and living glory. It is not by differences that the Great Ones are exalted, but by their striking likenesses of heart and mind. They are one in love, one in wisdom, one in their lowly humanity, one in their radiant Divinity. The true religious message never comes as a stranger. It comes rather like a returning mother, who seeing the home disordered by her wayward children, seeks not to destroy it, but to cleanse and restore it. May we by prayer and earnest living so deepen our inner vision that we may be able to receive that Mother with glad heart and understanding mind whenever and however She may come.

ONENESS OF ALL THINGS

From the Teachings of Chuang-Tzu.

The true sage rejects all distinctions between this and that. He takes his refuge in God and places himself in subjective relations with all things. . . . Viewed from the standpoint of Tao (the Divine Way) a beam and a pillar are identical. So are ugliness and beauty, greatness, wickedness, perverseness and strangeness. Separation is the same as construction; construction is the same as destruction. Nothing is subject to construction or to destruction, for these conditions are brought together into One.

Only the truly intelligent understand this principle of the identity of all things. They do not view things as apprehended by themselves, subjectively; but transfer themselves into the position of the things viewed. (They do not seek knowledge through mere sense-perception). And viewing them thus, they are able to comprehend them, nay, to master them. So it is that to place oneself in subjective relation with externals, without consciousness of their objectivity—this is Tao. But to wear out one's intellect in an obstinate adherence to the individuality of things, not recognizing the fact that all things are One—this is called *Three in the Morning.*

What is *Three in the Morning?* asked Tzu-Ya.

A keeper of monkeys, replied Tzu-Ch'i said with regard to their rations of chestnuts that each monkey was to have three in the morning and four at night. But at this the monkeys grew very angry; so the keeper said they might have four in the morning and three at night, with which arrangement they were all well pleased. The actual number of the chestnuts remained the same, but there was an adaptation to the likes and dislikes of those concerned. Such is the principle of putting oneself into subjective relation with externals.

Wherefore the true Sage, while regarding contraries as identical, adapts himself to the laws of Heaven. This is called following two courses at once.

The knowledge of the men of old had a limit. It extended back to a period when matter did not exist. That was the extreme point to which their knowledge reached. The second period was that of matter, but of matter unconditioned. The third epoch saw matter conditioned, but contraries were still unknown. When these appeared, Tao began to decline. And with the decline of Tao, individual bias arose.

Therefore what the true Sage aims at is the light which comes out of darkness. He does not view things as apprehended by himself, subjectively; but transfers himself into the position of the things viewed. This is called using the light.

There is nothing under the canopy of heaven greater than the tip of an autumn spikelet. A vast mountain is a small thing. Neither is there any age greater than that of a child cut off in infancy. P'eng Tsu himself died young. The universe and I came into being together; and I and everything therein are One.

REPORT

Swami Paramananda left for the West immediately after the morning Service on Sunday, March 9th. His first stop was at Louisville. He remained there eight days during which he held two meetings daily, besides giving many private interviews. When he suggested that it was too much to expect people to come so often, the reply was: "You do not know how long we have waited for this and how hungry we are." A resident of Louisville, writing of his visit, says: "There was intense interest, which increased after each lecture, deep appreciation and a demand

for the Swami's return. Although there were strangers at each lecture, the majority came again and again, showing their interest and appreciation and giving close attention. . . . Sunday was a real test. We had extremely bad weather, very windy and a downpour of rain; besides, a popular lecturer was speaking at one of the theatres, yet there were over one hundred present." Another letter reads: "Tell the Swami for me that his first lecture gave the whole message, so I know I have lost nothing (being prevented by illness from attending subsequent meetings); and that message is to live the Truth daily. Every word he uttered was a solace to my Soul. I trust he will stop here on his return from the West."

From Louisville the Swami went to Cincinnati. Dr. Stewart, a prominent physician, who was chiefly instrumental in arranging for the Swami's visit, thus writes of it: "Three lectures were planned, five were given, besides numerous personal interviews. A spontaneous outgrowth from the interest created was the formation of a class to study with devotion the teachings given out from the Vedanta Centre. Books were eagerly bought, and the supply on hand exhausted. The first lecture was given in the Auditorium of the Christ Church Parish House on Wednesday night, March 19th, to a representative audience of over two hundred people. The subject, 'The Religious Ideals for the Present Age' was most timely, because of the great interest in religious matters on account of the war; and on account of the attitude of the soldiers, who having stood side by side with fellows of all creeds and no creed, want little of ceremony but keenly observe how the preaching tallies with the life of him who does the preaching. The thoughtful receptive attitude of the audience was the best possible indication that the Swami's message

was falling on fertile soil. On Thursday afternoon March 20th, an audience of eighty or more gathered in one of the lecture rooms in the Hotel Gibson. Close attention was given to the Swami's elucidation of practical suggestions toward spiritual living. On Thursday night, in the Auditorium of the Christ Church Parish House, 'Spiritual Awakening' was the subject to which over one hundred and fifty people listened with close attention. A concert by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra for the benefit of the Italian War Orphans prevented many from attending. The interest was sufficient to announce an extra meeting at the Hotel Gibson for Friday afternoon. About seventy people attended, and again Saturday afternoon still another meeting was held. The Swami's friends in Cincinnati are looking forward to his return in June."

A third stop (of two days) was made at Gallup, New Mexico, where the Swami again lectured. On the 28th of March he reached Los Angeles and on Sunday the 30th began his work at The Vedanta Centre founded by him there.

During the Swami's absence all meetings at The Vedanta Centre of Boston will continue as usual, under the charge of Sister Devamata.

The Swami's lecture on "The Harvest Field of Life" which appeared in the March number of "The Message of the East" has appeared in pamphlet form. (Price 10 cents. Postage one cent.) The first volume of Swami Paramananda's translation of the Upanishads, containing the Isa, Kena and Katha-Upanishads, is nearly through the press and it will probably be out sometime during the month of April. (Price $1.50. Postage extra.)

THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East"
Ezekiel.

"Light shall come again from the East"
Tyndall.

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THE POWER OF FAITH

By Swami Paramananda

Faith is one of the greatest spiritual gifts. It is a living, glowing factor in our life. But we must not confound this faith with mere belief. Belief comes from reasoning and argument. We hear something which appeals to us, we analyze it, reflect on it, and at last decide that we may believe it. This belief, however, can be shifted. By a word someone can create a doubt in our mind and make us waver again. Real faith, on the contrary, rests on actual experience and when we possess that, nothing can shake us. Before we reach this point, however, we may accept the word of those in whom we have trust. As when we are going to a strange country and desire information about it, we seek out someone who has been to that country and is thoroughly acquainted with it; so first of all we must turn to those who are acquainted with the spiritual realm and listen to what they have to tell us of it.

It is for this that we have inspired Saviours and Teachers. If we wholly rely on ourselves to discover Truth, we may choose a round-about way; but if we take their word, we may save ourselves much time and labor. We believe in them because a careful study of their life and words convinces us that they know, and we depend on their

knowledge until we gain knowledge for ourselves. At the outset of our spiritual study we are forced to accept certain facts which are based on the experience of others, but we must not stop until we have gained the same experience for ourselves. Faith based on the testimony of another is never ours, it is another's. Until we have made it ours through our own experience, we cannot depend on it. To be dependable, it must rest on proof and this proof must be of our own making.

Unless we have faith we cannot work well, because doubt scatters and dissipates our energy. A little grain of doubt enters our mind and soon a great storm is raging inside, which leaves us dejected and exhausted. Doubt always tears down, it is wasteful and destructive; while faith is constructive. It is so easy to doubt; for as soon as we begin to doubt regarding one thing, that leads to doubt of everything. Before long the whole moral nature becomes diseased. When we doubt, we strike a deathblow at the very root of the tree of our life and naturally all the leaves and flowers fade away. "The ignorant, the faithless and one of doubting mind perishes. There is neither this world, nor the next, nor any happiness for the doubting self," the Bhagavad-Gita declares. One who is full of doubt invariably misses the goal of existence, because he fails to take advantage of the opportunities which come to him. Without faith, indeed, we can accomplish very little in this life. When we begin to practise, we find that it is always more beneficial to have faith than to hold a doubting, critical attitude. We must, of course, use our discriminative faculty; but to tear down does not show superiority. Those who criticize do great harm. They may drop just one doubting thought into a mind and that may grow until the mind is ruined.

A wise Teacher has said that if we wish to advance, we must take the road of faith. If we doubt, we shall go down and down. The doubt which leads us to investigate is all right; but when by the light of our Soul we gain some deeper revelation, then we must throw doubt away. There are people who seem to be naturally skeptical; but their skepticism is nothing but a habit which they have cultivated and it can be replaced by another more constructive habit. It is just as easy to trust as not to trust. At the present moment we have faith in ordinary things. We have firm faith in the existence of this external phenomenal world; and if some one comes and tells us that it is temporary and apparent, we refuse to listen to him. We cannot disbelieve its existence, because we have based our whole life on a belief in its reality. It is only regarding the realm of spiritual consciousness that we allow ourselves to doubt, and some of us even take pride in our skeptical attitude. We say we cannot accept what cannot be proved by the senses; but if we reject everything not proved by our sense-perceptions, we would reject a large part of the world. We do not hesitate to question the existence of our Soul, but we never doubt our bodily life; yet a man does not live because he has a body, but because he is a Soul. We may have thousands of bodies, but we never have more than one Soul. For the sake of that Soul we must strive to gain faith in spiritual realities. We must cultivate a sense of consecration and learn to trust in God even in the darkest moments. If we can do this, we shall be able to stand up and bear the most overwhelming misfortune.

We must never lose faith in God, in ourself, or in humanity; for in this threefold faith lies the secret of all success, all strength and all higher attainment. What-

ever we think we become; if we constantly think ourselves insignificant and worthless, we shall become that. Man must possess faith in himself, but not in an egotistical sense—not as a person with a certain name and form, born in such a family and with certain demands on the respect of his community. It is in his Higher Self that he must have faith—in himself as a child of God, a direct heir to the Divine. He must base his faith on that Soul power within which nothing can daunt. Then when he has learned to have faith in his own Soul, he will begin to have faith in God, for we cannot believe in one without believing in the other. A man who has lost all trust in himself is helpless; no one can help him and he goes to his ruin. This may seem confusing—we must have faith in ourself and yet we must give up all thought of self. What does it mean? It means that we must forget the lower self and place our faith in the Higher Self. The faith which we now have in our physical being must be spiritualized.

One cannot have faith without optimism. Faith and hope are inseparable. Depression is a great obstacle in the spiritual life and we must work until we conquer it. People who are morose will find it very difficult to advance. Cheerfulness is one of the essential spiritual qualities. We must guard ourselves against dejection, self-denunciation, or even feeling a little down-hearted. When these feelings come it is good to have some strengthening text to repeat. "Though thou mayest fail hundreds of times, let not defeat frighten thee, child," were the words of a great man in India. If we yield to depression, we are easily unnerved by difficulties and we create more difficulties. Dejection invariably distorts our vision. It magnifies our troubles. It makes every obstacle look insurmountable. That is why in the Bhagavad-Gita Sri Krishna tells Arjuna that any-

one who wishes to save himself must never allow depression to possess his mind. If he does, he becomes his own greatest enemy. Sometimes this depression is physical, sometimes it is mental, and sometimes it is spiritual. Doubt in regard to our Ideal, lack of trust in God, are forms of spiritual depression and they demoralize our life very quickly. The more active we are on the spiritual plane, however, the less susceptible we shall be to these dark hours of doubt.

Faith is born of contact. How can we expect the finite mind to come in contact with the Infinite? As well expect to put a gallon in a pint vessel, you may say. Yes, but the finite mind can be enlarged gradually and led to see things from a broader standpoint. Then as its vision expands, its faith will grow. Actually all men have the elements of faith in them. Some have firm faith in their physical strength, others in their intellectual power, but the truly strong man is he who has faith in his spiritual nature. If we know that there is within us a living Spirit which is undying, unalterable, we learn to trust in that rather than in fleeting material things; and when our faith in the Soul becomes greater, naturally we give less importance to passing physical conditions and are not so easily conquered by them. This higher faith, however, can only come by living the life. We may say that we believe in God and the Soul, but unless our life shares in that belief, it is useless. Only as we embody our belief in our daily life do we acquire a firm conviction about any thing. We must strengthen our spiritual consciousness and feed this as we feed the physical body. We must not starve our Spirit. The spiritual life is absolutely essential to our existence; and to make our spiritual life potent, we must be wakeful and we must have sincere yearning for

the Truth. Life is wonderfully balanced by God. He does not wish us to neglect any side. If we give attention only to the material side, we are easily overwhelmed by doubt and despair; but when we care for the God side too, then nothing can overwhelm us.

A life which is based on true faith is bound to bring great blessing and to manifest great spiritual power. "Verily I say unto you that if ye have faith even as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; nothing shall be impossible to you." We cannot expect to gain such unbroken, unwavering faith at once; but if we seek and pray and really yearn for it from the depth of our being, the way will open by which we shall inherit this rare spiritual gift. When it comes, it will lead us to that realm of Reality which never fails, which never deceives, which is more real than this world, and which is the very foundation of our being.

That man is always happy who is in the presence of something which he cannot know to the full, which he is always going on to know. This is the necessary condition of a finite creature with divinely rooted and divinely directed intelligence; this, therefore, its happy state—but observe, a state, not of triumph or joy in what it knows, but of joy rather in the continual discovery of new ignorance, continual self-abasement, continual astonishment. The whole difference between a man of genius and other men is that the first remains in great part a child, not conscious of much knowledge—conscious rather, of infinite ignorance and yet infinite power; a fountain of eternal admiration, delight and creative force within him meeting the ocean of visible and governable things around him.

—*John Ruskin.*

PRAYER TO THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

From the Omaha Indian Ritual of the Great White Rock

(Rendered by Wm. Norman Guthrie in "Leaves of the Greater Bible.")

I cry unto thee! Ancient of Days, *(hearken)*
I cry to thee, Great White Rock that sittest aloof on high,
Ancient of Days, *(hearken)*
To thee I offer my prayer,
Ancient of Days. *(hearken)*

(Ancient of Days, hearken)
"If one of mine pray to me aright *(hearken Ancient of Days, hearken)*
My presence shall abide continually with him, *(hearken)*
He shall go far forth in the way and farther still *(hearken, Ancient of Days)*
Unto the fourth hill of old age shall they go, *(hearken)*
Ay, unto the third of middle age, and unto the fourth, *(hearken)*
As they go, shall they appear thereon and stand with me."
So hast thou verily spoken, and our Fathers have told us.
(Ancient of Days, hearken!)

O thou who art ever the bowed pillar of our house: *(hearken)*
"One of these my little ones—*(hearken)*
I shall stand over each of them and brood upon him; *(hearken)*
All things unclean in him *(hearken)*
Shall I wash so away from everyone of them *(hearken)*
That in the end they shall appear with me and stand upright, having overcome whatever would hinder or harm their life."
So hast thou verily spoken, and thy words have come unto us, even unto us also.

Ancient of Days *(hearken)*
Our fathers have told us that thou hast most surely said:
"In calling upon me, say ye: 'Our Father!'"
And thou Water *(hearken)*
I cry unto thee, bear away past the many turns of the stream,
Through the swirl and the eddies, into the marshy shallows, all that is unclean and vexeth us.
Let nought impure enter ever again into us!

(Ancient of Days, hearken)
"Whoso draweth nigh and toucheth me lovingly with face or lips
All that is unclean in him *(hearken)* . . .
I shall thoroughly purge it away!"
So hast thou spoken, and our fathers have told us: *(hearken)*
"Yea, the four gateways of the body,
And all within the body shall I thoroughly cleanse, and it shall be pure."
So hast thou spoken, and our fathers have told us. *(hearken)*

"Little ones, my children, *(hearken)*
Through you truly shall the light shine.
In the midmost place where meet the four winds of life
Ye shall appear, and stand upright steadfast with me forever."
So hast thou spoken, and our fathers have told us,
Ancient of Days. *(hearken)*

* * * * * *

Ancient of Days, *(hearken)*
When longing for protection and guidance, *(hearken)*
Mankind did seek in thought for a way, *(hearken)*
Behold Thou sattest, pure, enduring forever,

In the midmost place, where meet all trails,
There sattest Thou, blown on alike of the four winds of life,
Between the noon of day and the noon of night,
Mighty alone of all to receive prayer, and almighty to succour!

(Ancient of Days, hearken)
"I have desired, with my little ones, yea, I have greatly desired
To walk with them ever further forth in the way of life,
Without anguish to them, and without sickness, *(hearken)*
Over the second, the third, ay, the fourth hill, and beyond!"

Ancient of Days, hearken, I do beseech thee
Give ear graciously unto my prayer!
Ancient of Days, we do beseech thee, hearken,
Though my speech be feeble and no skill be mine,
Ancient of Days, to the cry of the children, hearken!

Purify the heart that He may enlighten, and He whom thou callest on may enter in. Be His house and He will be thy house; let Him dwell in thee, and thou shalt dwell in Him. . . . He alone is truly pure, who waiteth on God and keepeth himself to Him alone. . . . Whoso seeks from God any other reward but God and for it would serve God, esteems what he wishes to receive more than Him from whom he would receive it. What then? Hath God no reward? None, save Himself. The reward of God is God Himself. —*St. Augustine.*

YOGA AND NATURE

By Swami Ramakrishnananda

All that a man has learnt here in this world he surely has not learnt from books, but rather directly or indirectly from Nature; for books are nothing other than the records of men's experiences about Nature; so in reality Nature is our teacher. Whenever Nature teaches us, we become really learned and gain something thereby not only for ourselves but for others. When young James Watt studied the action of steam in the boiling kettle before him, he made a valuable contribution to the progress of the human race. When Benjamin Franklin was flying the kite and detected the existence of electricity in the clouds, he gained a new and most useful servant for man. Similarly by studying Nature George Stephenson was able to invent the locomotive engine. All these incidents clearly show that Nature is the book the study of which gives us the greatest return.

Our Indian Yogis, knowing this, deeply studied the book of Nature and ultimately found out the methods which took them beyond Nature. Through the study of the inner aspect of Nature they opened a channel of unlimited knowledge; they could subsist without food any length of time; and they gained supernatural powers which our modern science cannot even dream of. That a man can become practically all-knowing they seem to have at first learnt from studying the property of a convex lens. Ordinarily the solar rays have no burning power; but if brought together at the focus of the lens, they will begin to burn. This burning power is brought about by the convergence of the scattered rays of the sun to a single point. This fact suggested to the mind of the Yogi that because the mind is distributed through the senses and as such is

scattered in all directions, it has only the ordinary power of knowing what is visibly going on in this world and of knowing that but very partially. If, however, he could call his mind back from all external pursuits and concentrate it on one idea or at one point, as in the case of the focused solar rays, then why should it not be able to perceive both these ordinary things and many extraordinary things also? He made the experiment and was successful.

This intense increase in the power of the mind was learnt also from the current of a stream. If we build a dam across a flowing stream, keeping only a very small aperture in the embankment, the water which then comes out of that aperture has a thousandfold more power than the ordinary current of the stream. This suggested to them the idea that if by shutting up all other outlets of the mind, it is made to flow through one outlet, it must acquire powers unknown to it before. In this manner the Yogi discovered the extraordinary powers which mental concentration can produce.

He also studied the habits of frogs, tortoises, snakes, and found out that frogs do not eat anything during the whole of the winter; that snakes live chiefly on air; that tortoises can draw in their limbs at their will and thus become protected against all danger, and can live without food for any length of time. In winter the body of a frog is almost assimilated to the earth; apparently there is no sign of life in it; but as soon as the spring season sets in, the warm rain brings new life to it and the frog becomes active again. To get rid of the cravings of hunger the Yogis imitated the winter-life of these creatures. Like the limbs of a tortoise they learnt to draw in all the scattered parts of their mind and concentrate them at one point;

then they could subsist without food for a long time. The snake and the tortoise breathe after long intervals. This suggested to them the efficacy of holding the breath or performing *Pranayama.* They found out that these creatures eat very little and live very long. So when they wanted to be blessed with long lives, they determined to imitate their methods. When a man attains the highest perfection in *Pranayama* or the control of the breath, then daily a small quantity of milk is sufficient to support his life.

When the quantity of a Yogi's food becomes very small, his general constitution becomes a little weak no doubt, but a certain glow comes from his face which is nowhere perceptible except in a Yogi. We may know a Yogi by his eyes, so sweetly brilliant do they become. Once upon a time in olden days a sage, it is said, went out of his hermitage to see one of his brother sages in a distant forest, leaving the charge of his little homestead in the hands of one of his young disciples. The boy daily offered oblations in the fire and thus propitiated the god of fire, who appearing before him initiated him in the knowledge of the Self. When the sage returned, he was astonished to find the face of his disciple beaming with the full glow of knowledge and he at once inquired: "How is it, my boy, that your face is shining like that of a knower of the Self?"

The face is the index of a man's character, and especially is this true of the eyes. Whether we are happy or unhappy can be easily detected in our eyes. The eye is the window of the Soul. Whatever we feel and think may be detected through the eye. The eye undergoes as many modifications as the mind within, and an expert can find out what is going on within by simply looking at the eyes. This branch of knowledge goes under the name *Chakshushi-*

Vidya or the science of optical control and mind-reading. The man who is well versed in this art can fascinate or madden a person by the management of his optical powers. Through the light of a man's eye a Yogi can enter his mind by making the light of his own eye harmonize with it; and a mental connection being thus established between the eyes, he is enabled to dive into the other man's mind and turn it so as to bring it within his control. In the process of mesmerism some such action takes place.

The first lesson in the acquirement of this optical power is to practise the *Trataka,* that is, to go on staring at a minute object until tears appear and obstruct the eyesight. A man should attentively look upon a certain minute object without winking until tears flow forth from his eyes. This process is known by the name of *Trataka.* This *Trataka* cures all optical maladies, drives away sleepiness, increases the power of eyesight, enables a man to see even the minutest things which an ordinary man has to see with the help of a microscope, and brings about sundry other beneficial results. In olden days this practice was so prevalent in India that even women were known to be experts in it. Once upon a time when a learned assembly had met, an ascetic lady, it is said, entered the court of Janaka. She had a doubt as to Janaka's being a genuine knower of the Truth, and she wanted to examine him by entering his mind through the light of his eyes. This she easily did; and entering Janaka's mind she tried to bring it under her control, but not being able to do that she at last concluded that he was a real *Jnani* or knower.

In the practice of Yoga, especially for a beginner, the natural conditions are carefully taken into account. The sages give the following advice: upon a level clean spot, without any pebbles or flints, a Yogi should sit to medi-

tate. His environment should be pleasant and agreeable to his taste. No bad sight should trouble his eyes, no sudden noise should disturb his ears. When a man is half asleep, if then a sudden noise arises, his sleep completely forsakes him and he is sorely troubled; similarly when a man has but half effected his concentration, if then a sudden noise or a troublesome sight brings him down from his height, who can describe the distress which he then feels within himself? This is the reason why a pleasant and solitary place is advisable for a beginner.

I have already told you that the holding of the breath is necessary for the concentration of mind. Sometimes even ordinary jugglers practise this in order to perform certain feats. By practising this process of stopping the breath gradually, all their nerves and veins become inflated with a peculiar kind of very light gas which makes their bodies rise up a few feet above the ground. These people generally exhibit this feat in girls. When girls are very young they teach them to stay under water longer and longer. In this way they make them learn to hold their breath for a considerable length of time; after this they ask them to practise this restraint of the breath sitting upon a heap of sand. When they have held their breath for some minutes, gradually these jugglers remove the sand from beneath them; and after a few days' practice the girls are actually found to be sitting in the air. But although these juggler-girls can perform all these extraordinary feats, they are nothing more than mere juggler-girls.

We have already noticed that Yogis can live without food for a long time. Many may not believe it, but we find no reason why we should disbelieve it. In the state of sleep we have no craving for food. We have read of men who

sleep continually for a month, during which time they do not eat anything at all. But still their bodies are stout and healthy. There was a man named Bilton living in a place called Timberry. He was a common laborer and used to fall asleep for more than a month and during this period not a drop of water entered his stomach. Still he was as strong and stout as a healthy man. A sudden mental shock is also another cause for the destruction of appetite. Once upon a time a woman living in a village named Damurhudo, Bengal, suddenly lost her husband. She was so overpowered with grief that she did not take any food or any drink for more than a score of days. After the shock was over, coming to herself, she wanted to take a little food, but instantly she threw it up. Next day she tried, the result was the same. Finally, after repeated attempts, she stopped taking any food and lived for several years without eating. She was in the habit of bathing daily, and this kept her perfectly healthy. These are historical facts and consequently we cannot deny them. Now let us consider the case of a Yogi. A Yogi has no physical labor to go through. Much of his time is spent in Samadhi or the superconscious state, which outwardly resembles sleep. His mind is concentrated on one point, he having no other desire than the realization of Truth. When we consider these things, does it then appear impossible that a Yogi may live without food for any length of time?

One point more. Besides our two eyes the Yogis speak of a third eye. The two external eyes can see only what is before them. But this third eye can see what is going on within or anywhere in the subtler realm of being. This third eye is called the Divine eye. Its seat is between the eye-brows. The end and aim of a Yogi is to open this third eye. When the mind becomes calm, when passions and

desires vanish from within, then this third eye opens and enables the Yogi to see many extraordinary things. Eternal peace is then established in him. Soul-consciousness is gained. *Maya* or illusion can have no further influence over him. The man dies in him and the god rises in its place. The human gives way to the Divine. Before the attainment of such a high state, a Yogi experiences many extraordinary things; sometimes he see deified forms moving in the clouds; sometimes he smells a delicious fragrance; sometimes he hears celestial voices; within his body he will hear the sound of a bell, or the music of a flute; sometimes he perceives his Ideal seated upon the lotus of his heart. We cannot easily account for all these phenomena. But when any man is blessed with such visions or super-earthly experiences, then he may understand that the attainment of his goal is very near.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

By Ali Ghazzali

(Sufi Philosopher, 11th Century)

The rational Soul in man abounds in marvels, both of knowledge and power. His five senses are like five doors opening on the external world; but, more wonderful than this, his heart has a window which opens on the unseen world of spirits. In the state of sleep, when the avenues of the senses are closed, this window is opened and man receives impressions from the unseen world and sometimes foreshadowings of the future. His heart is then like a mirror which reflects what is pictured in the Tablets of Fate. But even in sleep thoughts of worldly things dull this mirror, so that the impressions it receives are not clear. After death, however, such thoughts vanish and things are seen in their naked reality, and the saying in

the Koran is fulfilled: "We have stripped the veil from off thee and thy sight today is keen."

This opening of a window in the heart towards the unseen also takes place in conditions approaching those of prophetic inspiration, when intuitions spring up in the mind unconveyed through any sense-channel. The more a man purifies himself from fleshly lusts and concentrates his mind on God, the more conscious will he be of such intuitions. Those who are not conscious of them have no right to deny their reality. Nor are such intuitions confined only to those of prophetic rank. Just as iron, by sufficient polishing, can be made into a mirror, so any mind by due discipline can be rendered receptive of such impressions. Every human being has in the depths of his consciousness heard the question "Am I not your Lord?" and answered "Yes" to it. But some hearts are like mirrors so befouled with rust and dirt that they give no clear reflections, while those of the prophets and saints, though they are men "of like passions with us," are extremely sensitive to all Divine impressions.

Nor is it only by reason of knowledge, acquired and intuitive, that the Soul of man holds the first rank among created things, but also by reason of power. Just as angels preside over the elements, so does the Soul rule the members of the body. Those Souls which attain a special degree of power not only rule their own body but those of others also. If they wish a sick man to recover he recovers; or a person in health to fall ill, he becomes ill; or if they will the presence of a person, he comes to them. According as the effects produced by these powerful Souls are good or bad they are termed miracles or sorceries. These Souls differ from common folk in three ways: (1) What others only see in dreams they see in their waking

moments. (2) While others' wills only affect their own bodies, these by will-power can move bodies extraneous to themselves. (3) The knowledge which others acquire by laborious learning comes to them by intuition.

These three, of course, are not the only marks which differentiate them from common people, but the only ones which come within our cognizance. Just as no one knows the real nature of God but God himself, so no one knows the real nature of a prophet but a prophet. Nor is this to be wondered at, as in every-day matters we see that it is impossible to explain the charm of poetry to one whose ear is insusceptible of cadence and rhythm, or the glories of colour to one who is stone-blind. Besides mere incapacity, there are other hindrances to the attainment of spiritual Truth. One of these is externally acquired knowledge. To use a figure, the heart may be represented as a well, and the five senses as five streams which are continually conveying water to it. In order to find out the real contents of the heart these streams must be stopped for a time, at any rate, and the refuse they have brought with them must be cleared out of the well. In other words, if we are to arrive at pure spiritual Truth, we must put away, for the time, knowledge which has been acquired by external processes and which too often hardens into dogmatic prejudice.

Any one who will look into the matter will see that happiness is necessarily linked with the knowledge of God. Each faculty of ours delights in that for which it was created: lust delights in accomplishing desire, anger in taking vengeance, the eye in seeing beautiful objects, and the ear in hearing harmonious sounds. The highest function of the Soul of man is the perception of Truth; in this accordingly it finds its special delight. Even in trifling

matters, such as learning chess, this holds good; and the higher the subject matter of the knowledge obtained, the greater the delight. A man would be pleased at being admitted into the confidence of a prime minister, but how much more if the king makes an intimate of him and discloses state secrets to him! An astronomer who by his knowledge can map the stars and describe their courses, derives more pleasure from his knowledge than the chess-player from his. Seeing, then, that nothing is higher than God, how great must be the delight which springs from the true knowledge of Him! A person in whom the desire for this knowledge has disappeared is like one who has lost his appetite for healthy food, or who prefers feeding on clay to eating bread.

An important part of our knowledge of God arises from the study and contemplation of our own bodies, which reveal to us the power, wisdom, and love of the Creator. His power, in that from a mere drop He has built up the wonderful frame of man; His wisdom is revealed in the intricacies of this frame and the mutual adaptability of its parts; and His love is shown by His not only supplying such organs as are absolutely necessary for existence, as the liver, the heart, and the brain, but those which are not absolutely necessary, as the hand, the foot, the tongue, and the eye.

Man has been truly termed a "microcosm" or little world in himself, and the structure of his body should be studied not only by those who wish to become doctors, but by those who wish to attain to a more intimate knowledge of God; just as close study of the niceties and shades of language in a great poem reveals to us more and more of the genius of its author. But when all is said, the knowledge of the Soul plays a more important part in

leading to the knowledge of God than the knowledge of our body and its functions. The body may be compared to a steed and the Soul to its rider; the body was created for the Soul, not the Soul for the body. If a man knows not his own Soul, which is the nearest thing to him, what is the use of his claiming to know others? It is as if a beggar who has not the wherewithal for a meal should claim to be able to feed a town.

We have attempted, in some degree, to expound the greatness of man's Soul. He who neglects it and suffers its capacities to rust or to degenerate must necessarily be the loser in this world and the next. The true greatness of man lies in his capacity for eternal progress, otherwise in this temporal sphere he is the weakest of all things, being subject to hunger, thirst, heat, cold and sorrow. Those things he takes most delight in are often the most injurious to him, and those things which benefit him are not to be obtained without toil and trouble. As to his intellect, a slight disarrangement of matter in his brain is sufficient to destroy or madden him; as to his power, the sting of a wasp is sufficient to rob him of ease and sleep; as to his temper, he is upset by the loss of a sixpence; as to his beauty, he is little more than nauseous matter covered with a fair skin. Without frequent washing he becomes utterly repulsive and disgraceful. In truth, man in this world is extremely weak and contemptible; it is only in the next that he will be of value, if by means of the "alchemy of happiness" he rises from the rank of beasts to that of angels. It is necessary for him, at the same time that he is conscious of his superiority as the climax of created things, to learn to know also his helplessness, as that too is one of the keys to the knowledge of God.

THE DELIGHT OF WISDOM

From the Apocryphal Book of Ecclesiasticus

(Written by Jesus the Son of Sirach in the 3rd or 4th Century, B. C.)

Strive for the Truth unto death, and the Lord God shall fight for thee.

Speak not against the Truth; and be abashed for thine ignorance.

If thou love to hear, thou shalt receive; and if thou incline thine ear, thou shalt be wise.

If thou seest a man of understanding; get thee betimes unto him, and let thy foot wear out the steps of his doors.

My son, gather instruction from thy youth up: and even unto hoar hairs thou shalt find wisdom.

Come unto her as one that ploweth and soweth, and wait for her good fruits; for thy toil shall be little in the tillage of her, and thou shalt eat of her fruits right soon.

Come unto her with all thy Soul, and keep her ways with thy whole power.

Search, and seek, and she shall be made known unto thee; and when thou hast got hold of her, let her not go.

For at the last thou shalt find her rest; and she shall be turned for thee into gladness.

And her fetters shall be to thee for a covering of strength, and her chains for a robe of glory.

Thou shalt put her on as a robe of glory, and shalt array thee with her as a crown of rejoicing.

Wisdom exalteth her sons, and taketh hold of them that seek her.

He that loveth her loveth life; and they that seek her early shall be filled with gladness.

He that holdeth her fast shall inherit glory; and where he entereth, the Lord will bless.

They that do her service shall minister to the Holy One; and them that love her the Lord doth love.

He that giveth ear unto her shall judge the nations; and he that giveth heed unto her shall dwell securely.

If he trust her, he shall inherit her; and his generation shall have her in possession.

For at the first she will walk with him in crooked ways, and will bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his Soul, and try him by her judgments:

Then will she return again the straight way unto him, and will gladden him, and reveal to him her secrets.

JAMADAGNI AND THE SUN

Free Rendering of a Story from the Mahabharata

Once the illustrious Jamadagni, of Bhrigu's race, was engaged in practising with his bow, while his wife Renuka lovingly collected the arrows and brought them to her husband. It was the noontide and Jamadagni, having emptied his quiver, begged the faithful Renuka to bring back the scattered arrows. Joyfully Renuka ran to gather them, but overcome by the burning rays of the midday sun, she sought the cool shelter of a wayside tree. When she returned, her husband inquired sternly the cause of her unaccustomed delay. "My head and feet were scorched by the sun's rays," was her answer. "Oppressed by the heat, I betook myself to the shadow of a tree." Jamadagni replied: " O Renuka, this very day I shall destroy with the fiery energy of my weapons the blazing star of day who has thus afflicted thee!"

Then drawing his celestial bow and taking many arrows, he turned his face towards the sun and watched him as he moved along his heavenly course. Surya (the sun),

assuming the form of a Brahmana, approached and thus addressed him in anxious tones: "What has Surya done to displease thee? It is by his grace that the rain falls, by his grace that the harvest grows, by his grace that the kine flourish. Without him could be neither food nor life. Wherefore then dost thou seek to destroy him?" But the wrath of Jamadagni would not be appeased.

Then Surya bowed his head and with folded hands said to him: "O Sage, the sun is perpetually in motion! How wilt thou pierce him swinging forward in his ceaseless course?"

Jamadagni gave answer: "With the eye of knowledge I know thee to be both moving and motionless. This day I shall surely teach thee a lesson. At midday thou dost seem to pause in thy course. It is then that I shall pierce thee with my sharp arrows!"

Surya pleaded: "Without doubt thou knowest me, O Sage, thou who art the best of archers. But behold, though I have offended thee, yet I am a suppliant for thy protection."

The noble Jamadagni at once forgot his anger and smilingly replied: "If thou hast sought my protection, then truly hast thou naught to fear. The man who can slay one who has sought refuge with him is capable of betraying his Guru (spiritual teacher), of slaying a holy man, or of taking intoxicating drinks. He is without virtue and undeserving of esteem. I shall no longer pursue thee with my wrath, but I adjure thee to find some remedy by which the children of earth may be shielded from thy scorching rays."

Then the mighty Surya gave to the pacified Jamadagni an umbrella to screen the heads of men from the noonday heat, and sandals for the protection of their feet along the sun-baked highway!

REPORT

Swami Paramananda spent the month of April in Los Angeles and his time was filled to the utmost. On Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday of each week he held meetings at The Vedanta Centre there, on Monday he spoke in Pasadena, on Wednesday in Long Beach and on Friday in Santa Barbara. Two of his visits to Santa Barbara were extended in order to deliver additional lectures, one in Montecito and the other at the Theosophical Society. He also spoke at the Theosophical Headquarters at Krotona. Besides these numerous engagements the Swami devoted many hours daily to interviews. Everywhere he met with genuine interest and enthusiasm. At the Sunday evening lectures in Los Angeles the capacity of the hall was nearly always exceeded, although it seated over two hundred. Of the meeting on April 13th a member writes: "The Sunday lecture this week was more than successful. People were turned away; every available space was filled, yet there was not room. Fully 250 must have been there and very attentive they were too." His subjects for the month were "Spiritual Awakening," "Science of Self-Mastery," "Life After Death," "Higher Consciousness." The Class attendance was proportionally large and the demand for literature phenomenal. The Swami has accepted an invitation to speak on May 1st at a large New Thought Convention and on May 5th he goes to San Francisco.

The work at The Vedanta Centre of Boston was very active throughout the month. An extra Service was held on Good Friday at 5 P. M. and on Palm Sunday, after the two regular Services at the Centre, Sister Devamata went to Ayer to speak at The Unitarian Church there. Her subject was "Development of the Devotional Nature." Nearly 200 were present.

Swami Paramananda's translation of the Upanishads will be ready early in May. (Price $1.50. Postage extra).

THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST

"And behold the glory of the God of
Israel came from the way of the East"
Ezekiel.

"Light shall come again from the East"
Tyndall.

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INNER AWAKENING

Lecture by Swami Paramananda

In all the great Bibles of the world we find the same constant call to the Soul. It comes from the lips of Jesus Christ, of Gautama Buddha, of the great Vedic sages, of all the wise ones—a call to "awake, arise, and sleep no more." Are we not already awake? Not as they mean; for they speak of another awakening, which brings us in contact with strong spiritual forces of which we are now not conscious. In the days of our material life we are really asleep. Although our eyes are wide open, we are asleep to the things of the spiritual realm. We may rouse ourselves enough to have an occasional glimpse, but we cannot keep it. We fall asleep again. Yet without this inner wakefulness we are able to do little for others or with our own forces. The road of the world is full of dangers for him who is not wakeful; because unless the Soul guides us, this body cannot hold very long; nor can it accomplish anything worth while.

Inner awakening means changing our point of view; putting first what should come first; depending not on wealth and material things, but on Spirit. Very few of us are steadily mindful of our spiritual nature. Those who are, when difficulties confront them, stand firm on the rock

of something which is indestructible, invincible and undying. All petty things drop away from them. When this awakening comes, indeed, our life opens on a new sphere. We begin to think differently and to act differently. The things which once vexed us and disturbed our tranquillity can no longer touch us, because we have gained a larger outlook. We live in a very small circle until spiritual awakening comes. We cling to little things, to matter, thinking it all in all. It is indeed a blessed moment when we find a spiritual Ideal with which our mind may constantly associate. Nor is this awakening for a few chosen ones only. It is the birthright of every Soul. We all have the right to know that inner principle without which no one can live; and the sooner we know it, the better it will be for us.

Our real strength exists in God; and when our mind turns inward, we become conscious of those subtler faculties by which we may perceive Him. At present we do not even suspect that we possess them. We have left the very best part of our being unexplored, and we can only discover it by going within. Instead of listening to many voices, we must try to hear the one Voice. It is not a loud voice, it speaks only in the silence; but when it is heard, no unworthy doubt or anxiety can disturb our inward peace. That is why it is so important to take up the spiritual life with vital interest. Mere intellectual curiosity will not do. We must have ardent devotion and firm resolution. Then we shall gain something so mighty and so tangible that our whole life will be transformed. We may go on with the same outer duties, but we shall do everything more efficiently and with a happier heart.

The things of the spiritual realm do not appear true to us until we make ourselves ready. We ourselves must unfold our inner possibilities. Each man must raise him-

self by his own Higher Self. We are our own friend and we are our own enemy, as the Bhagavad-Gita says. When we look without and relate our life entirely to changeable fleeting conditions, we are bound to meet with disappointment and create suffering for ourselves. We should look within instead of without. We should go to the very fount of our being and relate ourselves to a higher and better region of life. We must not be satisfied to live merely as others have lived, or to believe as others have believed. That is not religion. Religion is an individual matter. Every individual must have a religion of his own. There are plenty of religions in the world, but we must make them ours by living, by drawing the Spirit close to our heart. They give us the inspiration; they show us the way, but we must formulate our own Ideal and follow it. Many things are written in the Scriptures, but it is not enough to read them, we must realize them in our own Soul.

Awake! Arise! Awake to the life of meditation, to thoughtfulness, to discrimination and unselfishness, to the things which are real. But this is not easy for us unless we are full of determination. Our physical nature does not turn easily to these higher ideals. Rather it leads us away from them, so we must wage an energetic war against our bodily habits and our concern for physical comforts. On the last day of Buddha's life, His disciples asked Him for some parting instructions and He said to them: Do not depend on external things, but always cling to that inward instinct which leads to Truth.

We form our own habits of life. We make ourselves dependent on physical conditions. Now a small material thing seems more real to us than our Soul, but we must reverse this. We shall have to do it gradually, however.

We cannot expect a person living wholly in this world suddenly to attain Soul-consciousness. It must be done by degrees. Let us uplift our mind from the bondage of material things. Let us try first to elevate our thought and then express these loftier ideals in our actions. If our thought is noble, then the action which follows is bound to be productive; but if our thought in the seed form is not of noble quality, how can we expect it to bear noble fruit? It is the Soul which should always guide; and when our Soul-consciousness is living and strong, the body can never go wrong. If we keep our mind constantly connected with the Soul, we are very little likely to blunder.

The sense world and the spiritual world represent two different spheres. The sense world is full of darkness for the sages. They do not take any active part in it. The spiritual world, on the other hand, seems dull and useless to the man full of worldly interests. He cannot understand the sage when he declares it to be full of light and the highest activity. The lowest form of activity is mere muscular exertion; mental activity and moral activity are recognized as higher; but the highest form must always be that which gives birth to noble spiritual thought, because it alone enables us to stand on firm ground. Therefore, we should exert ourselves most of all on the spiritual plane. Man cannot live without God. If we separate ourselves from Him, our life grows weaker and weaker. Nothing in this world can take His place, but when we open our heart wholly to Him, we may be sure that we shall be sustained and protected.

Of ourselves we can do little, but we can do everything with the help of God and Truth. When the sages tell us to rely upon ourselves, they mean the Higher Self. Even apparent humility may be egotistic. Only when we identify

ourselves with the higher principle of our being can we become free from ego. Whatever broadens our vision and leads us to identify ourselves with the universal is a blessing; because we deal a deathblow to all selfishness and pettiness when we want things which are good for the whole. It is this which enlarges our sphere of happiness.

The sayings of Christ or Buddha or any of the Great Ones are not to be kept on a shelf. They are to be applied in our daily life; and when we begin to apply them, we shall see how quickly they will stimulate our latent spiritual forces. They are to be lived, and to be lived in silence. When inner awakening comes, its first fruit is silence. When a man becomes absorbed in nobler and deeper things, he does not care to argue and dispute. He thinks more of doing and less of talking. It changes his point of view. It also fills his mind and body with greater vigor and greater courage. He no longer feels daunted by circumstances. He is conscious of a something infinite behind him, which sustains him. He does not grow angry when people denounce or insult him. When our inner consciousness is unfolded, we stand on a rock where no wave, no wind or storm can overwhelm us. We may take every outer precaution, but it will not avail. We may build a fortified city, we may surround ourselves with a bodyguard; but none of these can save us from fear or danger. There is only one thing which can save us and that is higher understanding. It must be our constant companion wherever we go. Wise men may forsake everything else, but they never forsake this foremost element of their being.

Inward awakening brings us a more exalted attitude towards life. All feelings of bitterness, of injustice and rebellion vanish from us. We live with God and become

living instruments in God's hands. We cannot attain this state so long as we depend on the physical and yield to the appetites of the flesh; but when we sacrifice these for the Soul, the Divinity which abides in us awakens and brings us the fulfillment of all our prayers. If we will but give a chance to our real being to unfold itself, all will be made plain to us. Richness of the Soul comes when we awaken to the facts of the spiritual realm. "O how blessed is that Soul which is ever conscious of God reposing and resting within it," the great Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross, writes. "He is there, as it were, asleep in the embraces of the Soul and the Soul is in general conscious of His presence and in general delights exceedingly in it. If He were always awake in the Soul, the communications of knowledge and love would be unceasing, and that would be a state of glory. If He awakes but once, merely opening His eyes, and affects the Soul so profoundly, what would become of it if He were continually awake within it?"

In order to gain these inner riches, however, we need more than intellect. We need to develop the habit of contemplation. We need to go within. True spiritual awakening reveals to us a new vista, a new world of inspiration and great power. That is the reason why the mystics and saints and all spiritually-minded people experience such ecstasy when they take up the contemplative life. They do not fear that they are going to miss something because they have sacrificed personal gratification and worldly association. They are not concerned lest people regard them as selfish. They know that they can never be truly selfless until they have found the Source of their Self which is unbounded and eternal; so their whole aim and effort is to live in such a way that their life may be a constant manifestation of Divine Grace and Divine Wisdom.

SONGS OF KABIR

Translation by Rabindranath Tagore

I

The lock of error shuts the gate, open it with the key of love:
Thus, by opening the door, thou shalt wake the Beloved.
Kabir says: "O Brother! do not pass by such good fortune as this."

II

O Friend, dear heart of mine, think well! if you love indeed, then why do you sleep?
If you have found Him, then give yourself utterly, and take Him to you.
Why do you loose Him again and again? . . .
Kabir says: "I tell you the ways of love! Even though the head itself must be given, why should you weep over it?"

III

He who is meek and contented, he who has an equal vision, whose mind is filled with the fullness of acceptance and of rest;
He who has seen Him and touched Him, he is freed from all fear and trouble.
To him the perpetual thought of God is like sandal paste smeared on the body, to him nothing else is delight:
His work and his rest are filled with music: he sheds abroad the radiance of love.
Kabir says: "Touch His feet, who is one and indivisible, immutable and peaceful; who fills all vessels to the brim with joy, and whose form is love."

THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE

From the Texts of Confucianism

Heaven penetrates to the bottom of our hearts, like light into a dark chamber. We must conform ourselves to it, till we are like two instruments of music tuned to the same pitch. We must join ourselves with it, like two tablets which appear but one. We must receive its gifts the very moment its hand is open to bestow. Our irregular passions shut up the door of our Souls against God.

Man has received his nature from Heaven. Conduct in accordance with that nature constitutes what is right and true, is a pursuing of the proper path. The cultivation or regulation of that path is what is called instruction.

Man has received from heaven a moral nature by which he is constituted a law to himself; over this nature man requires to exercise a jealous watchfulness; and as he possesses it, absolutely and relatively, in perfection, or attains to such possession of it, he becomes invested with highest dignity and power.

The superior man does not, even for the space of a single meal, act contrary to virtue. In moments of haste, he cleaves to it. In seasons of danger he cleaves to it.

If the will be set on virtue there will be no practice of wickedness.

He who offends against Heaven has none to whom he can pray.

I do not know how a man without truthfulness is to get on. How can a large carriage be made to go without the cross-bar for yoking the oxen to, or a small carriage without the arrangement for yoking the horses?

If a man in the morning hear the right way, he may die in the evening without regret.

Let the will be set on the path of duty.

The way of the superior man reaches far and wide, and yet is secret; the path of duty is to be pursued everywhere and at all times while yet the secret spring and rule of it is near at hand, in the Heaven-conferred nature, the individual consciousness, with which no stranger can intermeddle.

When one cultivates to the utmost the moral principles of his nature, and exercises them on the principle of reciprocity, he is not far from the path. What you do not like when done to yourself, do not do to others: serve my father as I would require my son to serve me; serve my elder brother as I would require my younger brother to serve me; set the example in behaving to a friend as I would require him to behave to me.

Be earnest in practising the ordinary virtues, and careful in speaking about them; if in his practice he has anything defective, the superior man dares not but exert himself; and if in his words he has any excess, he dares not allow himself such licence; have respect to his actions, and his actions have respect to his words; is it not an entire sincerity which marks the superior man?

The philosopher said: I daily examine myself on two points: whether, in transacting business for others, I may not have been faithful; whether, in intercourse with friends, I may not have been sincere.

Hold faithfulness and sincerity as first principles.

To see what is right and not to do it, is want of courage.

When you have faults, do not fear to abandon them.

To acknowledge one's incapacity is the way to be soon prepared to teach others; for from the moment that a man is no longer full of himself, nor puffed up with empty pride, whatever good he learns in the morning he practises before night.

Let your life be in accord with perfect virtue.

HOW TO GAIN POISE

Lecture by Sister Devamata

Firmness is the basis and condition of efficiency. If a telescope sways on its pedestal, the observations made through it are worthless; if a carpenter's ladder totters, he will almost surely drive his nail crooked; and if our nerves quiver and break down under every strain or blow, we shall be incapable of effective thought or action. Without steadiness, indeed, we can be of little use to ourselves or to our fellowmen. Under stress we may even prove a danger, because at the critical moment we may lose our balance and be the cause of a grave catastrophe. It is evident then that if we have any sense of responsibility towards the world or any desire for efficiency in our own life, we must labor diligently to cultivate this essential quality.

Nearly always when our equilibrium is disturbed, we blame it on people or circumstances. We believe that in other conditions it would have been perfectly easy to maintain our serenity. As a matter of fact, however, the outside has nothing to do with it. We have only to look about us to convince ourselves of this. Why is it that when a car swings round a corner, some of the passengers stagger and others retain their footing? The curve and the swing of the car are the same for all. Or why in a disaster are certain ones panic-stricken while others by their composure save the situation? The danger is equal for the terrified and for the quiet ones. It is because the external circumstance is never the determinative factor in our actions or states of mind. They merely test us and show us where we stand. Their power over us is much like that of a disease germ. If we are strong, we throw it out of our system and escape the epidemic; if we are weak, over-

wrought and fearful, we take in the germ and succumb. In one state we have "a conquest which cannot be conquered" as Lord Buddha says, "a conquest into which no one in this world can enter;" while in the other, not having conquered our own nature, we are perpetually conquered by our environment and association.

If we will observe ourselves from day to day, we shall see how our stability varies at different times in the same circumstances. When we are in a sensitive mood, we are quickly overthrown by some trifling incident, which on the morrow we laugh away; and by a reversal of mood, what yesterday may have seemed a molehill today is magnified into a mountain. This makes it apparent that the degree of our self-possession is determined not by the action of the outside condition on us, but by our reaction against it. If we permit each passing experience to stir our mind into waves of pleasure or pain, approval or resentment, we cannot hope to maintain that habitual balance which we call poise. All this unrest and discontent, this nameless distress and downheartedness, which so often sweep over us, are nothing but forms of mental seasickness caused by incessant rocking on the waves of our own mind; and if we can still its troubled waters, these painful sensations will quickly disappear, leaving us at peace.

It is wholly with our own thought that we have to deal in acquiring poise. When that is properly adjusted, the outer world can never overthrow us. And we adjust our thought by the practice of discrimination. The crucial point in this practice, however, is not how to discriminate, but when. We are all using our discriminative faculty, but not at the right moment. We begin to exercise it too late. Like a foolish servant who admits a stranger before he finds out whether or not he is a fit person to enter the house,

we give access to the word of praise or blame, the pleasant or painful impression; then after it has begun to act undesirably upon our thought, we hastily call in our discriminative faculty to stay the reaction. When a stone has been thrown into a lake, however, it is not easy to check the circles widening to the shore; so when the surface of our mind is once broken and disturbed, it is very difficult to tranquillize it. Even the discriminative faculty is crippled and functions haltingly. The time when its action is most effective is not at this tardy moment, to allay the disturbance; but at the very outset, to prevent it.

Discrimination should be the angel at the gate, with a flaming sword of wisdom, challenging every impression which seeks admission. None should be allowed to enter which has not come on an errand of primary importance. Nearly always it is the secondary things which destroy our balance. When large joys or sorrows overtake us, something heroic rises in us and we meet them in a big way. Perhaps it is because they cut deeper into our nature and rouse our Soul to action. However that may be, even a commonplace man sometimes proves himself a hero in the hour of a great disaster. It is under the repeated sting of petty irritations that our poise goes down—the little envies and jealousies and misunderstandings met in the daily round. But these should never be allowed to gain access to our mind. We should brush them aside as we would a gnat or a mosquito. We make ourselves vulnerable to them by our feverish concern for outer things. We take our desires too seriously, and we expend too much energy in weighing our rights and privileges against those of our neighbor. Our mind is kept in a state of constant agitation by these foolish calculations and it becomes easy for the least provocation to overturn it.

This is what is meant in the Bhagavad-Gita when it says that thinking on external things, attachment for them arises; from attachment is born a desire to have them. If our desire is thwarted, we grow angry; anger so clouds the mind that we lose our true measure of values; this disintegrates our power of discrimination and when that is gone we are ruined. Such is the actual order of events whenever we lose our balance, but it usually takes place so swiftly that we are unconscious of the successive stages. A resolute and voluntary reversal of the process will give us the practice necessary to establish a habit of calm stability. We must exercise our discriminative faculty without ceasing. No trivial or destructive thought should be given lodgment in our mind. Once within, it cannot fail to produce a reaction of like or dislike, desire or aversion, which not only will disturb our present balance, but through our memory will create a future menace to our serenity; for every time the impression rises, with it will rise the reaction of anger or distress and a fresh storm will pass over us.

But how to prevent the entrance of such disturbing thoughts? By meeting them with counteracting thoughts. Let the angel at the gate drive them away with his flaming sword. Does a complaining voice whisper: "Why must you always work while others play?" Let the discriminative faculty answer: "But do those who play seem really happier than those who work? Is there not more weary-heartedness among the idle than among the busy ones?" Or does the voice say: "If you only had more money, think how free and peaceful you would feel?" Again let discrimination give answer: "Are the rich invariably at peace? Do not desire and unrest appear to increase rather with increasing riches? And have there not been wise men

even who have chosen a life of voluntary poverty, believing it to be the way of peace and freedom?" If words of criticism or denunciation wound us, again let discrimination check the hot retort by the reminder: "You are what you are. Words cannot change you. If they are just, strive to profit by them; if unjust, they will surely die away, for Truth alone conquers, not untruth; and if you are faithful to the Truth, nothing can do you harm."

By such diligent practice of discrimination we shall gradually eliminate the false and illusory from our thought; and as we do so, our scale of values will adjust itself automatically. What once was all-important will dwindle into insignificance, while that which seemed of slight importance will grow real and vital to us. With this change in our standards, our selfish desires and attachments will diminish necessarily, and we shall find ourselves back at the starting point where the Gita warned us to guard our poise:—"Thinking of sense-objects, one becomes attached thereto." We return, however, fortified by a new measure of things and possessed of a new and invaluable habit of thought,—we have learned to look upon life from the vantage ground of the witness.

According to the Vedic Scriptures this is one of the profoundest lessons in attaining that serenity essential to all higher understanding. Only the witness can see clearly and judge calmly. The moment the sense of self-identity enters in, with it comes the twin sense of self-preservation and we are in the fight, swaying back and forth in grim struggle with some antagonist who threatens our rights or our possessions. This external world is a world of opposing dualities; and the continuous alternations of light and darkness, pleasure and pain, good and evil, desire and aversion, make of it a giant teeter-totter. So long as we cling

to it, we must go up and down with it. Good resolutions to maintain a calm demeanor will avail us little; each rise or dip of the plank inevitably sends us up or down. We must let go our hold and watch it. Only then can we exercise freely our power of discrimination and learn the lessons the world has to teach us.

This attitude of witness, however, does not imply deadness or indifference. The scientist is not indifferent to Nature as he studies it. Nor is there anyone in the battle more vitally concerned for it than the general observing its course from some nearby hill. His heart feels every forward or backward sweep of the line. Yet upon his self-detached calmness rests the safety and success of the seething mass of human lives fighting blindly in the field below. It is the witness only who can become a leader. The moment the least self-interest enters in, rivalry undermines authority and judgment. The Soul has been defined in Vedic Scriptures as "the Witness or Looker-on, the Sanctioner, the Sustainer;" and as we cultivate this attitude, we move closer to our Soul and can draw more freely on its power and wisdom. There is nothing which will so quickly bring us into conscious union with the Cosmic life and Cosmic will. The looker-on perceives clearly the two sides of every question and being himself in no way involved, he instinctively stands for the universal right. When we gain this impartial point of view, poise becomes an easy matter.

So long as our way of solution looms larger than the Cosmic way, we shall never be able to face a difficult problem without some degree of anxiety and uneasiness; for there will always be the fear that circumstances may go against us, and we shrink instinctively from sacrifice or defeat. Even our sincerest efforts at resignation will lack

conviction. But when our moral sense expands beyond the narrow boundaries of personality and we are able to consider the abstract right of the question, we shall be able to meet it without tense nerves, which so often give way and deprive us of all advantage. Whenever a trying situation arises, we should conserve our energies for the decisive moment, instead of wasting them on considering the various possible lines of action we may take to win our point. We should hold our mind firmly on the thought: "There is only one right way, right for me and for every one involved, and that is the Cosmic way. If I do not interfere, it will fulfill itself." Or as Swami Vivekananda graphically puts it: "Hands off! Who are you to do God's business?" Each time the mind reverts to its old habit of calculation and disquietude, we must draw it resolutely back to this one thought, the only safe one to hold whatever the problem before us. In this manner gradually we form a habit of moving according to the larger plan. In other words, we put ourselves on the side of God; and when He is with us, who can be against us?

It is not wise, however, to wait until we are in trouble to apply this new principle of action. By regular daily exercises in discrimination we must readjust our general outlook on life, so that intuitively the mind will classify all its experience according to a cosmic standard of values. This will eliminate by degrees the countless petty things which now harass us. Nor need we lose time in striving to free ourselves from our old personal scale of weights and measures. This too can be made to serve us. Even that lurking self-interest, which against our will still haunts us in the hours of important decisions, can be turned to account; for it requires very superficial analysis to prove that our greatest individual advantage lies in cooperating

with the Cosmic forces. We may defy them for a time. A certain elasticity in Nature makes this possible. But if we continue to push against them, we cannot escape failure, impoverished energies and eventual destruction.

When we lay hold on some fragment of creation, labelling it "ours," and try to put it where it does not belong, the tension after a while reaches a limit and the object snaps back into place, leaving us dazed and tingling with the sudden wrench. We call it loss, grief or misfortune; but in reality it is only a re-establishment of the Cosmic order. We cannot turn aside or check the normal working of the law; nor can we isolate ourselves from the universe. The simple laws of sanitation have taught us this. We have learned through them that lack of health or cleanliness anywhere is a menace to all alike. What is good or bad for one member of the social body is good or bad for all; and this principle extends beyond tribe or race or nation to the whole human family. There can be no real conflict of rights or benefits in this compactly built universe, where solidarity is a fundamental fact. As soon as this becomes plain to us, our self-interest shifts naturally to a new centre and we begin to identify our personal advantage with the universal good. This gives us a firm base on which to rest our poise, for we have allied ourselves with the Cosmic law of equilibrium.

Whenever the balance is disturbed in Nature, there is an immediate effort to restore it. All things tend to a state of equilibrium, and when we move in harmony with the Cosmic life, this law fulfills itself in us. To make this possible, however, we must not deal with the situation ourselves. If we do, we may thwart the working of the law. Our sole task is to bring ourselves into conscious union with the Cosmic forces. We do this by turning our attention

away from our own troubled state and fixing it on the Great Centre where all things attain a state of perfect balance. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that when a boy spins round and round alone, he soon grows dizzy and falls down; but let him hold to a strong post and he can turn at any speed without fear of falling. So when we fasten our thought on God, the world may turn us as it will, it cannot destroy the serenity of our mind or the calm poise of our outer bearing.

SELF-WILL AND GOD'S WILL

From the Letters of St. Francis de Sales

You ask what you should do to acquire a devout and peaceful mind? In truth it is no light query, but I will strive to answer you as well as I can. Devotion is really neither more nor less than a general inclination and readiness to do that which we know to be acceptable to God. It is that "free spirit," of which David spoke when he said, "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou hast set my heart at liberty." Ordinarily good people walk in God's way, but the devout run in it, and at length they almost fly therein. But further than this each individual must carefully obey such special points as concern his or her own vocation, without which he cannot attain salvation, though he were able to raise the dead. For instance, Bishops are commanded to feed their flocks, to teach, comfort, guide them; and were I to spend the whole week in prayer, or to fast all my life, I should still be lost if I neglect this duty. But further still, the virtue of devotion lies not merely in observing them, but in doing so willingly and readily. And there are several things to be considered with respect to such readiness.

First, that it is God's Will; and we may well strive to do His Will, for we came into this world for no other end. Alas! day by day we ask that His Will may be done, and yet when it comes to the doing, we find it so hard! We offer ourselves so often to God; we continually say, "Lord, I am Thine, I give Thee my heart," and when He accepts it, we are such cowards. How dare we call ourselves His, if we cannot shape our will to His?

Next, consider how gracious and kind all God's Commandments, whether general or particular, are. What makes them hard to you? Nothing save self-will, which strives to reign within you at any price, so that it rejects the very things when commanded, which it would perhaps seek were they forbidden. Among a myriad of delicious fruits, Eve chose the one which was forbidden, whereas probably but for the prohibition she would not have touched it. In a word, we want to serve God according to our own will, not according to His. So Saul was commanded to destroy all Amalek, and he did destroy all except that which he considered costly enough to offer as a sacrifice; but God declared that "to obey is better than sacrifice." God sends me to serve Souls actively, but I prefer contemplation. Well, the contemplative life is good, but not to the neglect of obedience. We must not choose for ourselves, we must will what God wills; and if He would have me serve Him in one thing, I must not prefer to serve Him in something else instead. God chose Saul to serve Him as a King and a Captain, whereas Saul chose to serve Him as a priest; —doubtless the latter office is the highest, but all the same that did not matter; what God wills is obedience.

God gave manna to the children of Israel, but they despised it, delicious as it was, and longed after the leeks and onions of Egypt. Even such is our wretched nature, which

always prefers its own will to that of God. But as we come to have less of self-will, we shall more easily obey His Will. It is well to remember that there is no vocation without its trials, bitterness, and weariness; and without hearty resignation to God's Will every one is tempted to wish he could change his troubles for those of other men.

Whence arises this universal dissatisfaction, save from our innate rebellion against constraint, and our perverse disposition to believe every one else better off than ourselves? Nevertheless, turn as we may, hither and thither, no one will be at rest who is not resigned. The fever-stricken patient finds no repose, he would for ever change his bed; but it is not the bed that is amiss, it is his own feverishness. He who is free from the fever of self-will is content with everything, so long as he is serving God. He does not care how God uses him, so long as His Holy Will is fulfilled. Our Lord bids us each renounce himself, that is, our own will. I wish for this or that, I could do better here or there; all this is temptation. Our Lord knows perfectly what He is doing: let us follow His Will, and abide where He has placed us.

Would to God that we could pay but little heed to the road we tread, rather fixing our eyes on Him Who leads us, and on the blessed country towards which we travel! What does it signify whether we pass through desert places or pleasant fields, so long as God is with us and we reach Paradise? Believe me, you would better forget your pain as much as possible, and if you feel it, at all events do not dwell upon it; the sight will cause you more fear than the feeling causes pain.

When you have prayed that God would comfort you, if He does not will so to do, cease to seek it, but gird yourself up to work out your salvation on the Cross as though

you were never to come down thence, never again to live in a clear untroubled atmosphere. What would you have? We must speak with God amid the storm and the whirlwind; we must see Him in the burning bush; and in order to do this, we must indeed, like Moses, put our shoes from off our feet and make a hearty abnegation of our will and affections.

Make friends with your trials, as though you were always to live together; and you will see that when you cease to take thought for your own deliverance, God will take thought of it for you; and when you cease to help yourself eagerly, He will help you.

Be firm, I pray you. Let nothing move you. It is night as yet, but the day is coming, and will not tarry. Meanwhile let us follow David, "Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and praise the Lord." Let us bless Him with all our heart, and entreat Him to be our guide, our vessel, our haven.

You would fain have nothing but spring and summer, but there must be vicissitudes in the interior life as well as in that which is external. Only in Heaven shall we find perpetual spring as to beauty, perpetual summer in love, perpetual autumn in fulfillment of desire. There will be no winter there; but here winter is necessary that we may practise self-abnegation, and a thousand minor graces which spring forth in the time of barrenness. Let us go on steadily, though slowly; so long as our affections are firm and good, we shall not go wrong.

When some trifle disturbs your mind, you are vexed because of it and afraid. This fear weakens your mind and makes it limp, sad and unsteady; it displeases you, and so begets another fear lest the first be wrong, and thus you get more and more confused. You fear being afraid, and

then you are afraid of fearing; you are vexed at the vexation, and then you are vexed at having been vexed. I have seen people in the same way get into a passion, and then be angry because they had lost their temper; just like the circles on water when one throws in a stone, one spreading beyond the other without end. The remedy is not to be so susceptible. Put aside all these entanglements, do not dwell upon them; laugh at them, distract your attention by active employment. It is a duty to bear with other people, but first of all we must learn to bear with ourselves, and to have patience with our own imperfection.

Be careful to preserve your heart in peace and tranquillity; let the waves and storms beat about your bark, without fear, for God is there, and consequently salvation. I know that little vexations are more trying, through their multiplicity and their importunity, than greater things; home troubles harder to bear than such as come from without; but I also know that the victory over such is often more acceptable to God than many other victories which have a greater show of merit in the world's eye. . . . Be as cheerful as you can in well-doing; there is a double grace in good actions when they are done cheerfully and brightly.

Serve Him as He wills,—some day you will find Him doing all and more than you can ask.

Difficulties are the things that show what men are. For the future, on any difficulty, remember that God, like a master of exercise, has engaged you with a rough antagonist. For what end? That you may be a conqueror like one in the Olympic Games, and it cannot be without toil.

—*Epictetus.*

God sends upon you at certain times breathings of His grace, be prepared for them. —*Saying of Mohammed.*

REPORT

Swami Paramananda arrived in Boston on the 13th of May. He came directly from California, breaking his journey only once—at Cincinnati, where he delivered a lecture at the New Thought Temple before an audience of 500 people. His season in Los Angeles was the most successful that he has yet had. Large numbers gathered round him and are still carrying on the work of the Centre there with enthusiasm, eagerly awaiting his return. A prominent member writes of the Swami's visit: "His influence also touched the smaller cities. Santa Barbara claimed him, Pasadena, Long Beach. The well-known author, Mrs. Marion Craig Wentworth, who arranged his lectures two years ago at Santa Barbara, again invited him; but this time, as her own home was rented, Mr. Lungren's spacious and beautiful studio in Mission Canyon was placed at his disposal. Its lovely woodland setting, its distinctive atmosphere and the quality of the people attracted, all created the most sympathetic surroundings for the Swami. He spoke there every Friday, making the journey over the old Camino Real or royal highway of the early Mission fathers, which winds through rainbow tinted hills and along the sea.

"Pasadena provided the Swami with an ample hall and attentive audiences. Long Beach was surprisingly enthusiastic, people flocking each week to the airy sunparlor of the Arlington Hotel. It was said that no other meetings held in the same place had ever drawn such numbers. So much interest was manifested everywhere, such real yearning, that the Swami was induced to extend his stay. New workers came forward with eager spirit and much was done to strengthen the Los Angeles Centre.

"A unique incident of the Swami's visit was a ceremony in commemoration of the birthday of Lord Buddha held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thein, two earnest Burmese members. The open court, around which their home is built, was utilized for the Service. It was transformed into a bit of Burma by the magic of wild grasses, bamboo, bright colored ribbons, gay lanterns and lotus-shaped lamp shades. At the front, against the flag pole, like a white flame stood an immaculate yucca palm, tall and aspiring, a 'candle of the Lord' as the Indians call it. In the centre of the court a miniature fountain played and at the rear the altar was placed. This the Swami decorated with roses and peacock feathers. Offerings of fruit were placed before an ancient figure of Buddha seated amid the roses. This Buddha is the cherished possession of Miss Ruth St. Denis. Many people came. The Swami conducted the Service with great simplicity and dignity. His appreciation of Lord Buddha touched the universal spirit in all hearts by its tenderness and tolerance. Mr. Jisoji, a priest of the Buddhist Temple in Los Angeles, was called upon by the Swami to say a few words, as was Mrs. Walton, who dramatized the 'Light of Asia' given at Krotona last year with great success. The host and hostess in native dress fairly glowed with happiness and good will as they passed Burmese tea and cake to their guests, who were in no haste to depart from this fragment of the real East in a Western landscape.

"The outcome of the Swami's sojourn among us has been, for those of us who have been blessed for the first time by his presence, a new vision and a holy purpose; for the older workers, renewed consecration; and for the people at large, a true benediction."

The Swami will remain in Boston for the present.

THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East"
Ezekiel.

"Light shall come again from the East"
Tyndall.

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REALIZATION

Lecture by Swami Paramananda

There are three main points in the Vedic teaching: discrimination, renunciation, and realization. First we investigate and try to distinguish the real from the unreal, then we give up the unreal, and this enables us to gain direct vision of the real. All religious truths are based on these three principles. The first step is to seek, and seeking is a state of struggle. So long as we are seeking, always there will be restlessness in our heart; but as the result of our seeking there will come a time of finding and that is a state of inexpressible joy. In our ordinary life if we lose something we care for and after long searching find it again, there follows a great sense of relief; and it is the same with the human Soul. When striving Souls come face to face with that which they have been seeking, it seems to them that they have attained the purpose of their existence.

The knowledge thus gained, however, is not the ordinary knowledge which can be gained from books. In the Upanishads we read that there are two kinds of knowledge. One deals with what is known as book-knowledge—art, poetry, astronomy, the various Scriptures; these are all classified as *Apara-Vidya* or secondary knowledge. Then there is another kind known as *Para-Vidya* or Supreme

knowledge, which reveals to us the existence of the Infinite and the Immortal Self. By knowing That, everything else becomes known. But this knowledge cannot be given to another as we give a tangible object; it comes through the unfoldment of the spiritual nature. It is not something which we have not now, but which we shall possess sometime in the future; it is something we already have within us. We find it by unveiling; and this unveiling is done through the process of discrimination. We are placed in this world of diversity where there is no unalloyed happiness or unmixed misery; and we must have intelligence, sincerity and the power of perception in order to distinguish what is real from what is only apparent. We must also have the strength to follow the real.

Our Soul is always hungering for something. So long as we are not aware of our spiritual consciousness, we identify this longing with our physical desires or mental impulses and try to satisfy them; but the real root of all this hunger is the one great desire to know our true being and our unity with the Absolute; in other words, to realize. Why does so much skepticism exist regarding spiritual things? Because we are so often asked to believe blindly; but we cannot have true faith until we gain direct proof, and direct proof comes only through individual seeking and finding. Many people imagine that direct perception is possible only for certain chosen beings—not for ordinary mortals, who being unable themselves to realize, must accept the words of these great Ones. But although it is true that we learn to believe in spiritual things when we hear of them through reliable sources, we cannot become absolutely convinced of their existence until we ourselves have direct vision of them. That is the test of religion. We must prove all things for ourselves directly. What has

been known by any one can be known by all; and if there is any reality, each one of us must find it out for himself. When the individual comes into direct contact with the Infinite Spirit, all doubts vanish forever, all darkness ceases to exist, the fetters of Karma break and freedom is attained.

In order to gain this realization, two methods are given. One is self-denial—"Not I, not I, but Thou;" "Not my will, but Thine be done." Through our individual investigation we discover that the little self, combined with the bodily consciousness, rises as an enemy and holds us back. Therefore as devotees we are told that if we would get rid of this ego which constantly gives rise to delusion, depression and all other imperfections, we must pray earnestly and worship an Ideal with perfect singleness of heart. Then there is another method which philosophers take; this is to reach the Ultimate Being through discrimination:—"Not this, not this. This is not what I am seeking. I am not this body, I am not this mind. My whole strength is not based on sense perception. I am not this limited intelligence. I am That which is all-pervading, infinite, undying and eternal." These two methods seem like opposites, but they are not. The devotee is trying to rid himself of the limited sense of self-consciousness by laying himself at the feet of his Ideal; and the philosopher is trying to break the bondage of the little ego by developing the consciousness of the universal ego. Both are striving for the same end and both will reach the same Ultimate Goal, where all things become one.

This realization is the aim of every human being. "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." "Know thy Self." "Know that thou art That." These are the watchwords of all the Great Teachers of

the world and of all the great Scriptures. We must know directly. Why do we often waver in our faith? We start out bravely, then some one comes and stirs a ripple of doubt in our mind and we falter. Why? Because we are not strong in our spiritual perception. We have only heard or read about the higher realities. We have not known them directly. Book knowledge has its value in this world; it gives us information which stimulates our desire to know; but true knowledge must be based on realization, not on mere intellectual acceptance. Theoretical knowledge cannot give us unfaltering strength.

Study the lives of the Great Saviours. Their teaching began after realization. First they proved to themselves the reality of God and Truth; then being armed with spiritual realization, their faith was unwavering. No matter how much the world stood in opposition, they remained undaunted. This is the case with us too in regard to our experiences in this world. When we know a thing by actual experience, we can stand up and fight for it. We must have the same definite knowledge of spiritual Truth before we can become truly religious. Until we possess such knowledge, we are dogmatic and quarrelsome, supporting one side and denouncing the other. We cannot reach God in that way. We all belong equally to Him, but the consciousness of our relationship with Him must be unfolded within our own Soul.

We talk of peace, of love and tolerance; but these things cannot be attained by mere theories. The world at present is full of theories, but there is little actual knowledge; that is the difficulty. What we want is not to fill our brains with ideas, but to fill our hearts with realization. We want to know, because only direct perception will satisfy our Soul. The sages have said again and again: "Truth can

never be attained by mere hearing or reading or through intellectual discussion; each one must find it for himself through consecration." How much are we doing in that direction? We are doing a great deal to find something tangible for our physical happiness; but are we trying to find something tangible for our Soul happiness? When the first difficulty arises in our path we are inclined to give up, declaring the spiritual life impossible. But how many difficulties do we overcome to gratify our desires in the material world! Should we not show the same energy in overcoming our spiritual difficulties?

Each Soul must strive, and this striving is the beginning of spiritual consciousness. There can be no loss in our effort. Even if we do not gain full realization in this life, it will not fail to bring us a certain degree of spiritual unfoldment. All that we need is sincere seeking, and some protection; for in the beginning if we mingle with people of a doubting, materialistic nature, it is bound to influence us. As Sri Ramakrishna says: "When a tree is young, it needs a hedge about it to keep the cows and goats from eating it up; but when it has grown large, it can give shade and shelter to those same cows and goats." Similarly, when we start on the spiritual path, our mind needs to be protected from worldly influences. We must guard it by constantly exercising discrimination and rejecting whatever is weakening. This is what renunciation means. It is not that we are to give up anything which is good or wholesome for us. We have only to give up that which brings a weakening reaction and blocks our spiritual consciousness. If we follow these principles in our daily life, realization is bound to come.

It is not possible for every one to devote himself exclusively to contemplation, but every one can use discrim-

ination. And when we are able to eliminate the non-essential from our life, we cut short our journey. We also strengthen our character. Realization is a thing which always makes us strong. He who knows becomes cheerful and fearless. Why should he fear? He understands the difference between body and Soul; between what is dying and what is undying. And he is cheerful because he has an absolute feeling of security. There is no more uncertainty in his mind. This is what realization means—no more doubting, no more questioning, but we know about God as we know about our friends or about tangible things. We must strive with our whole heart to acquire this state of knowing and being. It can be cultivated in time if we persist with steadfast devotion and unfailing courage. For no one is it impossible.

Our present state of consciousness we have cultivated through certain habits and association. But spiritual consciousness has remained apart from our life. Very seldom do we hear about it, very rarely do we read or think about it; so it seems like something foreign to us. But it can be made a part of our being. It is a matter of habit, and we form the habit by our daily thinking and living. If we live our life on a material basis, then spiritual ideals must seem distant; but when we seek them, they come very near. When we have direct proof of them, then nothing can daunt us. We do not know real good fortune until we come face to face with Divinity. And the only way we can gain access to God is through yearning. Whole-hearted yearning cuts a way through solid rock. It makes the most impossible possible. When our inner being cries out for God as a hungry man for food, or a thirsty man for water, then He will come; and the inner shrine of knowledge, which is now locked to us, will open.

HYMN TO THE GREAT GOD

By Swami Vivekananda

(Translated from the Sanskrit)

Salutation to The Great God!
Whose glory is
Immeasurable! Who resembles the sky
In clearness. From Whom come
The phenomena of all creation,
The preservation and dissolution
of this universe.
May the devotion,
The burning devotion of this my life
Be given to Him alone, to The Great God,
The Transcendent Lord of all;

Whose over-ruling is established
In the uttermost annihilation of delusion;
Whose most surpassing love, made manifest,
Has crowned Him with a name above all names,
The name of Mahadeva, The Great God!
Whose warm embrace, of Love personified,
Displays the universe within man's heart;
His manifestation infinite
Is but a semblance and a passing show;

In which the tempest of the whole past blows,
Past *Samskaras* (impressions), stirring the energies
With violence, like water lashed to waves;
In which the dual consciousness of "I" and "Thou"
Plays on;—
I salute that mind unstable,
Centred in Mahadev, the abode of calm!

Where the ideas of parent and produced,
Purified thoughts and endless varied forms,
Merge in The Real One; where the existence ends
Of such conceptions as "within," "without"—
The wind of modification being stilled;
That Hara I worship, the suppression
Of movements of the mind. Mahadev I hail!

From Whom all gloom and darkness have dispersed;
That radiant Light, white, beautiful
As bloom of lotus white is beautiful;
Whose laughter loud sheds knowledge luminous;
Who, by undivided meditation,
Is realized in the self-controlled heart;
May the Lordly Swan of the limpid lake
Of my mind guard me, prostrate before Him!

Him, the Master-remover of evil,
Who, Himself, bears the dark stain! Whose censure
The daughter of Daksha could not accept;
Who like the charming water-lily white
Is beautiful; Who is ready ever
To part with life for other's good; Whose gaze
Is on the humble fixed; Whose neck is blue
With the poison swallowed;—
Him we salute!

(Note: Mahadeva or The Great God is the third person of the Vedic Trinity, which consists of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the transformer. He represents the aspect of Deity especially invoked by those who are striving to transcend the play of *Maya* and attain ultimate realization. In Him all diversity is gathered up in unity, the waves of the mind grow still, and the vision of

absolute oneness is attained. He laughs at man's childish attachment to the unreal and thus rouses him to seek and find the Real. The "Lordly Swan" is the Soul. The daughter of Daksha is Uma, who after hearing her father denounce her heavenly consort, Shiva, gave up her body. Shiva is always depicted with a dark blue neck, because it is said that out of His great love He swallows all the poison of the world in order to save the struggling children of earth.)

WHAT IS MAYA?

By Sister Devamata

Probably no part of Indian teaching is so difficult for the Western mind to grasp as the Vedic conception of *Maya.* Interpreted usually as delusion, illusion, unreality, it would seem to reduce creation to an illusive dream. The idea at once calls out a protest from the practical man, accustomed to believe implicitly in the testimony of his five senses. What is there evasive or dreamlike in these solid objects which daily we see and taste and touch, he asks defiantly. The fault lies, not with the fact, but with its definition. *Maya* does not mean illusion; it means relativity. Everything in the manifested universe exists in relation to something else. It has no independent existence or independent characteristics. The outline which marks off one form does not belong to it, any more than to the contiguous forms which it also defines. It is only a dividing line. If the object on one side changes shape, the form on the other side must be equally modified; that in turn alters the neighboring form; so the change is transmitted on and on throughout creation. And since there is always change somewhere, it follows that there must always be change everywhere; that is, absolute immobility

nowhere. Take it in our own physical organism. Is the condition of our body ever static even for a second? If it were, in that second it would be dead; for on the material plane life and motion are synonymous; and motion means constant variation in temperature, size, weight and outline. The variations may be too minute to register, but they are none the less actual. This ceaseless alteration in the world of form is one of the fundamental qualities of *Maya.*

What is true of body is more intensely true of mind. So fluid and susceptible is our thought that we can rarely determine what is ours and what our neighbor's. We think out some special style of dress and find the design in every fashion plate; we evolve a new scheme and meet a dozen people with the same idea. Thoughts move back and forth across our mind unbidden and unexplained. Even in the silence of some far mountain cave the world-thought beats upon us, transforming the stillness into a noisy thoroughfare. At last we learn that thoughts cannot be classified as "mine" and "others'," but as human and Divine. Then we abandon the fruitless struggle to better our mixed human thought; and emptying the mind of self-thought, we pray that it may be wholly filled with God-thought.

In the realm of secular knowledge the ban of relativity defeats our most resolute efforts at precision and conclusive demonstration. Psychology teaches that knowledge is acquired through association of ideas. A new experience comes to us. The mind takes it up and compares it with previous experiences. If it finds others of like nature stored in the memory, it classes the new one in the same group, gives it a name and claims to know it. But what does it know about it? Only its relation to other things; nothing of it in itself. Thus the chemist discovers through experi-

ment that one substance when mixed with another will produce a certain precipitate; but he cannot give the reason, because he is unacquainted with the real nature of any of the substances involved. He is able to report what they do, but not what they are. The physicist in his turn may compile an elaborate record of natural events, but he is powerless to lay his hand on the final cause of them. In every branch of scientific investigation we hear the same frank admission, that the ultimate facts of Nature lie beyond our power to know or prove. We may observe what happens when objects or elements enter into relationship, but the final "why" is hidden behind the floating mists of *Maya*.

In reality, through association of ideas we can never gain ultimate knowledge, because each new contact gives rise to a new modification. Therefore the unfamiliar object which we are studying and the objects with which we are comparing it are none of them at any time in their real, unmodified state. They are all constantly changing in relation to each new association. Take for example some color. We place it beside a pronounced blue and it looks purple; we put it beside purple and it looks blue; by the side of another shade it will take on a reddish tone; by still another it will appear black. What color shall we call it? And what is the color of that with which we compare it? How is it possible to have any fixed scale of colors by which to go? In the same way, who can determine what is beauty or what is ugliness? A shade which is exquisite in one combination of color appears garrish in another; a costume which is charming on one person loses all its grace of line on some one else; a building which is a triumph of architectural beauty in one setting becomes an offense to the eye in other surroundings.

Oriental music jars on Western ears. Occidental music sounds crude and noisy to the Oriental. Try as we may to coordinate and generalize, we cannot find a unit on which to base a world-ideal of beauty.

In the phenomenal world there can be no true generalization anywhere; for among all the objects or concepts which we gather into one group under a generic name, not any one is exactly like any other. Perfect repetition is not to be found in Nature. Have we ever seen any two temperaments or faces or objects exactly alike? The untrained observer may imagine that he perceives identity, but the expert will always detect some infinitesimal variation. We know from our own futile attempts to make two sides of any thing absolutely even, how impossible it is to produce undeviating sameness. This endless divergence or diversity which characterizes the external universe constitutes another fundamental quality of *Maya*.

The subtler the substance, the greater also is the opportunity for variation. In gross forms an approximate identity may be achieved; but when we pass to the more mobile sphere of thought, it becomes impossible. In the realm of ideas the variations are limitless. No two persons can form precisely the same concept. The same word cannot mean the same thing to any two minds. There is, therefore, no chance of arriving at a permanent settlement through discussion. A temporary agreement may be reached, but it is at best an armistice. Every word spoken creates a new variation, which means a new difference to settle. Exact definition of terms will not allay the difficulty, for each will interpret the definition according to his specific experience. Thus the term "hot" will convey a widely different picture to an inhabitant of India and a dweller in the polar regions. There is but one place where

perfect understanding can be attained and that is in the silence of the higher consciousness, where thought-forms lose their peculiar personal bent and become pure abstract ideas.

This strong individualization in Nature, added to the fluid character of manifested life, makes it impossible to gain a sense of certitude in anything. Before we have firmly established ourselves in one position, the relation of things has changed and we are adrift again. Thus the working hypothesis of today is tomorrow a discarded theory. Every new and finer instrument reveals new variations which discount all past conclusions. Feeling the need of a firm foundation for research, science has been forced to capitulate to Nature, accepting her boundary lines and remaining merely a prisoner at large within them. It assumes a theoretical certitude somewhere and builds its subsequent investigations on that.

When we turn to ethics, do we find any greater uniformity? All men may have a sense of right and wrong, but their conception of what is right or wrong varies with every race and country, even with every individual. The ideal of duty has countless differences. Each community, each family, has its own standard and tradition. Time, place and circumstance also enter in as modifying factors. What is right for a person in one position may be wrong for him in another; what is commended in a child is condemned in a man; what is permissible in the country is unlawful in the city. The intricacies of our legal statutes show how impossible it is to have a fixed standard of judgment; and it is these never-ending variations in circumstance and interpretation which open the way to ceaseless litigation and the frequent defeat of justice.

How is it possible moreover to have any uniformity in

the moral code, when the idea of good and evil on which it rests is wholly relative? Can we say that anything is absolutely good or absolutely evil? A soldier who sheaths his sword and turns the other cheek is a deserter. The man in private life who does it is a saint. Under one condition killing is heroism, under another it is crime. To a flooded district a heavy rain is a fresh calamity, to a drought-stricken land it represents rescue from starvation. Things are good or evil in relation to other things, not in their own nature. It is this inevitable relativity which balks all the noblest efforts of the reformer or the peace-maker. When he has fully adjusted the relation between two factors in a problem, a third one enters, the proportion is at once destroyed and the work is to be done over. A new act of legislation corrects some wrong; but it creates a new set of relationships in the social order, some of which will be good and others evil.

Even in our daily experience how quickly a change of mood or circumstance will transform good into evil or evil into good. At one instant we are cold and wrap ourselves in furs; at the next we are warm and they become an oppressive burden. Today we are tired and crave solitude; tomorrow that same solitude seems loneliness. What made us happy a year ago, at present wearies us; while what seemed then unbearable misfortune, we now regard as a blessing. This kaleidoscopic interblending of light and shadow, good and evil, happiness and misery, is another essential characteristic of *Maya*.

Through all this never-ceasing change and endless diversity, however, perfect order and consistency are apparent. This is definite proof that the world about us is not wholly dream or phantasm. Where all things move with unfailing regularity, there must be some fixity and reality. *Maya*

then is not an illusion. It is the play of the Infinite in finite fragments, the pure white light broken into the multicolored rays of the spectrum. There could be no rays without the white light, hence their separate existence is illusory; but in relation to the basic light it is vital and inevitable. The very existence of the white light presupposes the existence of the colors of the spectrum, as the various colors presuppose the existence of the white light. That is the background on which alone they can manifest. So God or Ultimate Reality is the background of all created things. And since He is Infinite, there must be infinite variation in His modes of expression. No true artist ever repeats the same scheme of color or composition. No true musician ever carries the same melody from one symphony to another. An inexhaustible flow of originality in idea and expression is the sign of genius.

Diversity, however, apart from unity is mere confusion; bound to it, it becomes the source of constant joy and loveliness. In relation to the whole, every created thing has its special place and value. Discord and harmony, pain and pleasure, darkness and light, all contribute their share towards the universal beauty. The jar and clash come in relating things to one another, or to ourselves; for in no way does *Maya* so easily entrap us as by leading us to judge life and experience by personal rather than by universal standards. Through this mistaken habit each human being continually weaves a *Maya* of his own, from which again he must free himself. But why need he tear the net? Because it is the cause of all his misery. He does not cling to it, but to what he believes it to be. No one loves uncertainty. Do we not often hear: "Better the worst than this suspense?" No one loves instability. Does not the thought "It may not last" pour drops of wormwood

into the sweetest cup of happiness? No one loves evasion; yet whenever we would lay our hands on Truth, does it not slip from our grasp? No one loves defeat; but however high we climb, are there not always heights beyond? On the plane of matter never can there be a satisfied ambition, for what is done never satisfies. It merely reveals fresh possibilities of achievement.

The Soul of man demands an absolute and will not rest until it has broken the entangling web of relativity which now holds it prisoner. This web is woven of a three-fold thread—the relation of things to one another, their relation to the individual consciousness, and their relation to the Cosmic Being. The first two must be illusory and unreal; because what has no independent existence cannot enter into independent relationships. Could two waves be related apart from the ocean? Taken from it, they would cease to exist. What would remain to relate? There can be but one real relationship and that is with God. When we try with all our heart to establish that, we move towards Reality and enter into true relation with all things. This is why we are taught to seek His Kingdom first. Seeking earnestly, we shall come to perceive ourselves and the whole created universe living and moving in Him alone; then the last thread of *Maya's* web will snap; all sense of instability will drop away; and we shall see this world of incessant change and relativity transfigured by the all-pervading presence of the Unchangeable, the Eternal and the Real.

The Lord supports all this together, the perishable and the imperishable. By meditating on Him, by fixing the heart on Him, by becoming one with Him, there is cessation of all illusion. —*Svetasvatara-Upanishad.*

WHAT CAN WE OFFER TO GOD?

By the Neoplatonist Hierocles, 5th Century

(From his commentary on the Golden Verses of Pythagoras)

Whatever we love, we imitate as much as we can; and the honor we offer to Him who has no need of any thing consists in receiving the good things He offers us. For thou dost not honor God by giving Him anything, but by rendering thyself worthy to receive from Him; and as the Pythagoreans say: "Thou wilt honor God perfectly if thou behave thyself so that thy Soul may become His Image." Every man who honors God by gifts, as a Being that has need of them, falls unthinkingly into the error of believing himself greater and more powerful than God. Even the magnificence of gifts and of offerings is no honor to God, unless a heart truly penitent offer them. For the gifts and the victims of fools are only fuel for the flames, and their offerings but a bait for the sacrilegious. But a mind truly penitent and sufficiently strengthened and confirmed in love, unites itself to God; and it is of necessity that the like should have a tendency to its like. For this reason it is said that the wise man is the only sacrificer, that he alone is the friend of God, and only knows how to pray. For he alone knows how to honor, who offers himself first as a pure sacrifice, who renders his Soul the Image of God, and who prepares his mind as a temple worthy to receive the Divine Light.

Every man who thinks to honor God in any other manner, and not by himself and by the thoughts of his heart, makes this honor consist in a useless profusion of exterior goods; and endeavors to acquit himself of this duty towards God, not by offering Him holiness and virtue, but by giving Him temporal and perishable goods. A man having immolated a hecatomb without any sentiments of piety, enquired

of the God how he accepted his sacrifice; the God answered him thus: "The barley-cake alone that the famous Hermioneus offered was more acceptable to me." Thereby giving us to know that He preferred before that magnificence even the meanest offering, because its worth was enhanced by the sentiments of true piety. And with piety everything is agreeable to God, without it nothing can please Him. . . .

Now the only things profitable to the Soul are virtue and truth. Thou wilt therefore be out of the reach of all frauds and of all deceits, if, knowing thine own Essence, what it is and Whom it resembles, thou always take all possible care to preserve that Likeness. Thou wilt regard everything that can efface or change it as the greatest misfortune that can happen to thee, and as the greatest loss thou canst undergo. There is nothing but what is not profitable for thee that can make thee lose this Divine Likeness. Seeing, therefore, whatever keeps up this Likeness in us must be for our advantage, I would fain know what offer can be made to us of value and moment enough to make us renounce so Divine a good.

Are the riches that may be promised us, or those we may be threatened shall be taken from us, of equal concern? We are taught by the dictates of sound Reason how we ought to receive riches, and how to part with them. Besides we know the inconstancy and the uncertainty of all these transitory goods, for though I should not lose them in this or that manner, but defend them bravely against tyranny and usurpation, may they not be taken from me by a thief? May I not lose them by shipwreck? And should I keep them safe from robbers and from the perils of the sea, how many other ways are there for losing them? . . .

The main stress and extent, therefore, of what depends

on us and is in our power, appears chiefly in this: that we can judge aright of the things that depend not on us, and that we need not suffer ourselves to be deprived of the power of our free will by an inordinate affection for frail and perishable things.

THE TEAR OF REPENTANCE

A Mediaeval Legend

There was in Egypt a rich and powerful knight who lived in great ease and splendor, never attending mass, nor yet making confession of his sins. Many friends had he because of his high estate, the which by their worldly conversation and vain flattery turned his thought away from God. But among them there was one who grieved sadly that his comrade should thus neglect the sacrament of penance; and meeting him on a certain Good Friday, he sought to direct his mind towards heavenly things.

"Messire," he said, "I marvel much that you can bear to look upon your ill-doing, which is so displeasing to God and the Blessed Virgin; for, in that you confess yourself never, your sins go alway with you, the which make a heavy burden for any man to bear alone. Easter Day approaches, when all true Christians must put themselves in a state of grace. I do beseech you therefore, brother, that you also seek to be absolved. Let us go to that saintly hermit who lives nearby on the mountain and ask his holy counsel."

The knight was moved by these earnest words to a mindfulness of his ungodly life and answered right eagerly:

"You speak wisely. Gladly will I go, for now my sins press upon me and I would ease my conscience by a speedy confession of them."

Together they climbed the steep harsh rocks on which

the hermit dwelt, spending his nights and days in humble supplication for the sins of men. With exceeding joy he bade the fair knight welcome and listened to the long confession of his evil-doing. When all was said, he spake thus to him:

"Dear brother, be of glad heart, for this day you shall be cleansed of all your sins. Soon you will feel the love of God, because of the holy penance which will be layed upon you."

At this the knight grew troubled, for long years of soft living had ill prepared him to endure discipline or hardship. "Alas, my father," he answered, "in the matter of penance I know not how it may be. I can in no wise bear a harsh one. I was bred in great ease, so I must have a penance which I can do without too much labor, else will I be cast down and thrown back into my old habit of sinning."

"Do not fear, brother," replied the hermit. "You shall have so light a one that none could refuse it. Mark well that which now I tell you. Take this costrel, go down to the stream that is below, and there fill it to the brim with water. When you have done so and brought it to me again, you shall be shriven of all your sins. But take heed that you sin no more."

"So will I do right gladly," said the knight, rejoicing that the penance layed upon him was so light and quickly done. He took the costrel, which was a vessel made in the fashion of a little flask, and ran with all speed to the stream. Stooping from the bank he plunged the costrel again and again into the swiftly flowing water, but not one drop would enter. Always the waters parted and flowed by on either side.

Seeing the costrel empty, he grew wrathful, believing that there was witchcraft; then within him rose the

knightly spirit which scorns defeat, and he swore that he would not return to the hermit till his flask was filled and his penance done. So did he depart from the place, heavy of heart and questioning if ever he would achieve his quest. A solitary penitent he wandered through the land, sometimes doubting, sometimes filled with deep contrition. And wherever he found a spring or streamlet, he would hurry to its brink and dip his costrel, but still no water entered.

Weeks passed, then months. His body now was wasted, his garments ragged, his hair matted and unkempt. Hungry and tired, by rain and wind, by cold and frost or dust and heat, he pushed on afoot, companionless, bearing his empty flask. The measure of his shortcomings weighed upon him. He sorrowed that he had offended God, and then at other times, that he had renounced his life of ease. "Was ever knight so luckless?" he cried. "Yet if in the end I accomplish my quest, it will not have been vain; for then shall I be acceptable to God and great blessedness will be mine. Let me wander on in patience therefore, since by my own ill-doing has this come upon me."

Thus it happened that he found himself one winter's day in a dark and lonely forest. He was shivering and footsore, with not one drop of water in his costrel. But his heart had grown gentle through much pain and loneliness and he called aloud: "Dear Lady, Most Glorious Virgin, bitterly have I offended Thee and Thy Blessed Son; yet wilt Thou not pray for me? I stand in great need of Thy compassion. If Thou wilt intercede for me, then have I hope; for to Thine intercession God is never deaf; but by my own grace, I know right surely, I shall never reach the end of all my sufferings, since full well have I deserved them."

The Blessed Mary heard his humble prayer and had

pity on this sorrowing knight, who did wander solitary through the world because he had not the companionship of God. So She appeared before him in the darkness of the forest and counselled him to return to the hermit, humbly confess the failure of his quest and beg anew his help. The knight set out with joy and climbed once more the rocky heights where the hermit still prayed for him and all struggling sinners. The good man gave him loving welcome, but as a stranger; little divined he that this ragged and starving pilgrim was the fair knight of other days. Only when his eyes fell upon the empty costrel, did he surmise who it might be. Then with clasped hands he knelt and gave thanks to Jesus and His Holy Mother that this long absent penitent had returned in safety. The knight then told him simply of all his hapless quest; and as the hermit listened, his joy grew yet greater.

"Be not disheartened, Messire," he said to him. "By these griefs have you gained great merit. Now are you quit of all your sins, because of this heavy penance you have borne. Leave now your costrel and I will give you another penance which will end all your griefs."

"Not so, good father," was the knight's quick rejoinder, "that cannot be. I may not leave a quest which is not ended; and I doubt not God will by His grace enable me to accomplish it, when my penance has become pleasing in His sight. Therefore, when I have rested and listened to your wise admonishing, I will commend me to the Blessed Mary's guidance and go forth again into the world."

For this the hermit praised God still more heartily and he spoke many soothing words unto the knight for his encouragement. So did the time pass until the hour when the penitent must set out once more upon the road. The hermit at his going wept greatly, being full of pity; and

the knight, too, wept because of the grief he felt at his own unworthiness. The costrel was still slung about him, and it so happened that one of these tears of devout contrition fell into it, and so large did it grow that it filled the costrel to the brim. When the knight perceived the miracle, he fell upon the ground, praising God for His exceeding mercy; and to his prayers of thanksgiving were joined those of the happy hermit.

Then the hermit took from him the costrel, which now was full, saying:

"Go and set yourself to well-doing in remembrance of the grace that our Lord hath here shown you; for unto the tear of your repentance He hath added the ocean of His Love."

REPORT

Swami Paramananda gave his eighth annual dinner to the students and friends of The Vedanta Centre of Boston on the evening of June 26th. The Swami himself prepared the entire dinner and by a happy coincidence the Menu Card at each place contained just eight different dishes, for which the Swami had found appropriate names. Some, to pique the curiosity, were in Bengalee, such as *Polow Chamatkar* (full of wonderful surprises); others had a flavor of philosophy in them—"Curry Unity in Variety," for example. There were seventy-five guests, seated at two long tables linked at one end by a cross table where the Swami served. Bunches of fragrant June roses were placed at frequent intervals along the tables and were distributed to the guests afterwards. The rooms also were converted into a green arbor with palms, laurel branches and masses of cut flowers.

It was an interesting fact that the gathering included

members from every centre of the Swami's activities. One had come all the way from Los Angeles to be present. There were three from Washington, and three from Louisville; while one of the most ardent of the Cincinnati workers had promised to be here, but was forced to change his plans. One friend had come from Garrison on the Hudson; another from Scarsdale, N. Y.; still another from Philadelphia; while others had returned from various points in New England. Many nationalities also were represented, but all sense of difference and strangeness melted away under the radiant warmth of the Swami's loving hospitality.

At the close of the dinner the Swami spoke words of friendly welcome, at the same time warning the Boston members that the demands for Vedanta teaching were increasing rapidly all over the country and that they must be alert and responsive if they wished to keep the Centre here. Mrs. Walton then gave a brief account of the Swami's recent season in Southern California; Mrs. Thurber told something of his success in New York when he lectured at St. Mark's in-the-Bouwerie; Miss Puddeyfoot spoke of his visit to Louisville; Mr. Roy of India, a relative of the eminent leader of the Brahmo-Samaj, Keshub Chunder Sen, talked of present conditions in his country; and Mr. Burnham, one of the oldest friends of the Boston work, described the first annual dinner given in the earlier quarters in St. Botolph Street. He referred to the story of Emerson's meeting on the train with a friend who said that he was going to town charged with the task of finding an angel for a cook, and Mr. Burnham added that they all decided at that first dinner that they had found one. Later he called upon the guests to express their gratitude to the Swami by rising, whereupon all rose and clapped their hands in enthusiastic appreciation.

THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East"
Ezekiel.

"Light shall come again from the East"
Tyndall.

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DEVOTION TO THE IDEAL

By Swami Paramananda

(Sunday Vesper Service Talk)

If we could always remember our spiritual Ideal it would be very easy to live according to a higher standard of life. If we could always feel the all-loving and protecting hand of God, the many struggles and perplexities would vanish very quickly from our lives. Yet there are moments when the spiritual kingdom and all things pertaining to it seem very near at hand. We can almost grasp that spiritual realm, and without question or doubt we enjoy its blessings. Then again it disappears in such a way that we have no clue as to how or whence it came. Is there not some way by which we can keep the vision of the Highest and always draw from that Source when we have need of it? Yes. That is the lesson we learn from practical spiritual living. We do not become acquainted with this secret by joining a church or a society. We become acquainted with it when with yearning spirit and great devotion we reach out for it. Then we find that the secret is given to us directly and very simply.

There are many things in the world which apparently do not represent our Ideal and do not help us gain a closer view of it, still we must not waver in our persistent effort

to reach it. Whenever we show the spirit of willingness, willingness to go through any suffering, to endure any difficult condition without sacrificing our spiritual Ideal, in itself this creates a tremendous moral force. People who come into mere intellectual contact with great ideals do not attain the highest; but only those who live them and abide by them. Abiding by them, however, requires persistent effort. It does not matter how many times we may fail. It is not a terrible thing to fail, but it becomes a terrible thing when we embrace the failure and accept it as final. Whenever we are thwarted by circumstances, if we can look up to our Ideal and open our heart with absolute guilelessness and a complete sense of surrender, then even failure may prove a blessing.

Often we find that people who have not met with difficulty or defeat block the way to their spiritual blessing by a belief in their own power, they do not feel the need of God; while those who have stumbled and failed have learned humility, and humility before God is one of the greatest factors in our spiritual progress. Humility is the sign of great wisdom. I have often told you that real humility only comes when we realize the infinitude of God and the finiteness of our own little self. As we realize the limitations of our human nature and grow conscious of the allness of the Infinite, our heart naturally becomes filled with humble devotion. Devotion to what? Devotion to God. Devotion to that One from Whom we have come into existence, by Whom we live, and without Whom we can do nothing.

The great secret of gaining spiritual blessing is keeping our mind persistently on the Ideal in a spirit of complete surrender. When through understanding we can lay ourselves down utterly, that is true surrender. Surrender does not mean helplessness; it does not mean that you

have nothing to do. It means realizing that there is a Power mightier than yourself, a Mighty One Who is all in all. Ceaseless effort to connect ourselves with this spiritual Source alone can sustain us and lift our burdens. Whenever we do not remember to lean upon the Lord, we find that our burdens press upon us, suffocate us and make us suffer. The hour of devotion should be an hour in which we experience a sense of rest—rest in God, rest in Truth. We should feel that we have no burdens to carry, because He has taken them; that we have no fear, because having laid ourselves on the altar of Truth, no evil can approach us. When we enter into this spirit of childlike simplicity and trust, we find ourselves in rhythm with the Infinite and that is the aim of all devotion.

Devotion is not a matter of calculation; it is the dropping of all calculation. It is not a matter of merely reasoning about things, but of rising to a higher plane where we come face to face with the subtle Spirit. When we feel the reality of God in our heart, instinctively we bow down in devotion and experience a natural sense of security. Until we have found this, no amount of material prosperity or worldly protection can bring us the feeling of rest and safety, which every one needs. Let this be our aim—to gain a sense of refuge in God through the practice of devotion. In order to accomplish this aim, we must have earnestness and perseverance. Our worldly thoughts and associations will try to overpower us and rob us of our spiritual blessing. Let us not be thwarted by them; but let us be steadfast in our effort to overcome them. If we make every effort with sincere yearning and whole-heartedness, we shall surely find God and He will help us. He is always willing to help us, but we do not always allow ourselves to be helped by Him. When we look to our little

self and lean on it, we lose the power to lean on God. Rain water, as we know, never settles on a steep hill, but naturally rolls down to the low levels; in the same way, the blessings of God, which are being showered upon us every hour, every instant, cannot rest on those who are not humble.

We must prepare ourselves to receive the Divine blessing. If the heart is made ready, then when the seed falls, it must grow. So all our duty lies in making the soil ready and in watering the seed after it has been planted. If we neglect this, we neglect the real part of our life. We all have opportunities brought to us many times, but we must avail ourselves of them. We can lift ourselves and keep ourselves beyond the reach of evil. They are not overcome by evil, the wise ones; they are not overcome by evil, but they overcome evil—not by aggression, but by superior understanding; and this understanding comes to us when we find our connection with the Godhead. Let our striving be to cultivate the habit of the presence of God, to lay everything before Him, to open ourselves with such utter selflessness and childlike simplicity that He can fill our need. It is so easy, so simple, that we overlook doing it.

Many people imagine that the spiritual life must be very difficult—so difficult that one must drop everything else. But we are not to consider what we have to drop; things which are unnecessary will drop of their own accord. Let us concern ourselves wholly with what we have to offer to the Ideal. When we have touched the unchanging principle of life, all the unrealities will vanish as the darkness vanishes before the light of day. Our striving should be to keep our eyes fixed on God, the rest will accomplish itself. Spirituality is a simple thing. It makes our heart

single, our purpose single, our whole being homogeneous in an effort to attain to that One from Whom we have descended. Let our devotion call out such ardent feelings from within that we can unite ourselves with the Supreme Being. No one else can do it for us. It must be done by each individual for himself or herself, by opening the heart spontaneously to the Divine.

Let us in this hour of devotion lift our thoughts in prayer to that Supreme Being, that He may come to us and fill our hearts with His Presence and shower His blessings upon us.

O Thou Infinite, All-abiding Spirit, Thou knowest all our thoughts and prayers; Thou knowest our needs; therefore, we offer unto Thee our innermost feelings. Thou art the One without a second, the only Reality, the Giver of all strength and wisdom. Give us such understanding that we may follow Thy path with unwavering faith, undaunted courage, whole-hearted devotion and absolute steadfastness. Give us such endurance that we may go through all the varying conditions of life with evenness of mind and heart, always keeping our thoughts fixed in Thee. Give us inspiration that we may find joy in every task which falls to our hands and learn to serve Thee through our every act. Thou art the Source of all blessings, the Embodiment of all blessedness. Fill our hearts with Thy Divine Grace and remove from us all discord, all harshness, all alien thoughts and desires, that we may tune our whole being to Thy Being and express Thy radiance in every hour of our existence. O Thou Compassionate, All-loving One, fill our hearts with such love that we may never even unconsciously hate anyone or harm anyone, but ever express Thy love and peace. Peace! Peace! Peace be unto us and to all living beings.

WALK IN THE LIGHT OF SPIRIT

From letters of Isaac Penington

(Quaker Mystic of England, 17th Century)

Ah, do not imagine and talk away the rest and salvation of thy Soul. The gospel-state is a state of substance, a state of enjoying life, a state of feeling the presence and power of the Lord in His pure holy Spirit, a state of healing, a state of knowing the Lord, and walking with Him in the light of His own Spirit.

It begins in a sweet powerful touch of life, and there is a growth in the life, (in the power, in the Divine virtue, in the rest, peace, and satisfaction of the Soul in God), to be administered and waited for daily. Now art thou here, in the living power, in the Divine life, joined to the spring of life, drawing water of life out of the well of life with joy? Or art thou dry, dead, barren, sapless, or at best but unsatisfiedly mourning after what thou wantest?

Give over thine own willing; give over thine own running; give over thine own desiring to know or to be anything; and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee, and be in thee, and breathe in thee, and act in thee; and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that, and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of life, which is its portion.

And as thou takest up the cross to thyself, and sufferest that to overspread and become a yoke over thee, thou shalt become renewed and enjoy life and the everlasting inheritance in that.

Let nothing judge in thee (concerning thine own heart, or concerning others, or concerning any way of God), but only the begotten of God in the heart. Be not hasty, be not forward in judgment; keep back to the life, still waiting for the appearance and openings of the life.

A few steps fetched in the life and power of God are much safer and sweeter than an hasty progress in the hasty, forward spirit.

When the night comes upon thee, and thou perhaps art at a loss, missing the savor and presence of the life, and not knowing how to come by it again, be patient and still, and thou wilt find breathings after a fresh visitation, and a meek, humble, broken spirit before the Lord.

Thou wilt see that thou canst do nothing to recover His presence again; nay, thou canst not so much as wait for Him, or breathe after Him, without His help; but He is nigh to the poor, nigh to the broken, nigh to the distressed, nigh to the helpless.

In the night of distress, feel after somewhat which may quiet and stay thy heart till the next springing of the day. The sun will arise, which will scatter the clouds; and He is near to thee who will give thee to hope that thou shalt yet see God, and find again the quickenings and leadings of His spirit.

And in the day of His power thou wilt find strength to walk with Him; yea, in the day of thy weakness His grace will be sufficient for thee; and He will nurture thee up in His life by His pure Spirit, causing thee to grow under His shadow; and He will be teaching thee to live, and to speak, and to move and act from the principle, and within the compass of His light and life eternal.

Retire, deeply retire, and wait to feel His life; that thy soul may be gathered out of the reasonings and thoughts of thy mind, into that which stays from them, and fixes beneath them.

Let the earthly thoughts, desires, and concerns, which eat like a canker, be kept out by the power of that life, which is yours, as ye abide in covenant with Him that hath gathered you, by His pure light shining in you.

A DEVOTEE'S PRAYER

From the Jitante-Stotram, Mahabharata

O Lord of untold loveliness, until now have I lived far from Thy redeeming Grace; but now am I overpowered by Thine immeasurable beauty. O Lord of all, to Thee belongs the kingdom of this universe. I perceive that I am not the master even of myself; Thy humble servant am I. May my adoration be acceptable unto Thee, O God, Who art the Ruler of my being. Thou art the Almighty One, the Primal Cause of all existence. I seek refuge at Thy Blessed Feet. Thou art the one Protector of every living thing.

Thou art the sole Creator, Transformer and Preserver of all worlds. Thou in Thy mercy dost grant unto men to follow their own will, while Thou dost ever remain the Witness. Since Thy nature is covered by the veil of *Maya* (creation), Thou art hidden from clouded mortal vision.

Wise men, finding in Thee the surest refuge, cross safely over the vast ocean of *Samsara* (birth and death), wherein lurk endless pains and struggles.

Neither color, shape, nor weapons hast Thou, nor any fixed abode; yet Thou revealest Thyself unto Thy devotee in human form.

Nothing is beyond Thy sight, yet none of all Thy children directly seeth Thee. Unto Thee all things are known, but none here knoweth Thee.

The sages perceive Thee as the First Cause of all things, the Highest Word of words, the aim of all devotion.

Should age or disease attack my body, still shall I account myself blessed, if my thoughts remain fixed in Thee.

For all the fruits of my ignorance, Lord, I beseech Thee earnestly, do Thou forgive me, because I am Thy humble and sincere devotee.

Who am I, unworthy as I am? And where in me is the

right thought to seek what should be sought? Though immeasurably wide seemeth the gulf between us, do Thou in Thy mercy ordain what Thou deemest best for me.

Lord of the Universe, ever dear to Thy devotees! Save me! By Thy Grace save me, who am helpless, downcast and unblessed.

Thou art the Supreme Lord! Through sincere devotion only can Thy devotees approach Thee. Thou art the Primal Cause of the Universe, its Protector and Destroyer. O Lord of infinite loveliness, Refugee of the world, alone and helpless am I. I know no other guide than Thee! Take me under Thy protecting care and save me from all affliction.

HUMILITY

By Rabbi Bachye

(Jewish Teacher of Spain, 11th century)

The man who does good works is more likely to be overtaken by pride in them than by any other moral mischance; and its effect on conduct is injurious in the extreme. Therefore among the most necessary of virtues is that one which banishes pride; and this is humility.

Humility is lowliness of the Soul; and it is a quality of the Soul that, when established there, allows its signs to be evident in the bodily members. The voice, for instance, is softened, and so is the language it utters; and one is subdued in times of anger, and vengeance is withheld when one has the power to avenge.

But there are three kinds of humility. One kind of humility is shared by man and by very many species of dumb animals; this is poverty of spirit and the sufferance of injuries that one has the power to avert. This kind of humility is found in fools among the sons of men, and in

low and ignorant people, on account of their want of knowledge and the weakness of their understanding. We are accustomed to call this humility; but it is, in truth, merely poverty of the Soul and blind stupidity. Real humility is that which follows the exaltation of the Soul after it has raised itself above sharing with the cattle their more shameful attributes. Then only, when humility and lowliness of Soul are joined to such elevation, are they praiseworthy qualities.

The second variety of humility is humility towards men; either on account of their having dominion over us, or on account of our being in need of their services. This is submission in the right direction. But although it is proper, it is not a lasting quality; for it does not comprehend all reasonable beings, nor is such humility proper at all times and in all places.

But the third kind of humility is humility before the Creator, blessed be He; and its obligation embraces all reasonable beings, and it is incumbent upon them at every time and in every place. This is the special kind of humility that I have in view. And all the Scriptural passages which speak of "the humble", "the meek", "the modest", "the broken-hearted", "the contrite", etc., etc., are written with reference to this third kind of humility—which is the most exalted degree of humility. Moreover, he that has acquired it is not far from the way that leads him near to God; and he will be favorably accepted by the Creator.

Humility before the Creator obliges a man to behave meekly and unselfishly in all his transactions with his fellowmen, whether in matters of business or in any other relation of life. The truly humble man will mourn for all the mistakes made by other men, and not triumph or rejoice over them. He who has true humility will be free

from all pride, conceit, self-praise and self-glorification, even in his secret thoughts, when he is occupied in works of charity or other virtuous or righteous acts, whether commanded or not; and in his own Soul he will account them as nothing in comparison with the greatness of his obligation to God.

He who is humble before God will not only do good to all men, but he will speak kindly to them and of them, and will never relate anything shameful about them, and will forgive them for any shameful things they may say about him, even if they are not worthy of such treatment. It is related of one of the *Chassideem* that once when he was taking a walk with his disciples, they passed the carcass of a dog in an advanced stage of decomposition. His disciples exclaimed: "Oh, how this carcass stinks!" He replied "Oh, how white its teeth are!" so as to counteract their remark. If it be wrong to speak disparagingly of a dead dog, how much more so of a living man; and if it be a merit to praise a dead dog for the whiteness of its teeth, how much more is it a duty to find out and praise the least merit in an intellectual human being? But it was also the intention of this pious man to teach his pupils to habituate themselves to speaking favorably, and to the avoidance of evil speaking. For that to which one accustoms the tongue becomes its natural speech.

He who is humble before God should be meek and modest in all the affairs of the world; both in what is seen and in what is secret; in his speech and in his actions; in his bodily activities and when at rest; and what is in his heart and mind must not be the opposite to what is manifest about him; and all his actions must be well pondered and suitable, equal, equable, and constant, and must tend in the direction of humility and lowliness, both towards God

and man. Our sages say, "Be lowly of spirit in the presence of every man."

First among the signs by which the meek are known is that they forgive all injuries and subdue their anger against those that treat them with contempt, even when they have the opportunity of avenging or resenting what has been done to them. The second is that when misfortunes come to them their endurance triumphs over their fear and grief, and they willingly submit to the decree of God and own that His judgments are righteous.

It may be asked: Can pride and humility dwell together in the heart? The answer requires a definition of pride. There are two kinds of pride. Pride in the bodily powers and in corporeal and material things; and pride in spiritual and mental qualities, such as wisdom and in good works. All pride of the former kind banishes humility. For all pride in the things of the world implies contempt for the Lord of all good, and ignorance of the instability of these things and the rapidity with which they may depart, and shows that the proud man thinks he is, himself, his own benefactor, and that it is his own wisdom and his own power that has gained him the acquisitions of which he is proud.

Even pride in spiritual and mental qualities is of two kinds; one shameful and the other admirable. The shameful kind is where a man prides himself on his wisdom and the righteousness of his conduct, and it leads to his being great in his own eyes and perfectly satisfied with himself, and to his thinking it enough if he gets a good name and is praised among human beings; and it induces him to look with contempt on other men and to despise them and talk against them; and to think little of the wise men of his day and of their greatness; and to glory in the failings of his

fellows and in their folly. This is what our sages mean by "glorifying one's self in the shame of one's neighbor."

The admirable kind of pride is that, when the wise man prides himself on his wisdom, and the just man on his works, he should acknowledge in these things the great beneficence of the Creator, and should rejoice on account of these gifts. Such pride in these gifts will then induce him to increase them and make good use of them, and to be meek with all around him; and to rejoice with his fellows, and be eager for their glory, and to cover over their folly, and to speak in praise of them, to love them, and to rejoice over them, and to be careful of their honor. Then also his own good deeds will appear so small in his eyes, that he will be continually striving to increase them. He will be humble because of his sense of inability to attain to the realization of his ideal in respect to them, and he will be full of gratitude to God for giving him these precious qualities. Such pride is helpful and not harmful to humility.

Humility is profitable to man in this world, because it makes him rejoice in his lot. For the whole world and all it contains is insufficient to satisfy the ambition of him into whom pride and a sense of greatness have entered, and he will look with contempt on whatever share of it falls to his lot; whereas, the humble man assigns no special rank to himself, but is content with whatever comes to him and finds it sufficient. This induces restfulness of Soul and minimizes anxiety. He will eat what comes his way and dress in the raiment that is readily found; and a small share of the world satisfies him.

I believe that the first test of a truly great man is his humility.—*John Ruskin.*

RENUNCIATION AND FREEDOM

Familiar Talk by Swami Ramakrishnananda

It is because we are mistaking the real for the unreal, the unreal for the real, that all this human life seems so serious to us. We are mistaking the play to be the real thing and the Player to be unreal; whereas God is the only reality and apart from Him all this creation is absolutely unreal. If you will analyze your own life, you will find its utter hollowness. A birth, a death, and a little space between. Out of darkness you have come, into darkness you will go again, and you call this little space between life. There was no dream, then you dreamed, and again there was no dream. That dream you call unreal; but this life is just as unreal, just as much of a dream as that. At any moment death may call you away. A man builds a fine house, confident that he will enjoy it for many years; yet the day he enters it, he may go out of it forever.

When Yudisthira was asked: "What is the most wonderful thing in the world?" he replied: "Every day men are dying all around, yet every man believes that he will be an exception to the rule." A man thinks "At least I shall live for fifty years"; and when those fifty years are over, he says "I shall surely live for fifty years more." Yet he may die to-morrow. Nevertheless he goes on earning and planning as if he were to live forever. Faith in God is the only wealth. A man thinks that if he gets more money he will be happier, but he is only more miserable. Only the man who depends on himself has reason to fear all the wants and dangers of the world. The man who has perfect faith in the Lord is never in want or danger.

As long as you are held by any one of these senses, as long as you care for good food or sweet sounds or

beautiful sights, you cannot hope to fix your mind on God. You will have to go out of the creation; you will have to turn your thoughts away from these outer things. And when you go out of creation, where must you go? To the Creator. These senses are like so many poisons. You know that there are different kinds of poison. Some, like cyanide of potassium, kill instantaneously; others kill more slowly—in a day or a week or a month; and there are some which kill only after many years. Sensuality is a poison which kills after many years. Man is immortal, he cannot die; yet this slavery to the senses kills him again and again.

We are all caught in the meshes of creation. This world is a huge web and *Maya* is the spider. Until we escape from it, we shall have to be born again and again; and every time the spider will be waiting for you and will weave a new web of sense life about you. Light the fire of wisdom in your heart and it will burn up the whole web and destroy the spider too, if it dares approach you. But when that fire is lighted, it will not dare come near you.

My Master, Sri Ramakrishna, used to say: "All this is unreal, Thou alone art real." This universe is unreal. This body is unreal, this life is unreal; the only reality in this universe is God. But until you have realized the hollowness of this world and your own utter helplessness, you cannot hope to know that Reality. Until you realize the emptiness of everything here, your desire for the world will not cease. A fruit-vender comes with some mangos. They look very delicious and you want them. But if you find out that they are sour, at once your desire for them dies. So only when you have learned that this whole world is sour, hollow, unsatisfying, will you give it up. You must know it for what it is, then at once you will throw it away.

Christ knew the hollowness of this little life and so he could easily give it up for eternal life. That was the reason why He preached "He who loseth his life shall find it;" that is, he who loseth this temporary life of the body shall find eternal life. He wanted infinite life, not the poor little life of this world. Infinite life means God.

All at once it is not possible for a man to attain salvation, except in very rare instances. There are so many subtle ways in which this *Maya* can take hold of us. A man may renounce and then he becomes a *Guruji* (teacher) or he thinks himself a great lecturer. Of course, a man can attain salvation by the special grace of God. If he can realize that God is all in all and that he himself is nothing, then *Mukti* or freedom comes easily. For what keeps us from seeing God? Our egotism. The more we can minimize that, the more we shall approach the goal. If we can throw it away altogether, then *Mukti* is ours. Therefore, the more we can fix our mind on God and forget ourself, the more quickly shall we reach freedom.

WHAT IS THAT IN THINE HAND?

(*Exodus IV. 2*)

My hands were filled with many things
That I did precious hold,
As any treasure of a king's
Silver, or gems, or gold.
The Master came and touched my hands
(The scars were in His own)
And at His feet, my treasures sweet
Fell scattered one by one.

"I must have empty hands," said He
"Wherewith to work My works through thee."

My hands were stained with marks of toil,
Defiled with dust of earth;
And I my work did oft-times soil,
And render little worth.
The Master came and touched my hands
And crimson were His own;
But when, amazed, on mine I gazed,
Lo! every stain was gone.

"I must have cleansed hands," said He
"Wherewith to work My works through thee."

My hands were growing feverish,
And cumbered with much care;
Trembling with haste and eagerness,
Nor folded oft in prayer.
The Master came and touched my hands
With healing in His own;
And calm and still, to do His will
They grew—the fever gone.

"I must have quiet hands," said He
"Wherewith to work My works through thee."

My hands were strong in fancied strength,
But not in power Divine;
And bold to take up tasks at length
That were not His, but mine.
The Master came and touched my hands,
And mighty were His own;
But mine since then have powerless been,
Since His are laid thereon.

"And it is only thus," said He
"That I can work My works through thee."

THE PLANLESS LIFE

By Sister Devamata

We are told in the Bhagavad-Gita that the wise life is a planless life, and the Occidental mind readily interprets this to mean an aimless, unordered life. But this is not what is meant. There is a mighty plan always. The universe moves according to the most perfect plan that can be conceived and everything in it has its place and purpose. Order and system reign everywhere. The individual plan disturbs this system. If we could imagine an army in which the whole campaign is carefully thought out, every officer has his instructions, the command is given, but each soldier sets out to fight the enemy according to a scheme of his own; what kind of a battle would it be? Yet that is what we do in life.

We consider it a sign of strength and superiority when we elaborate a personal aim and hold to it in the face of every obstacle. But if we can follow to the end those who insist on moving in their own direction without regard to the universal plan, we shall find that they inevitably end in disappointment and collapse. They may carry their own way on through years, perhaps through an entire lifetime, but if their way is contrary to the cosmic way, the crash must come sooner or later. May that not explain the sudden tottering of realized ambition, as we see it every now and then in the world about us?

The man of small vision rises in the morning with his mind full of self-created projects. At this hour he will go here, at that hour he will go there; he will see this person or perform that task. Rarely do these plans accomplish themselves strictly according to schedule and the mind grows irritated by the constant thwarting of its efforts. The far-seeing man, on the contrary, does not lay himself

open to these unnecessary causes for anger and discomfort. When he rises, he reminds himself that the day is already planned out, not only for him and for that other man whom he wishes to see, but for every living thing, great or small. Each tiny root fibre, every bud and leaf, has its work to do. The whole universe, he knows, is a great workshop in which every unit of existence is allotted its peculiar task. Therefore instead of mapping out the use of his time and energies according to a limited personal standard, he sends up an earnest prayer from his heart that he may take his place in the scheme of things and fulfill each hour in God's way the duty which God appoints. A universe in which everyone followed this rule of action would be a universe without friction, without disappointment, without all the abortive effort and loss of energy from which it now suffers.

True planlessness, however, goes much further. Every preconceived idea regarding the outcome of our activity is a plan. We do our work expecting a certain definite result, but that may not be the result which the universe has in view. Hence we fail of our purpose, grow angry and rebel against the injustices of life. To avoid this, Vedanta tells us that in all our activity we must hold ourselves free from attachment to the fruits of our actions, both for our own sake and for the sake of mankind. To attach ourselves to any special outcome may force a result which will throw out of order that portion of the universe where we are working. Our energy will be wasted and nothing will be accomplished. Granted a momentary achievement, it will soon be obliterated by the inevitable adjustment of the cosmic order of things. If, on the contrary, we cease to be hirelings, seeking a fixed wage in return for each action,, and offer up all our activity to

God as a free will offering, then even if our effort be a mistaken one, the great Divine Wisdom will be able to swing that misdirected energy into the cosmic current and make it count despite our weakness and lack of understanding.

We must carry our practice of planlessness further still. In our spiritual life nearly all of us expect to grow at a certain pace and attain certain clearly defined ends. We look upon our daily practice as if it were an investment committed to bring us a fixed dividend. We fancy that if we sit and meditate faithfully each day we should begin before long to have visions or some glimmering of illumination. How many of us battle at frequent intervals with a sense of disappointment because our spiritual practice has not transformed us as we expected it to do; or we have not made the progress or acquired the wisdom which we counted upon when we began. But this very element of calculating expectancy bars the way to progress. It divides the attention and energy, making it impossible for us to put the whole of ourselves into our effort. Spiritual education is the most fundamental of all. Why should we suppose that it can be achieved in a few months, when we have devoted the greater part of each day through many years to the training of our mind, having very little knowledge at the end?

We should make no terms with God when we set out to know Him. We are ignorant of what spiritual growth involves. It may be good for us to gain no outer results from our practice during a long interval. When plants are first repotted it is better for them to remain for a season in the dark until they are thoroughly rooted. So we too may need to put down deeper, stouter roots into the spiritual soil before there is any apparent growth on the surface. To try to force a visible growth might wholly

defeat the working of the higher principle within us. There are times also when we seem rather to go back than forward. We are more irritable, less in harmony with our surroundings, less lovable, less useful than formerly. But even this must not betray us into a premature judgment regarding the workings of the Spirit. If we are doing our best, we must be patient and long-suffering towards these failings of our little self, remaining firm in our trust in Divine Wisdom and not asking to interfere with the ways of God by substituting some way of our own. This period of apparent deterioration is probably the first step, and a necessary one, in the process of purification. When the inner spiritual fire is kindled by regular practice, it sets the whole system to seething and throws to the surface all the sediment of old habits and tendencies. Only by this means can they be permanently eliminated.

To lead a planless life means to set no goal save the goal of unswerving conformity with the cosmic plan; to ask nothing of God save that we never fail in surrender and obedience to Him. Until we have developed the habit of planlessness, we can never attain complete surrender. Before that there will always lurk an element of bargaining in our submission. We have an end to gain—power or illumination or freedom, so we yield ourselves up to God as we would to a physician or a teacher or a higher official. We even take it for granted that surrender must bring escape from suffering; and when it does not, we quickly take ourselves back and begin once more to direct our own life. We are like a soldier who offers to serve his country provided he is not given sentry duty or put in the first line trenches.

We shall never know the joy or the power of the spiritual life, until we are ready to let God fill every hour of every day as He may choose; to create any con-

dition which He may see fit to create; to use our energy as He will. We must be ready to go here or there, to succeed or fail, to meet honor or dishonor, to live in solitude or on the noisy thoroughfare. In other words, we must have no plan apart from His plan. Nor need we fear, if we reach this point, that our life will lack direction. For the first time it will have a definite course. Now it starts in one direction, then it is pushed into another, and continues to be swayed by circumstances until through a happy chance it falls into line with the cosmic current. Only when it moves habitually with that current, will it become consistent and continuous in its aim.

In striving to cultivate a habit of planlessness, however, we must guard ourselves against the error of beginning on the outside. What we must seek to change is not our outer mode of living, but our attitude of mind. As we persevere in our daily spiritual practice, we shall grow naturally into a more vivid sense of God's guiding wisdom and learn to turn more and more to Him for counsel. Thus gradually His way will take the place of our way and we may not even realize the change. There will be no sense of blankness or lack of routine in our day. Events and duties will follow one another normally. We shall always see clearly what is to be done; but we shall live more wholly in the present, and the future will not stretch out in so long a perspective as it does now, confusing our thought and dividing our attention.

This is what planlessness means—to merge our many little plans into the one great plan; to exchange our countless shifting aims for the one great cosmic aim; to live a larger life in union with a mighty scheme; in other words, to be an integral part of God's great world instead of living in a narrow, emprisoning world of our own making.

REPORTS

The Sunday Services and Tuesday Classes continued without interruption throughout the summer, and the attendance was unusually good. The Swami conducted all meetings from May until after the first Sunday of August, when he placed them in charge of Sister Devamata and withdrew for a period of rest before setting out on a lecture tour through the Northwest. He spent one week with friends at Garrison-on-the-Hudson and also paid several visits to New Hampshire. During one of these, he delivered a lecture at East Jaffrey on "The Literary and Spiritual Value of the Upanishads," to which people came from Dublin, Hancock, Peterborough and other nearby places, manifesting sincere interest in the message given.

The Thursday class will be resumed on the 2nd of October and all other meetings will remain the same.

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The Swami Paramananda's season in Los Angeles last spring infused new life into the Centre founded by him there several years ago. Since his departure in May, the members have continued their bi-weekly meetings with warm enthusiasm and have worked with zeal to enlarge the field of the Centre's activities. Various of the members have visited the Boston Centre, thus creating a new link between the eastern and western branches of the Swami's work. They are now eagerly preparing for the Swami's return.

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Very encouraging reports come to us from the Vedanta Society of San Francisco. The work is gaining steadily under the able leadership of Swami Prakashananda. The attendance at the meetings steadily increased through the summer and the demand for Vedanta literature was unusually great.

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We are happy to be able to announce that the translation of the Upanishads by Swami Paramananda, recently published, has met with the warmest welcome. From all sides are coming expressions of appreciation and gratitude for the helpfulness and inspiration gained through it. The clearness of the translation, made still plainer by the commentary, has brought to many readers a new revelation of the Vedic message, and they have taken it as a text book for their daily Scriptural study. The small flexible form of the book specially lends itself to this purpose, since it can be carried about easily.

The Swami's idea of selling autographed copies for the benefit of the starving poor of India has called out a generous response. Instead of giving merely the small extra charge added for the Swami's autograph, some have paid as high as fifteen dollars for a copy. Still others have contributed directly towards the Relief Fund, with the result that already several hundred dollars have been received. The condition of the poor in India at present is very grave. Thousands are dying of hunger and yet other thousands are falling a prey to disease because of the ill-nourished state of their bodies. Just now when so much is being done for the sufferers of Europe and the Near East, we feel that the Far East should not be forgotten; and that those who have gained new light and strength through the Indian teaching should be given an opportunity to repay the blessing, by doing what they can to lift the heavy burden of want now pressing on the countless patient sufferers of India.

We take this occasion to thank those who have contributed already towards the Fund, and to make it known to still others who may value the privilege of having a share in increasing it. All contributions may be sent to The Vedanta Centre, 1 Queensberry Street, Boston.

THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East"
Ezekiel.

"Light shall come again from the East"
Tyndall.

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CONTROL OF BREATH AND HEALING

By Swami Paramananda

This God-given life of ours is sacred and full of infinite possibilities; but being unaware of this fact, we live half blindfolded, accepting every condition which confronts us, because we feel powerless to counteract it. Thus we deprive ourselves of the health, happiness and freedom which are our rightful heritage. In the psychological study of ancient India a great effort was made to discover methods by which all the baser tendencies and impulses inherent in our nature might be overcome. Taking first the physical, they tried to make the body so rhythmic and harmonious that it would not create any obstacle to the free flowing of the life-force within. Breath became the chief factor in doing this. We live so long as we breathe. If a man can breathe in such a way that he can keep his reservoir of vital energy full, then he will have an inexhaustible supply of strength. But very few of us know how to do this. We simply inhale and exhale, without consciousness of what we are doing. It is not an action over which we have any apparent control. The early Indian teachers, however, tried to formulate a science of breath, recognizing that it was the medium of life.

It is through the breath that we convey the life-force.

which they called *Prana*. This *Prana* is so subtle that we cannot lay our fingers upon it. When we seek to study it, we see nothing; we are unable even to describe or analyze it. But this we know,—that as long as we are able to inhale that force, so long we live; when breathing stops, we cease to live. Therefore these teachers sought to make a scientific study of the control of breath. They found that by breath control we can check the waste of bodily energy and acquire sound health. But that was not all. They discovered also that apart from its effect on bodily health, it constituted a potent factor in our spiritual development.

Ordinary breathing exercises help us to cleanse our inner nature. We know that whenever we are ill or when our body is disturbed in any way, we do not breathe normally; the rhythm is lost. Then, because we breathe irregularly, we are exhausted. Whenever we are nervous, ill or feverish, there is great waste in the system and it is chiefly due to this irregular breathing which invariably weakens us. If we will learn to regulate the breath, we can counteract these conditions; and if to regular breathing we add our thought force, we can gain wonderful control over our physical life. Thought has a vital influence on our bodily health and especially on the breath. Whenever we are under any great mental excitement, we see how abnormal and erratic the breath becomes. Whenever, on the other hand, our mind is exalted and peaceful, our breath grows very quiet and rhythmic.

It is not possible for me here to take up any intricate methods of breathing, although the various methods of controlling the breath and thereby restoring the equilibrium of the body were made a great science in Indian psychology. They recognized that this body is the instrument through which we have to work out our salvation. If it is

out of order, it becomes a serious hindrance. When the body is disturbed, it is difficult to forget it; and if we are constantly thinking of the body, we have no time to think of higher things. A healthy person is one who is least conscious of his body. Therefore the object of all breath-control is to make ourselves as little conscious of our physical condition as possible. This cannot be done by directing our mental force on every little ache or pain, but by putting the body in tune with higher ideals of life and creating a proper rhythm.

Those early investigators, however, did not pay undue attention to the physical constitution, because after all the body is only an instrument. It is not the thing itself. Yet they were very strict in all their bodily habits, and because of this they attained great heights in their psychological and spiritual researches. If people practise breathing exercises merely with the idea of gaining health or some material advantage, they will achieve very little. Those who take up these practices are expected to live pure, chaste lives; to be very strict in their eating, drinking, recreation and association; and to be free from selfish, unworthy motives. In every way they are supposed to cultivate tranquillity and self-control. How few are willing to do this! Yet without observing these simple rules, we cannot expect any benefit from the practice of Yoga.

Here in the Occident some, carried away by the wonderful results which Yoga promises and yet unwilling to conform with the fundamental principles of right-thinking, purity and self-control, have met with disastrous results. This has led to the erroneous belief that Yoga is dangerous and unsuited to the Occidental temperament. The danger lies wholly in the misuse of the study. The practice of Yoga quickens our latent finer forces, and unless we have

the right motive and the knowledge to direct them through the right channels, they necessarily create havoc in our organism; just as a strong medicine, which has curative powers, will injure if not properly administered.

Certain breathing exercises are practised daily by many in India to cleanse their inner organism, just as they take a bath to cleanse the outer body. There are also other exercises to freshen and prepare for meditation, by bringing the whole system into rhythm. Such practices are not only cleansing to the body, but quieting to the mind. Breath is life. When we inhale, if we hold the thought that we are filling ourselves with *Prana* or vital energy; and when we exhale, that we are throwing off all waste from the system, we cannot fail to be cleansed even by our ordinary breathing. We all know that we live by breathing, by filling our physical organism with oxygen; if added to this, we have a certain spiritual understanding regarding these things we can do much to help ourselves.

When we are tired and feel the need of rest or when we are nervous and restless, if we will fix our mind on some lofty thought and begin to breathe rhythmically—that is, breathe in and out on an even count—we shall restore our equilibrium and grow peaceful. This is a scientific fact. It may not seem to have any direct spiritual bearing, but it undoubtedly helps us to gain spiritual ends. That is why the Indo-Aryans laid so much emphasis on these practices. They knew that unless a man could control his body and bring it to a state of equilibrium, he could not focus his mind on the higher facts of life. Also they discovered that if a man could fill his own system full of *Prana*, he could then impart it to others, and thus heal and help. Highly developed spiritual beings often do this quite unconsciously by a

touch or a glance or a word. But they are able to do it only because of their selflessness. It is this which differentiates ordinary healing from spiritual healing, as we find it in the lives of the great Saints and Saviours. In the ordinary practice of healing there is a distinct consciousness of individual effort; while in the higher method there is a total absence of self-consciousness. The true healer must feel that the power flows through him. He must have no thought of self. He must not care for name or fame or material gain. True spiritual healing is only possible when all such ideas are absent.

In India they recognize the power of healing and have studied it as a science, but it is not so much discussed as in the West. The monistic system of healing there, is much like the Christian Science conception here. It does not recognize any bodily condition as real. No affliction, it declares, can touch the Soul. It holds one idea only: that God or the Infinite is One without a second, and "Thou art That", free from all impurity, free from all disease, death and misery. Of course if we can rise to such heights of consciousness, everything will roll away from us; but it means a very lofty flight. If there is no body, naturally we cannot treat a body; so the true Monist cannot deal with either good health or ill health. The ideal of healing which we find in the lives of Jesus the Christ, Sri Krishna, Buddha, Lord Gouranga and other great Saviours is the same. There is only one ideal—that the Divine can work wonders through us. Are we willing to give ourselves to that Divine Being? Are we really willing to offer our hands, our heart, our mind, everything we possess, our every faculty and gift, wholly without any thought of return? If we are, then even miracles of healing may be accomplished

through us. There are here and there people who succeed in eliminating all their egoistic sense and offering themselves wholly to God, and God works through them. They do not ask anything in return. And that is the only form of healing which is safe. The others are merely experiments—sometimes they work and sometimes they do not. Or sometimes they seem to work, but the cure is not permanent.

An example of true healing is to be seen in St. Francis' life when he cured the perverse leper not only of his leprosy, but also of his evil temper. Seeing that the other brothers could not content him by their service, St. Francis himself went to him. "God give thee peace, my brother most dear", he said to him tenderly. The leper replied: "What peace may I have of God who hath made me rotten altogether?" "My little son, have patience," St. Francis gave answer, "for the infirmities of the body are given by God in this world for the salvation of Souls, seeing that they bring great blessing when they are borne patiently." Then he prayed fervently for the sick man and bathed him in warm water scented with sweet smelling herbs. As his loving hands passed over the afflicted body, all the sores were healed. Mind and heart also were made whole, so that the man began to rejoice and glorify God. Unless the cure reaches to the Soul, today the pain may be gone and tomorrow something may happen to bring it back again; just as today we may relieve a poor man by giving him a piece of bread, but tomorrow he is hungry once more.

The relief we bring on the physical plane cannot be permanent. Only when we bring understanding do we find a true remedy. The great spiritual Teachers may have wrought miracles in healing men's bodies, but they went further. They produced a lasting impression on their lives,

and they did this by the power of God. That heals the wounds of the heart. It also heals the mind of all doubt, of all sorrow and darkness. We are all more or less in an unhealthy condition, either of body or mind. The greatest disease of the mind is doubt. Even if our body is strong, are we free from doubt—doubt of God, doubt of the Soul, doubt of the permanent realities? If not, then we cannot enjoy true health, and the only thing which can cure us is a revelation of Truth.

We all have great opportunities in life, but we do not know always how to make use of these opportunities. We have wonderful blessings, but we do not know how to retain them. This comes from our lack of preparation. Therefore we must prepare ourselves spiritually. Let us prepare our body; let us prepare our mind; and let us be ready to accept humbly all the help which comes to us, no matter through what channel. Only as we accept help from every source with openness of heart and an ardent spirit, can we restore ourselves to a normal condition; and a normal condition of life is that when our body, our mind, our whole being responds naturally to the call of the Spirit and is able to radiate the power of the Infinite. You ask, "Is it possible for us to do this?" Yes. But we must reverse the order of our life; and instead of being so full of craving for material things, we must be filled with yearning for spiritual things. When our heart is filled with such yearning, then alone shall we feel the reality of the Blessed Spirit and realize the fullness of life.

It is more necessary for the Soul to be cured than the body; for it is better to die than to live unworthily. Choose the best life, for habit will make it pleasant.—*Epictetus.*

PUT ASIDE ANGER AND SADNESS

From The Shepherd of Hermas

(Composed by Hermas, brother of Pius I, Bishop of Rome, 2nd Century)

Be patient, and long suffering; so shalt thou have dominion over all wicked works and shalt fulfill all righteousness.

For if thou shalt be patient, the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in thee shall be pure, and shall not be darkened by any evil spirit; but being full of joy, shall be enlarged, and feast in the body in which it dwells, and serve the Lord with joy and in great peace.

But if any anger shall overtake thee, presently the Holy Spirit which is in thee will be straightened and will seek to depart from thee.

For he is choked by the evil spirit and has not the liberty of serving the Lord as he would; for he is grieved by anger. When therefore both these spirits dwell together, it is destructive to a man.

As if one should take a little wormwood, and put it into a vessel of honey, the whole honey would be spoiled; and a great quantity of honey is corrupted by a very little wormwood, and loses the sweetness of honey, and is no longer acceptable to its Lord, because the whole honey is made bitter and loses its use.

But if no wormwood be put into the honey, it is sweet and profitable to its Lord. Thus is forbearance sweeter than honey, and profitable to the Lord, who dwelleth in it.

But anger is unprofitable. If therefore anger shall be mixed with forbearance, the Soul is distressed and its prayer is not profitable with God.

And now, said he, hear the wickedness of anger; how evil and hurtful it is, and how it overthrows the servants of God. It cannot hurt those that are full of faith, because the power of God is with them; but it overthrows the doubtful and those that are destitute of faith.

For as often as it sees such men, it casts itself into their hearts; and so a man or woman is in bitterness for nothing: for the things of life; or for sustenance; or for a vain word, if any should chance to fall in; or by reason of any friend; or for a debt; or for any other superfluous things of the like nature.

For these things are foolish and superfluous and vain to the servants of God. But even-mindedness is strong and forcible; and of great power, and sitteth in great enlargement; is cheerful, rejoicing in peace and glorifying God at all times with meekness.

And this long suffering dwells with those who are full of faith. But anger is foolish and light and empty.

Put all sadness far from thee; for it is the sister of doubting and of anger.

Remove sadness from thyself; and afflict not the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in thee; lest he entreat God and depart from thee. For the spirit of the Lord which is given to dwell in the flesh endureth no such sadness.

Wherefore clothe thyself with cheerfulness, which has always favour with the Lord, and thou shalt rejoice in it. For every cheerful man does well, and relishes those things that are good, and despises sadness.

But the sad man does always wickedly. First, he doth wickedly because he grieveth the Holy Spirit, which is given to man being of a cheerful nature; and again he does ill, because he prays with sadness unto the Lord, and maketh not first a thankful acknowledgment unto him of former mercies; and obtains not of God what he asks.

For the prayer of a sad man has not always efficacy to come up to the altar of God. And I said unto him, Sir, why has not the prayers of a sad man virtue to come up to the altar of God? Because, said he, that sadness remaineth in his heart.

When therefore a man's prayer shall be accompanied with sadness, it will not suffer his requests to ascend pure to the altar of God. For as wine when it is mingled with vinegar, has not the sweetness it had before; so sadness being mixed with the Holy Spirit, suffers not a man's prayer to be the same that it would be otherwise.

Wherefore cleanse thyself from sadness, which is evil, and thou shalt live unto God. And all others shall live unto God, as many as shall lay aside sadness and put on cheerfulness.

THE VALUE OF FOOD IN SPIRITUAL TRAINING

Lecture by Sister Devamata

In all Vedic teaching the term food has a much more extended meaning than in Western usage. It refers not merely to the food which we give our body; but in a far greater degree to the food with which we nourish our mind, our heart, our Soul-life. The great Indo-Aryan Sages realized the fact that food determines the constitution of man on every plane of his being. It affects in equal degree his character and his bodily condition. We take full account of this in dealing with animals. We see how by variations in the mode of feeding we may alter their disposition quite as much as their physical constitution. The difference in a dog when fed exclusively on meat and when given other foods is quickly apparent. It is an equally perceptible factor in modifying both the temper and health of masses of human beings, as in the case of army troops or bands of laborers. Diet, indeed, has become an acknowledged branch of social science; but too much stress is laid on the purely physical aspect of it, and too little on its value in developing the higher nature.

The words of the Bhagavad-Gita that "Creatures come forth from food" are literally and insistently true. As created beings we are coming forth from food at every moment; and those who are striving for spiritual consciousness cannot be too watchful as to what they feed their bodies, their minds, their hearts and their moral sense. If our body is not properly fed and properly disciplined we have a very poor foundation to work upon. The larger part of our bodily weaknesses and disabilities is due to the misuse of food. The first error which we nearly all make is to regard pleasure as the chief end of eating, and to judge of the value of food by our personal likes and dislikes. This is a very misleading standard on which to base our dietary. The wild beast in the jungle can trust to his instinct regarding what he eats, because he has not separated himself from the cosmic instinct; but our appetite can rarely be our guide. We must first cultivate a right taste and a right understanding as to the true purpose of life. It is not necessary to adopt an austere diet, nor is it wrong to enjoy our food; but we must teach ourselves to enjoy what is most beneficial for us. The physical organism can be trained to respond to any demand of the mind, and nothing is more easily cultivated than a taste for the proper foods, when we go about it intelligently.

Our diet must be regulated by our mode of life. This was a salient feature in the social system of ancient India. Each caste had its special rules of diet. The Brahmana, whose energies were devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, was expected to observe a much more rigid dietary than the soldier, the merchant or the servant. There can be no universal rule regarding the foods to be taken or discarded. The occupation, the constitution, and the deeper aim of the heart must determine this question; but what-

ever the diet adopted, two factors must be held constantly in mind—to keep the inner nature so far as possible pure, unweighted and pliant; and to fortify the outer nature against the rude attack of external conditions.

If our occupation takes us out into the active world, we need the ballast of some heavier foods, just as a ship needs ballast when it sets sail on the high seas. The quality and amount of our food should be changed also whenever our daily routine changes. In India when a man retires to the forest to practise Yoga, he may reduce his diet to wild herbs, wild honey or a few *chappattis* (unleavened whole wheat bread) baked on a hot stone in the sun; but when he returns to populated regions, he gradually alters the quantity and character of his food; otherwise his organism will be too sensitive to stand the jar.

Foods, Vedanta teaches, fall naturally into three classes and produce corresponding effects upon the system. Some foods are full of *Tamas* or heaviness and weight the body; others are *Rajasika* in their nature and create excessive activity, unrest, nervous energy; and there are still others which nourish, yet leave the body light and responsive to higher stimuli. The ordinary diet should contain a mixture of these three kinds of food, with emphasis laid on that one which corresponds with the nature of the life. It is evident that an athlete in the ring and a Yogi in the jungle do not require the same kind of food.

Among vegetables, those which grow in the ground are most *Tamasica*; those which grow above the ground and are ripened in the sun are more *Rajasika*; while those which not only grow in the sunlight, but which do not have to be cooked, such as salads, also fruits, are most *Sattwika*. Among cereals, oatmeal is more *Tamasika*; the wheat products more *Rajasika*; rice and corn more *Sattwika*. These

three elements should be present in the daily diet. We should have some article of food which provides the necessary density or bulk, others which renew our active forces, and still others which nourish the finer parts of our nature. All three need to be sustained in us, but in proper proportion. It takes very much less *Tamasika* food, because of its greater density; and much more *Sattwika*, because of its lightness.

By a judicious choice of foods one may correct any undesirable constitutional tendency. The inclination of the undisciplined appetite is to feed the predominant element in the system, instead of counteracting it. Thus, a heavy, lethargic person craves heavy foods, whereas he should have only the lighter vegetables or perhaps only fruit and milk for a season. Such dullness indicates that the system is over-weighted with the grosser aliments; therefore it should be given energizing, cleansing foods. When the nature is growing over-sensitive and visionary, that is a sign that the diet is too light and one or two heavier articles should be added to the daily diet. A tense, high-strung, over-active system, instead of nourishing the *Rajas* in it by stimulants, or by hot, pungent, strongly seasoned dishes, should seek rather the soothing, less highly flavored foods. Here again a predominance of milk, fruit, honey and cereals would be good; while spices, peppers and extreme acids or sweets should be avoided. Stimulants of all kinds are hostile to the cultivation of the state of *Sattwa* or serenity, essential to higher vision.

Meat also is not a necessary article of food, as many people imagine. The horse and the elephant have ample strength without it. Cereals, nuts, cheese, the various pulses, will give all that meat gives, without the added impurities inseparable from animal food. Yet too sudden a

change from the habit of long years is not advisable. This merely antagonizes the lower nature and makes it more difficult to handle. An opium-eater, it is told, once appealed to a wise man in India to rescue him from his desperate condition. "It is killing me", he declared, "yet I cannot give it up". "Why should you give it up?" the wise man replied gently. "Keep right on, but when you measure your daily allowance of opium, use a piece of chalk as a counterweight; and always draw a line on the floor with the chalk before you place it on the scale." In this way the quantity of opium was steadily but imperceptibly reduced; at the end of six months the chalk was gone and the man was cured. So should we make all our bodily readjustments. First we should cut out the heavier meats, being content with fish and chicken, and should take these less and less frequently. We do not need to nourish our animal nature. The struggle with our lower propensities is quite enough without increasing it through our daily food. If we are already nervous, restless, resentful, impatient, quick to angér, we can ill afford to sustain those elements in our system.

Over-eating is another prevailing evil against which we must guard ourselves. Too much food depletes the system quite as much as too little. We know how plants suffer from excessive fertilization. When we over-supply the body with nutrition, it is forced to exhaust its vital energies in taking care of the surplus. We should keep ourselves in the lithe, sinewy condition of a runner or an oarsman. Any reduction in diet, however, must begin with the non-essentials—those foods which pamper the appetite rather than strengthen bone and tissue. Above all we must eliminate eating between meals. Like any other mechanism the digestive system needs rest. But there is a deeper

reason. When food is put into the stomach, the *Prana* or life-force is drawn to that point to take care of it, leaving the brain and other organs temporarily impoverished. This explains why after a hearty meal one finds it so difficult to sing or think or do any serious work. The greater part of the *Prana* is concentrated on the act of digestion; the subconscious faculties are in the ascendant, and all the higher faculties perforce must remain dormant.

The habit of frequent eating or nibbling means that the subconscious in us is being stimulated constantly at the expense of the conscious and superconscious, and the lower nature must overrule more and more the higher. To counterbalance any such possibility and allow our subconscious activities now and then to drop to a minimum it is good to skip a meal from time to time. This is the chief value of fasting. It releases the *Prana* and enables it to become more wholly operative on the higher planes. It also gives nature an interval of freedom in which to cleanse the clogged highways of the system. Nearly everyone takes more impurities than he can throw off between one meal and the next; an occasional period of rest from further assimilation is therefore very beneficial.

There are still other varieties of foods which demand consideration. The water we drink is one. Everyone should take at least six glasses of fresh pure water daily. Air also is a food, and without at least one hour's active exercise in the open every day the system cannot be fully nourished. Sleep is another form of food and one to which too little attention is paid. Its effect on the system is determined by the plane of consciousness uppermost during sleep. If we eat heavily and fall asleep, the subconscious is in full play and we wake full of dullness and heaviness, longing only to sleep again. To avoid this, the night meal

if possible should be a light one; or should be taken at least three hours before retiring. If, again, we drop asleep with our mind fixed on our worldly occupations, every nerve tense with suppressed motion, we cannot fail to wake more weary and overwrought than when we went to bed. If, however, we learn to fix our last waking thought on spiritual things, we shall pass unknowingly from prayer into sleep; and our hours of rest will be like a meditation, restoring and purifying the whole organism. The amount of sleep likewise must be regulated. Too much sleep packs the system just as too much solid food does; and instead of resting, produces added heaviness. For the average grown person seven hours suffice, more than that is weakening.

In matters of bodily sustenance, as in every department of the spiritual life, moderation must be the rule. Excess of any kind is harmful. We must not undermine our system by extremes of denial or indulgence. Above all we must not forget that the adoption of any special diet is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Often rigid vegetarians are guilty of a self-righteous superiority which is more poisonous to their system than any amount of meat could be. We must shield ourselves also against losing our sense of proportion and confounding diet with religion. Once a disciple of Swami Vivekananda said to him anxiously, "Swamiji, I have the habit of drinking a cup of tea every morning, do you think it will interfere with my spiritual progress?" "I should not give much for a religion which could be washed off by a cup of tea", was the Swami's quick reply.

But far above the question of feeding the body is the question of feeding the mind, for on this depends the deeper trend of our life. The daily mental diet, like the physical, must contain the three elements. There must be

a certain proportion of heavy food or serious study; some lighter food in the form of wholesome entertainment or recreative reading; and a full share of finer spiritual nutriment, to be gained through meditation and various religious practices. Regularity should be observed just as in feeding the body. There should be a time for work, a time for play and a time for meditation. The men who do most in the world always have fixed hours for their serious intellectual work and for their recreation; because the mental system, like the body, thrives best under a regular regime.

In choosing our study, our amusements and our spiritual exercises, there must be one clearly defined aim. No one has a right to maintain life on any plane without a high purpose, for it is a sacred trust given us to a lofty end. If we do not prove ourselves worthy, we shall pay a bitter price. This is the meaning of the grave injunction given in the Upanishad: "Let him never abuse food"; that is, let man never sustain any part of his being to an ignoble end. In the choice of our mental food, as in choosing food for our body, our aim must be to make ourselves more efficient and more responsive to higher influences.

Desultory reading is like nibbling and inevitably weakens our intellectual power. We should follow out consecutive lines of thought. If we are nervous and emotional, we should avoid over-exciting books dealing with the play of human passions. Also we should be careful not to deaden our mind by an excess of certain kinds of amusement. The moving picture show, for example, has become a sort of opiate with which people drug themselves in order to escape from the pressure of life. Rest and distraction should come rather from dwelling on higher thoughts, or from daily contact with the Source of life. Too much enter-

tainment and social intercourse act upon the system like intoxicants and create an artificial appetite for excitement. The wholesome life is a serene life—one which is free from extremes of emotion. All health of mind and body is to be found in the middle path.

We feed our moral nature by good acts; but even more, by holding ourselves to a high standard of living for the sake of others. Merely plunging into social service is not enough. Too often people leave their own problems at home unsolved and go out to solve those of society; but until we have met our own, we are not fitted to meet those of our fellows. One pauper cannot help another. We must develop our discriminative faculty and acquire a right scale of values. By meditation on the deeper verities of life and by thought association with the Great Ones we must feed and energize our higher nature. Soul hunger is the most terrible form of starvation, and it is that which is gnawing at the world's heart to-day. Men who cannot go a day without food have let the Spirit within them fast through long years; and now they wonder why they are sickening and staggering along the way, conscious only of emptiness and pain as the fruit of their life's effort. Who can revive and nourish these fainting souls? Only those who themselves are full fed of the Spirit and strong in the knowledge of God's might.

Are we preparing ourselves for this highest service to humanity? By our every act, our every word and thought, our every breath even, we are feeding our nature. To what part are we giving the largest share of nutriment —to the brute or the god? "Man consists of the essence of food" the Upanishad says again. We grow by what we feed upon, and in our hands rests the choice of our "daily bread". God grant that it may be of heaven and not of earth.

WHAT IS BRAHMAN

Selection from the Taittiriya-Upanishad

Bhrigu Varuni went to his father Varuna, saying: Sir, teach me what is Brahman (the Supreme). He told him this: Food, breath, eye, ear, mind, speech.

Then he (Varuna) said again to him: That from whence all beings are born; that by which, when born, they live; that into which they enter at their death, try to know that. That is Brahman.

He (Bhrigu) performed *Tapasya* (the practice of rigorous self-discipline or austerity for self-purification). Having performed *Tapasya*,

He perceived that food is Brahman, for from food all beings are produced; by food, when born, they live; and into food they enter at their death.

Having perceived this, he went again to his father Varuna, saying: Sir, teach me what is Brahman. He (Varuna) said to him: Try to know Brahman by *Tapasya*, for *Tapasya* is (the means of knowing) Brahman.

He (Bhrigu) performed *Tapasya*. Having performed *Tapasya*,

He perceived that *Prana* (the life-breath) is Brahman; for from *Prana* these beings are born; by *Prana*, when born, they live; into *Prana* they enter at their death.

Having perceived this, he went again to his father Varuna, saying: Sir, teach me what is Brahman. He (Varuna) said to him: Try to know Brahman by *Tapasya*, for *Tapasya* is (the means of knowing) Brahman.

He (Bhrigu) performed *Tapasya*. Having performed *Tapasya*,

He perceived that mind (*Manas*) is Brahman, for from mind all beings are born; by mind, when born, they live; into mind they enter at their death.

Having perceived this, he went again to his father Varuna, saying: Sir, teach me what is Brahman. He (Varuna) said to him: Try to know Brahman by *Tapasya*, for *Tapasya* is (the means of knowing) Brahman.

He (Bhrigu) performed *Tapasya*. Having performed *Tapasya*,

He perceived that understanding is Brahman; for from understanding these beings are born; by understanding, when born, they live; into understanding they enter at their death.

Having perceived this, he went to his father Varuna, saying: Sir, teach me what is Brahman. He said to him: Try to know Brahman by *Tapasya*, for *Tapasya* is (the means of knowing) Brahman.

He performed *Tapasya*. Having performed *Tapasya*,

He perceived that bliss (*Anandam*) is Brahman, for from bliss all beings are born; by bliss, when born, they live; into bliss they enter at their death. . . .

He who knows this, (recognizes and worships Brahman) as possession in up-breathing and down-breathing, as action in the hands, as walking in the feet. These are the human recognitions (of Brahman as manifested in actions). . . .

Let him worship that Brahman as (his) support and he is supported. Let him worship that Brahman as greatness and he becomes great. Let him worship that Brahman as mind and he becomes endowed with mind power.

(Note: When Bhrigu seeks from his father a knowledge of Brahman, the Ultimate Essence, Varuna begins with the boy's immediate experience. Brahman forms the basis of his bodily life, his sense perceptions, his thought and speech. He is "the eye of the eye, the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind", as the Kena-Upanishad declares. But mere superficial study will not reveal Him, the father re-

minds his son. Being the foundation of life and death, He must be sought for in the depths of being. He is the nutritive power in food and the vital energy in animate creation; each individual mind is merely a wave on His great mind; all understanding is only the kindling of His light in the Soul; and He is that which makes life dear to every heart, that blissful element which all men sense but cannot grasp without struggle.

Thus the boy is led from the more apparent to the subtler aspects of Brahman. But each onward step is preceded by a period of rigid purging by means of *Tapasya*. *Tapas* literally means "heat" and signifies here a purifying fire of self-discipline. Brahman can be known only by performing *Tapasya*, Varuna tells Bhrigu; that is, only the purified in heart can see God. A significant lesson is to be found in the fact that each new and higher vision of Divinity impels Bhrigu to return to his father and ask again to be taught concerning Brahman. The fresh revelation, springing out of further purification, evidently brings to the boy a greater humility; a deeper sense of his ignorance; a consciousness, not of added knowledge, but of the vast stretches of Divine Being still unknown.

Many there be who have sought light and Truth, but without wholly, where they are not found. Till, finally, they came so far from home, they could not back again to gain their quest. And so, by this means, have they missed the Truth, for It is wholly inward, in the ground-work, not without. Whoso in all sincerity will find enlightenment and insight, let him take thought and wait upon this birth within himself, in the ground-work of him: thuswise will all his powers become illumed and even his outer man.

—*Saint Augustine.*

THE CONDITIONS OF PROGRESS

By S. E. Waldo

Words are but clumsy symbols of our thoughts, and thoughts again are but symbols of something behind all thought. We need to understand clearly that what we call mind and thought are also material, that the difference between them and the grosser material forms which we can perceive with the senses is one of degree and not of kind. When the materialist claims that mind is matter he is perfectly right; but when he goes farther and claims that mind has evolved out of protoplasm, he is making a mistake and reversing the real process of evolution, which is that the finer produces the grosser and not the other way. Modern science is only beginning to look behind the more evident forms of life for an explanation of the seen universe. And the advance guard, the men and women who dare to advance new hypotheses and to support them with the evidence of new discoveries, are being met today, just as the earlier pioneers in the realms of scientific research were met long ago, with denial and with ridicule.

Mankind as a whole finds it very hard to depart from established precedents, to walk in new paths, so it vigorously opposes new ideas, preferring to cling to the old views. Of course this is never the attitude of the true scientist. He is always anxious to reach truth, and does not count the cost. The leading minds of today are far in advance of the majority of those who follow after science, walking in the paths marked out long before by those daring souls who ventured into the tangled labyrinth of facts and cleared the way for more plodding investigators to follow.

In every possible field of enquiry, only those succeed who are willing to abandon preconceived notions and who are

sincere and earnest in the search for truth, without being hampered by fear of ridicule or loss of fame. History is ever repeating itself; and sometimes the very men who were once in the van and had to bear the brunt of objections from those they had left behind, become in turn the ones to oppose the farther advance of a new generation. We must realize that never can a halt be called in the march of life. The current rushes on resistlessly, and those who do not go with it are left stranded and forgotten on the shores of time. This is just as true of religion as of science. That is why Vedanta says that the true Vedas must include all revelation that will ever come, as well as what has already been given. The spiritual source is not exhausted, nor is communication with it cut off. The spring is infinite and eternal, and as long as man exists he will get fresh inspiration from it, if he only puts himself into the right conditions to receive it.

The requirements for reaching such a condition are many and may seem hard to those who are still fast bound to the senses. First of all, a man must rise to a plane of intelligence where he can recognize the transitory and unsatisfactory nature of mere sense gratification. When he can clearly perceive that there is something more desirable, and that he prefers that something, he is then ready to start in search of it; but not until then. Just in proportion as the higher attracts him and fills his mind, will the lower cease to rule him and hold him back. But we must never suppose that a mere passing whim, a mere glimpse of the better way, will be enough to hold us steady in its pursuit. The conviction must go deeper than that; it must be a strong longing for the real and eternal, and an eager desire for truth at any price. A real thirst for knowledge will always lead to patient endeavor to satisfy it. But even

as we quench the thirst, we shall find a new thirst arising; and we must push on and on if we would be satisfied. Nowhere in the world of the senses can that satisfaction be found. In the realm of mind the gratification is greater and longer in duration, but even there the time comes when we are ready to repeat with Solomon of old: "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

Yet we shall not abandon the search for satisfaction; we shall turn to that which is unchangeable, which will not crumble in our hands. We shall turn to the realm beyond body and mind and there seek for the fulfillment of our heart's desire. Let us suppose that we have reached that stage and are anxiously looking for the eternal background of all the fleeting panorama of life. Perhaps the question comes to us in the old, old form, "What shall I do to be saved?" This question has received many answers, but we shall only deal with the answer given by Vedanta. Its answer is, "You must realize your true nature, your real one-ness with the Divine, the Self of the universe." Vedanta does not tell you to believe anything blindly, or to rule your life by any creed or doctrine whatsoever. It does not even tell you to follow any particular form of religion, but to take that one which is best suited to you and to follow it in sincerity and in truth. These two are essential to success. Vedanta points out the one gateway through which every aspirant must pass, be his creed what it may, and that is the gateway of self-conquest. Here every religion is agreed, though the methods may vary. This is the true meaning underlying all ideas of sacrifice; through it only can the gateway be passed. We must sacrifice the lower to the higher. Childish things have to be left behind when manhood is attained. To cling to them and try still to enjoy them is a weakness which soon destroys itself.

THE MESSAGE OF THE EAST

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East"
Ezekiel.

"Light shall come again from the East"
Tyndall.

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THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

By Swami Paramananda

The Spirit of Christ cannot be realized merely by belonging to a church. It comes from something in the heart, and only to those who "do the Will of the Father", as Christ Himself said. The Divine Will is one and universal, and when we unite ourselves with that Will, we work for the universal good. The Christ Ideal is not confined to Christendom, as the sky overhead does not cover one land or one people only. Thus there lived in India not many years ago a Brahmin saint, who had no contact with Christianity and yet who so far exemplified the teaching of Jesus: "him that taketh away thy cloke, forbid him not to take thy coat also", that the following incident among many others is told of him:

One day a thief entered his little hut and gathered into a bundle the few cooking pots and provisions which he had there; but hearing the saint approach, the man dropped the bundle and ran. The saint, picking up the bundle, ran after him. The thief, believing that he was being pursued, ran faster and faster, but finally the saint overtook him and laid the bundle before him, saying: "Take it, it is yours". The exhausted thief looked at the saint wonderstruck. Then lifting the bundle, he followed the saint

back to his hut and became one of his most ardent disciples. From such examples we must realize that religion is not merely subscribing to a creed; it is wholly a matter of living and feeling.

That one who is capable of feeling the joys and griefs of all other men as his own, he alone is a true example of the Christ Spirit whatever may be the form of his faith. When a follower of Christ shuts his heart against a child of God in any faith, he makes a mockery of his religion, because it is contrary to what Christ taught. Christ was willing to sacrifice His life even, in the service of God. When God so dominates our heart that we are willing also to give up our life, then we are true to the Ideal which He preached. We must create within us an atmosphere of holiness and loving brotherhood which will unite us, first with God and then with our fellowmen.

At the present time we are very proud of our mechanical inventions and social progress; but we do not see that our spiritual ideals have become faded. We look upon religion as a matter of tradition and as an important factor in maintaining social order. But religion is something more than that. When we are put through the greatest difficulties and do not grow faint-hearted, that is religion. And whether we are Christian, Mohammedan, Hindu or Jew, if we can maintain the same living faith in God, the same ungrudging love for His children in all circumstances, then we are religious.

How do we know there is a God until we have proved it? Until our Soul has communed with Him and lived close to Him, we cannot be absolutely sure that He exists. Religion is a question of plunging within and living with the Ideal. When the Christ Spirit shall truly seize the human heart, then will dawn a new era of civilization.

Whenever the world is thwarted and saddened, it looks for a new vision; but when all goes well, it settles back into the old way. It is natural to turn to God when we are forsaken by men and misunderstood by friends; but we do not truly worship Him until we come seeking nothing of Him. We must outgrow the habit of bargaining, of asking a fair return in personal benefit for our service to God. That attitude always limits our capacity to express the Divine. It also limits the power of God to bless us; for He cannot give us more than we are willing to take; and if we pray for some special thing, setting our heart on that, He cannot bestow on us a greater blessing. That is why Christ's prayer was: "Not my will, but Thine be done."

The Divine Incarnations are spiritual sight-givers. They are true redeemers, but they represent a state, not personalities. The differences we find in these Messengers are very small. There are differences in language and in the detail of the methods used, which are accounted for by differences in the speech and customs of the people among whom they came; but fundamentally they all proclaim the same spirit of love and tolerance. Krishna (1400 B.C.), Buddha and Laotze (500 B.C.), Christ and all the other Saviours give the same message. The differences which appear spring from the varying human interpretations applied to them, because the followers of the Great Ones have not been able to realize the ideals which their special Masters set forth.

There is no need of intolerance. There is one infinite Godhead and infinity is all-inclusive. If people would bear this in mind, we would at once eliminate all these ideas of difference between East and West, North and South; and we would see all living beings as parts of one human family. Whether a saint has become saintly by following the

teachings of Christ or Buddha or Krishna makes no difference. What do we gain by hatred or condemnation? We harm ourselves more than anyone. If we can realize these deeper facts, we shall shake off a great deal which is non-essential in our lives.

Christ taught that before we lay our gift on the altar, we must go and make peace with our brother; that is, we must remove all that is harsh and impure from our heart. The Vedic sages gave the same teaching. We all think how wonderful it would be to have the brotherhood of man; but this will never be possible until we have established the Fatherhood of God; and we cannot establish the Fatherhood of God until we see all men as children of one Father. All ideas of difference in caste, creed, race or nation must go down. We are children of the one God. It is an absolute fact. The moment we truly feel ourselves to be His children, there will come to us a new power for good. Those who are not faint-hearted, who are not content merely with intellectual gifts, but who have great hearts free from all pettiness, must work for this larger ideal of unity.

And when this broader vision comes to us, do not let us talk merely, but let us go onward and forward until we realize it in our life. An Ideal is something to be carried with us and put into practice at every moment. It requires unshakable faith, however, to abide by any Ideal. Christ's faith in His Father did not waver even on the cross. When this comes, we can walk through fire and overcome insurmountable obstacles.

The Christ Spirit cannot exist where there is the least self-seeking. We learn this lesson from the life of every Saviour. They gave their Message, whether men received it or not, and they were ready to sacrifice their life for

those very ones who denounced them. So must we do. When like Christ we can disregard the petty things of life and go bravely on—that is what will give us real strength.

The more we can live up to the Ideal which was in Christ, the more shall we become one with the universal Ideal. We must not think that our duty ends when we have heard the teachings of a great Saviour. Our duty is not ended until we have fashioned our lives after the life of the Ideal; and made all our thoughts, words and deeds like unto His Whom we worship. These Great Ones came as men to show that what they have done we can do. Outwardly they may appear like human beings, but inwardly their heart and mind are all full of God. So must our heart be full of God also, if we would manifest the Christ Spirit.

Let us try to reflect in our life all the beautiful lessons set forth in the life of Jesus. Forgiveness, love, fortitude —these are the lessons we learn from Him; and as we become imbued with them, His Spirit will abide more and more with us and grow, until we shall truly realize the power of His words: "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect". When everything is still, when the world in us lies asleep, then is the Christ Spirit born in us. It is in the moments of serenity and silence that we feel its presence. Let us strive to awaken that Spirit in our hearts. Let us connect ourselves wholly with God. As we live in Spirit, we shall be born anew in Spirit.

The Christ Spirit does not come to us only on certain occasions. When we seek Him, He becomes our constant companion. We are very much alone so long as we depend on worldly association. Human friendship changes because it is based on changing things, but Divine friendship never changes. If we lean upon that, we shall never

feel forsaken. We are not strong in any other way, but only when we put our whole trust in the Divine.

No matter where we stand or what we are, if we can kindle the fire of devotion in us, that will burn all our impurities to ashes. We must, however, sacrifice our foolish egotism and vanity. We must be able to say, as Christ said, "Thy Will be done". Also we must never grow faint-hearted or lose faith either in God or in our own higher nature. Let us pray from the depth of our being that we may grow daily in purity and holiness and that we may be worthy of our Ideal. Without His strength we are weak. Without His support, we stumble. But if we call upon Him with our whole heart, He will surely come and manifest His Spirit in us. Then shall we realize that we are born of Spirit and that our true life is eternal and infinite.

HYMN

By St. Patrick. 5th Century

(Composed while going up to Tara to preach the Gospel. Certain enemies, it is said, lay in hiding to attack him, but when he passed he saw only a wild deer with a fawn. Not all of the hymn is given here.)

I bind myself to-day to a strong strength, to a calling on the Trinity.
I believe in the Threeness, with a firm faith in the Oneness in the Creator of the world.

I bind myself to-day to the strength of Christ's birth and His baptism;
To the strength of His crucifixion and His burial;
To the strength of His resurrection and His ascension. . .

I bind myself to-day to a strong strength
In the might of heavens and the glory of sun
The radiance of snow and the glow of fire
The flash of lightning and the swiftness of wind
The depths of sea, the stability of earth, and steadfastness of rock.

I bind myself to-day to God's strength to pilot me;
God's power to uphold me;
God's wisdom to guide me;
God's eye to look before me;
God's ear to hear for me;
God's word to speak for me;
God's hand to guard me;
God's path to lie before me;
God's shield to protect me;
God's host to save me. . . .

So have I called on all these strengths
To come between me and every fierce and merciless power
That may come between my body and my Soul.

Christ with me, Christ before me;
Christ behind me, Christ in me;
Christ in lying down, Christ in sitting;
Christ in rising up.
Christ in the heart of everyone that thinks of me;
Christ in the mouth of everyone that speaks to me;
Christ in every eye that sees me;
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I bind myself to-day to a strong strength, to a calling on the Trinity;
I believe in a Threeness, with a firm faith in a Oneness in the Creator of the world.

SIMPLICITY OF INTENTION

By John Ruysbroeck

By what path do we go forth to seek the Lord? By the way of perfect likeness and fullest union. Every good deed, however small, if it be directed to God by simplicity of intention, increases in us the Divine likeness, and deepens in us the flow of eternal life. Simplicity of intention gathers together in the unity of the spirit the scattered powers of the Soul, and joins the spirit itself to God. It is this same simplicity that refers all to God and that makes of our virtues an offering to Him. Entering into and transcending itself, traversing all worlds of being, surpassing all creatures, it meets God in its own depths.

I call singleness of purpose that which sees only God, referring all things to Him according to duty and truth. It casts out all pretence, hypocrisy, and duplicity. In every action of our lives we must hold to this simplicity, must practise and cultivate it above all else. It is this which leads man into the presence of God, which gives light and courage, freeing him to-day as on the Day of Judgment from all vain and unworthy fear. It is the single eye of which the Lord speaks, as giving light to the whole body, the whole active life, and delivering it from evil.

Trusting in God and faithful to Him it has hope and charity as companions. It conquers our sinful affections and gives peace, stilling the discordant tumult of our nature. By it alone are we secure in grace and in the Divine likeness in the unity of the spirit, seeking God by the path of the virtues. It is this simplicity which will, at the last, offer to God our whole vital activity, fashioning us from hour to hour to a more faithful resemblance. It is this same simplicity which will carry us beyond even ourselves into the transcendent abyss where God dwells, giving us the

peace of the abyss, and that heritage that has been prepared to us from all eternity.

The whole life of the spirit and its activity consist solely in the Divine likeness and this simplicity of intention; and the final peace abides on the heights in simplicity also, in simplicity of essence. Men possess virtues and the Divine likeness in differing measure; in greater or less degree have they found their own essence in the depth of themselves, according to their dignity. But God fulfils all; and each, clearer or fainter, according to the measure of his love, possesses the sense of God's presence in the depths of his own being.

This contact is Christ's call to the spirit: "Pass out of thyself, act in the depths." It invites, attracts, and draws the spirit to that deepest point in its own interior life at which the creature is able to act. Then by the power of love the spirit passes beyond the region of effort into that unity out of whose midst sprang the living flame that touched it. When God has found a resting-place and a dwelling within the depths of our spirit, when by His grace and our likeness to our Father in Heaven there is found in us the unity of the spirit, God resolves to visit this unity continually and to glorify it perpetually by the Divine operation of His Word and the measureless outpouring of His love. It is His pleasure to dwell in the spirit quickened by love. When He has won and conquered and created in us His own likeness, He would seek that likeness, enrich it immeasurably with marvellous gifts, open within us the way to loftier virtues, create in us a more radiant likeness.

It is Christ's will that we shall dwell in the essential unity of our spirit, and that we dwell there with Him, above creatures and their human excellences, established in His

riches, in the midst of His treasures. He wills that we shall be adorned by these gifts and graces, and that in the fullness of our active life amidst all its daily practical duties we yet enter continually into the depths of our spirit, into the unity and into the Divine likeness.

At each moment of time in the fullest meaning of the word *now* Christ is born in us and the Holy Ghost proceeds, bearing all Its gifts. May we offer to the adornment of these gifts of the Holy Ghost the likeness of Him in ourselves, but to His divinely regenerating power may we offer the sacred unity of our essence!

NAVAHO INDIAN BENEDICTION

Paraphrase by Wm. Norman Guthrie

(From Leaves of The Greater Bible.)

O God, Thou Who revealest Thyself, Whose abode is in the white light of heaven:
In beauty may we walk with Thee (as becometh children of the light!)
With beauty before us do Thou cause us to go forward
With beauty behind us do Thou cause us to go forward
With beauty beneath us do Thou cause us to go forward
With beauty high above us do Thou cause us to go forward
With beauty enfolding us all about do Thou cause us to go forward
(In the path appointed unto us of Thee);
For all things soever that were, are made perfect only of Thee in blessed beauty,
Whatso now hath his being is perfecting in beauty,
And all that shall be, will be made perfect in beauty,
Yea, all things are made perfect of Thee in Thine exceeding beauty, (O glorious God of light!)

ESSENTIALS OF A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

Adapted from The Brahmavadin

Religion as an aspiration after God and a desire for union with Him is a necessity of our nature as intellectual and spiritual beings. It is the silent power working in the Soul of man, urging it on to seek rest in the Infinite. It represents the eternal struggle between the higher and truer self of reason and the lower self of appetite, and expresses itself in the endeavour of man to find peace and blessedness in making himself one with the infinite Thought and Being by the surrender of his human will to the Divine. The consciousness of the vanity and insufficiency of the world lies at the root of this religious sentiment and creates for man the need of an abiding reality as the object of his love, reverence and awe. This spiritual cry for light and love is heard in all lands and ages, and constitutes the chief glory of man as a rational being. Wherever this cry is heard, there we see religion making its appearance in response to it as a power, and supplying one of the most perennial demands of the human Soul.

Though religion is thus a universal phenomenon, being no less than an indestructible element of human nature, it unfolds itself in the history of the world in an infinite diversity of forms and faiths, each representing a certain phase or aspect of human thought and culture. Religion is not an isolated force in human society acting by itself, but one of the many forces, though unquestionably the most important one, acting and re-acting upon one another and conjointly making for human progress and civilization. In its actual working it is colored and modified by the physical, social and political environment in which it grows. It it the influence of these external conditions which makes religions appear diverse and even antagonistic at times.

But there is an essential unity underlying them all, implying the same aspirations, the same longings and the same ideals.

This unity cannot be fully traced in any one actually existing system of religion, but may be discerned with some approximation to truth in the tendencies of all religions, and in the lines on which all religions are developing themselves into higher and higher stages of perfection. It appears as a germ in tribal religions, as a plant in national religions, and as a full-formed tree with fruit and flower in the universal religion. By universal religion we mean the religion eternal or *Sanatana Dharma* proclaimed by the greatest sages and saints of the world. It is the Voice of God heard in the depths of the human heart— the Voice which is guiding the destinies of nations and educating humanity to higher and ever higher levels of purity and perfection.

The first and foremost characteristic of this religion eternal is that its conceptions of Nature, man, and God are such as can be harmonized with the highest generalizations of science and philosophy. It is the inevitable consequence of the fundamental oneness of human nature that there shall be no discord in the results of its many-sided activities. Science, philosophy, and religion deal with the same phenomena but only look at them from different standpoints. The conclusions they arrive at are essentially identical and point to the same verities. A religion which militates against the declaration of science and philosophy stands self-condemned.

The universal religion not only spiritualizes Nature, but also naturalizes man. It used to be an article of pious faith that man was a unique being with unique faculties standing apart and above Nature as its lord. The doctrine

of organic evolution has cast this crudity to the winds by establishing the fellowship between man and Nature, organic and inorganic, and uniting them into one vast and indissolubly connected whole. Man is no longer an independent entity, but a part of Nature, only reflecting the spirit that underlies Nature more fully and vividly. In him Nature awakens to a consciousness of itself and becomes aware of the mighty forces and potencies working in its bosom and the intelligence guiding its operation. Thus the dualism between man and Nature disappears and they are regarded as stages in the evolution of the spirit or as aspects of the same spiritual reality.

Again the universal religion has exalted and highly spiritual conceptions of God, which are in perfect accord with the spirit of science and philosophy. He is not simply a magnified and non-natural Being ruling the universe by His fiat from an extra-cosmic sphere, but a Spirit, infinite and absolute, immanent in all Nature, "who lives through all life, extends through all extent, spreads undivided, and operates unspent." He is everywhere equally present and potent, and as perfect and complete in an atom as in the whole universe. He is not a transcendent Being in the solitude of the world beyond, but a Being whose presence is reflected in all order and beauty, "in all thinking things and all objects of all thought." The Svetasvatara-Upanishad describes God as "the one eternal Reality hidden in all things. He is everywhere. He pervades all things. He is the final refuge of all beings. He witnesses all. He is the manifestation of all life. Those who know Him reach immortality."

Another characteristic of the universal religion is its inwardness and self-communion. The worship of God is purely spiritual and meditative, carried on in the silent tem-

ple of a pure and upright heart, without the help of ceremonies or mediation of priests. All the pomp and show of ceremonialism has no abiding place in the universal religion. Religion in this stage is a principle of inner inspiration rather than of external law or system. God is best worshipped, not by the flowers of Nature, but by the spiritual flowers of the heart. A devotee must worship his eternal Father with eight kinds of flowers. They are Tolerance, Control over the senses, Philanthropy, Forbearance, Knowledge, Devotion, Contemplation and Truthfulness. The best sacrifice we can make to God is to surrender ourselves to His will and for His service and claim nothing as our own.

Another feature of the universal religion is the spirit of toleration, arising from the recognition of the fact that all the religions of the world are members of an organic unity. All religions embody in more or less fulness and perfection the same eternal principles, the same longings of the heart, the same aspirations of the Soul. Their forms may vary, but the same spirit is working upwards and onwards in all. The Lord says in the Bhagavad-Gita: "I am in every religion as a thread through a string of pearls. And wherever thou seest extraordinary holiness and extraordinary power raising and purifying humanity, know thou that I am there." All religions therefore are entitled to respect and veneration. From the very necessity of things religions differ according to the circumstances and environments in which they grow and flourish. These differences generally relate to the non-essentials, such as rites and ceremonies, modes of worship and discipline, organization of the church, etc. But the spirit which expresses itself in all these is the same, and we must judge religions by their spirit and not merely by the forms in which they embody themselves.

It requires no small amount of philosophic insight and charity to put ourselves in the place of our rival religionists, to understand their principles and practices, and sympathetically discern their essential similarity with those which we cherish; but this attitude is essential to a religion which professes itself to be universal.

A peculiar kind of toleration which must find a place in a scheme of universal religion consists not merely in recognizing the lower ritualistic and symbolical forms of worship as indispensable aids to spiritual culture in the earlier stages of intellectual progress, but in taking them up kindly and reverently; breathing new life, meaning and sanctity into them; and working them up into the fabric of the universal religion. This process of transmutation is recommended by two important considerations. It has been said "that no one external form can adequately express all living religious ideas; and yet there must be external forms in order that religious ideals may be perpetuated." The necessity of some form or other being thus recognized, it is better to adopt old forms, purified and with new spirit infused into them, rather than invent new ones; as this course would tend to preserve the continuity of religious thought and emphasize the principle of their essential unity.

Another important characteristic of the universal religion is cosmopolitanism. It must throw open the doors of heaven, blessedness and peace to all men alike, irrespective of caste, color or creed. "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek." "Of a truth," said Peter to Cornelius, "I perceive that God is no respector of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him." The Lord says in the Gita: "I have neither friend nor foe. I am the same to all. And all who

worship me dwell in Me and I in them." A pure and upright heart filled with intense and unceasing love to God and His creatures is the abode of Divine grace, whether it belongs to the Jew or the Gentile, to the Brahmin or the Pariah. Whoever feels himself at one with man and Nature and sees God in all and all in God, casts away every sin and imperfection and becomes the child of grace. This cosmopolitan spirit is the very essence of universal religion.

A universal religion must further recognize and provide for the divergences and variations in human character, capacity and temperament. The ideal of religion is one—that is, Self-realization, union with the highest Self through self-renunciation and conquest over the lower self. This ideal may be attained in various ways, such as work, worship or intellectual intuition, according as the search after the Self is carried on along the lines of will or emotion or intellect. No one of these methods will suit all natures and accord with all temperaments. The diversity in the psychological constitution of human nature demands a wide and varied field of possible alternatives in developing itself and realizing its highest capabilities. This variety in the means and methods of Self-realization must find a distinct recognition in the working programme of the universal religion, that all men may be afforded opportunities to work for their spiritual emancipation each in his own way, and give full play to the many-sided energies of human nature.

Brethren! Meet together; talk together; let your minds apprehend alike; common be your prayer; common be your purpose; common be your desires; united be your hearts; united be your intentions; so that there may be a thorough union among you. —*Rig-Veda.*

THE ESSENES

By Sister Devamata

The Essenes appear in Jewish history as an exotic element, having little in common with the ideals or customs of orthodox Judaism. Their origin is a matter of conjecture. Some writers claim that during many centuries before the advent of Jesus of Nazareth they were a very numerous Order of monks living near Lake Mareotis and other similar regions. Theophilus Gale, an English scholar of the 17th century, finds reason to believe that they sprang into existence "in or immediately after the Babylonian captivity." A few historians try to carry them back to the time of Moses, others to the prophets; but impartial investigators are tending more and more to look upon them as the direct outcome of contact with far-Eastern thought and culture. Ernest Renan in his profound study of the Israelitish People notes various traces of Buddhist propaganda in Palestine prior to the Christian era; and other careful scholars confirm his testimony.

"It is asserted by calm thinkers like Dean Mansel", Arthur Lillie states, " that within two generations of the time of Alexander the Great, the missionaries of Buddha made their appearance at Alexandria. This theory is confirmed—in the East by the Asoka monuments—in the West by Philo. He expressly maintains the identity in creed of the higher Judaism and that of the Gymnosophists of India who abstained from the 'sacrifice of living animals'—in a word, the Buddhists." It is generally admitted that in the 3rd century before Christ the Indian Emperor Asoka, a fervent convert to Buddhism, despatched teachers to every quarter of the world then known to preach the gospel of the Awakened One.

"The spirit of this religion was the spirit of proselytism";

Mr. King writes in his work on the Gnostics; "The Buddhists from the very beginning sent out their missionaries. . . . From the mainland they converted Ceylon, Japan, and the recesses of Tartary, and penetrated into regions where their former presence and tolerated existence are now little dreamed of. * * * That Buddhism had been actually planted in the dominion of the Seleucidae (Greek kings) and the Ptolemies (Palestine belonging to the former) before the beginning of the third century B.C. is proved to demonstration by a passage in the Edicts of Asoka, grandson of the famous Chandragupta, the Sandracottus of the Greeks. These edicts are engraven on a rock at Girnur, in Guzerat." The stone-graven record here referred to reads: "And the Greek king (Yoniraja) besides, by whom the Chapta (Egyptian) Kings Ptolemaios, and Gonkakenos (Antigonus Gonatas) have been induced to allow that both here and in foreign countries everywhere the people may follow the doctrine of the religion of Devanipya, wheresoever it reaches."

The most conclusive evidence of Buddhistic influence, however, is an internal one, to be found in the habits and teachings of the Essenes themselves; for their rule of life, while standing out in sharp contrast to Judaic custom, is strikingly similar to that observed by every Buddhist monk. Pliny and Philo both speak at some length of them, but our chief source of information is the Jewish historian Josephus, who was born at Jerusalem in 37 A.D. It is said that after attending the best schools of Jerusalem, he withdrew into the desert to sit at the feet of Banos, who is believed to have been either a disciple of John the Baptist or an Essene. It seems certain from his own statement that in his youth he himself lived with the Essenes, although for too short a time to gain initiation into the inner

mysteries of the brotherhood; hence his account of them is drawn from direct observation.

According to his narrative there were about four thousand members in the Order, who maintained themselves mainly by tilling the soil. All properties were held in common and were managed by stewards elected from the brotherhood. They did not marry, but often adopted young children and trained them in the lofty principles of the Order; for "they exceeded all other men in virtue and righteousness." "And as for their piety towards God" he writes, "it is very extraordinary: for before sunrising they speak not a word about profane matters." After a time of prayer, "everyone of them is sent away by their curators to exercise some of those arts wherein they are skilled, in which they labor with great diligence till the fifth hour, after which they assemble themselves together again into one place; and when they have clothed themselves in white veils, they then bathe their bodies in cold water.

"And after this purification is over, they every one meet together in an apartment of their own, into which it is not permitted to any one of another sect to enter; while they go after a pure manner into the dining-room, as into a certain holy temple, and quietly set themselves down; upon which the baker lays them loaves in order; the cook also brings a single plate of one sort of food and sets it before every one of them; but a priest says grace before meat and it is unlawful for anyone to taste of the food before grace be said. The same priest, when he hath dined, says grace again after meat; and when they begin and when they end they praise God, as He that bestows their food upon them; after which they lay aside their (white) garments, and betake themselves to their labors again till the evening; then they return home to supper after the same

manner. Nor is there ever any clamor or disturbance to pollute their house, which silence thus kept in their house appears to foreigners like some tremendous mystery."

According to other authorities not only did they bathe and, laying aside their brown working garments, clothe themselves in white; but they stood throughout their meal, observing silence as at a sacrament. Their food was both scant and coarse. They did not believe in animal sacrifice and ate only their own fruits of the soil. They wore their garments until they were thread-bare or torn in pieces; and they were forced to follow a most austere daily routine. It is said that because of the great simplicity and regularity of their life, they not infrequently attained the age of one hundred years or more.

Any one who desired to join the Order was admitted on probation for one year, receiving a small hatchet or paddle, a girdle and a white garment. At the end of that time, if the neophite had given evidence that he could observe continence and bear the discipline imposed, he was made a partaker of the waters of purification. Then his fortitude and temper were tried for two years more, after which, if found worthy, he was admitted to the brotherhood. Before he was allowed to partake of the common food, however, he was obliged to make a solemn vow that he would reverence God, observe justice towards all men and harm no one, either of his own accord or by command of another; that if placed in authority he would at no time abuse that authority or endeavor to outshine those under him in his dress or mode of living; that he would be an unswerving lover of truth and always uncover falsehood; that he would keep his hands clean from theft and his Soul from unlawful gain.

The brothers were divided into four grades. The first

state or grade resulted from baptism and seems to correspond with the first Buddhistic state, those who have entered the (mystic) stream. Patience, purity and the mastery of passion were aimed at by the devotees of both Orders in the intermediate stages; while in the last, special powers—healing the sick, casting out evil spirits, etc., were gained. The most rigid obedience was exacted from every member. Only in one thing was perfect liberty granted—to show mercy and to aid those in need. The brothers were tireless in their acts of benevolence, and the sick and aged were made the special objects of their tender care.

That they had unusual gifts of healing is proved by their name, which is supposed to have come from the Chaldee word *Asa*, meaning "healer"; although some historians derive it from another Chaldee word *Sacha* meaning "bathers" or "baptists". The rite of baptism was strongly emphasized by them; and this will explain the title borne by John the Baptist, since he is believed to have been an Essene. The Talmud speaks of them as *Chasidim* (pious men) or *Nazirim* (abstinents). "The Essenes were called physicians of the soul, or *Therapeutae*, being resident both in Judea and Egypt," Godfrey Higgins writes in his *Anacalypsis*; "they probably spoke or had their sacred books in Chaldee."

Their code of ethics was threefold—love of God, love of virtue, and love of man. Perfection was measured by the power to commune with the Holy Spirit. "They contemn the miseries of life and are above pain by the generosity of their mind," Josephus tells us again. "And as for death, if it will be for their glory, they esteem it better than living always; and indeed our war with the Romans gave abundant evidence what great Souls they had in their trials, wherein, although they were tortured and distorted,

burnt and torn to pieces . . . they smiled in their very pains, and laughed those to scorn who inflicted torments upon them, and resigned up their Souls with great alacrity, as expecting to receive them again". Their firm faith in the immortality of the Soul undoubtedly fortified them in the hour of martyrdom, as did also their unfaltering habit of righteous dealing. "If thou leavest (the Divine law) for one day, it will leave thee for two", is one of their authentic sayings quoted in the Talmud.

Just what relation they bore to Jesus cannot be determined. The strong resemblances to be found in the precepts of the Essenes and those preached by Christ furnish strong grounds for believing that there was a close association of thought and feeling, whether bred of immediate personal intercourse or indirect contact through John the Baptist. The Essenes admonished their followers to seek God and His righteousness before all things; they forbade the laying up of treasures upon earth. Every applicant for admission to the brotherhood was required to sell all his possessions and divide them among the poor brethren. "It is a law among them", Josephus declares, "that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the Order," just as in Acts (II. 44-45) we read: "All that believed were together and had all things in common, and sold all their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had needs."

Service, not authority, was the ideal held before them. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant," was their daily teaching. The Order commanded its disciples to swear no oath, but to answer yea, yea, nay, nay. When they set out on a mission, they were not permitted to take gold or silver or extra clothing.

They never offered animal sacrifice, as was the custom in the Jewish Temple, but they taught that each man must present his body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. Every member was enjoined to lead a life of such purity and holiness as to be true temples of the Holy Spirit and to be able to prophesy, or, as Paul puts it, "covet to prophesy."

These and numerous other similarities in the teaching have led many Christian writers to advance the belief that Jesus was Himself an Essene; but there is no historical evidence for such a claim. The Essenes could not have borrowed their teachings from Christian sources since they long antedated the time of Christ. Nor need we infer necessarily that Jesus drew His mode of teaching from them. Both were the expressions of a new order of things. Strong waves of foreign influence had swept one by one over Jewish thought. From Persia, from Egypt, from Greece, from India had come new lessons in a greater universality, a broader altruism, a sterner asceticism; and those minds who were mobile enough to respond could not but react against the crystallized formalism of the Snyagogue.

The Essenes provided centres where this new thought could germinate and grow, until it culminated in the mighty message of the Son of Man. Whether or not they had a part in preparing Jesus for His later work, it is certain that they prepared men to receive Him. The baptism of John cleansed the hearts of the waiting multitude and made them ready for the deeper baptism of the Christ. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance," he declared, "but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

REPORTS

The report of the Vivekananda Society for 1918 shows a year of increased activity along various lines. In addition to public and private religious meetings, Feasts and classes, special relief work was organized and carried through in an efficient manner during the influenza epidemic and the North Bengal flood. The homoeopathic Charitable Dispensary shows an increase in cases treated. More students were aided financially and with books than in the preceding year, while the library has had an encouraging growth in volumes donated and in the number of books issued.

* * * *

Encouraging reports are coming to us from Louisville in connection with Sister Devamata's visit there. During the week of November 16th she spoke at the Louisville Truth Centre each day except Saturday. All her lectures and classes have been well attended by most appreciative audiences. She also gave during the week several interviews and a meditation class at a private house. A special lecture was arranged at the Louisville Public Library on "Robert Browning in the Light of Eastern Thought." Her talk on the "Development of the Devotional Nature" was found especially helpful to all students.

* * * *

Swami Paramananda resumed charge of all services and classes at the Vedanta Centre of Boston on November 1st. Besides the two regular Sunday services he is giving a series of talks on the Mundaka-Upanishad every Tuesday evening. These talks are proving most helpful and are being carefully preserved for the second volume of the Upanishads. On Thanksgiving instead of the regular Thursday Evening class a special devotional service was held in the Chapel at 5 P. M. to commemorate the occasion.

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