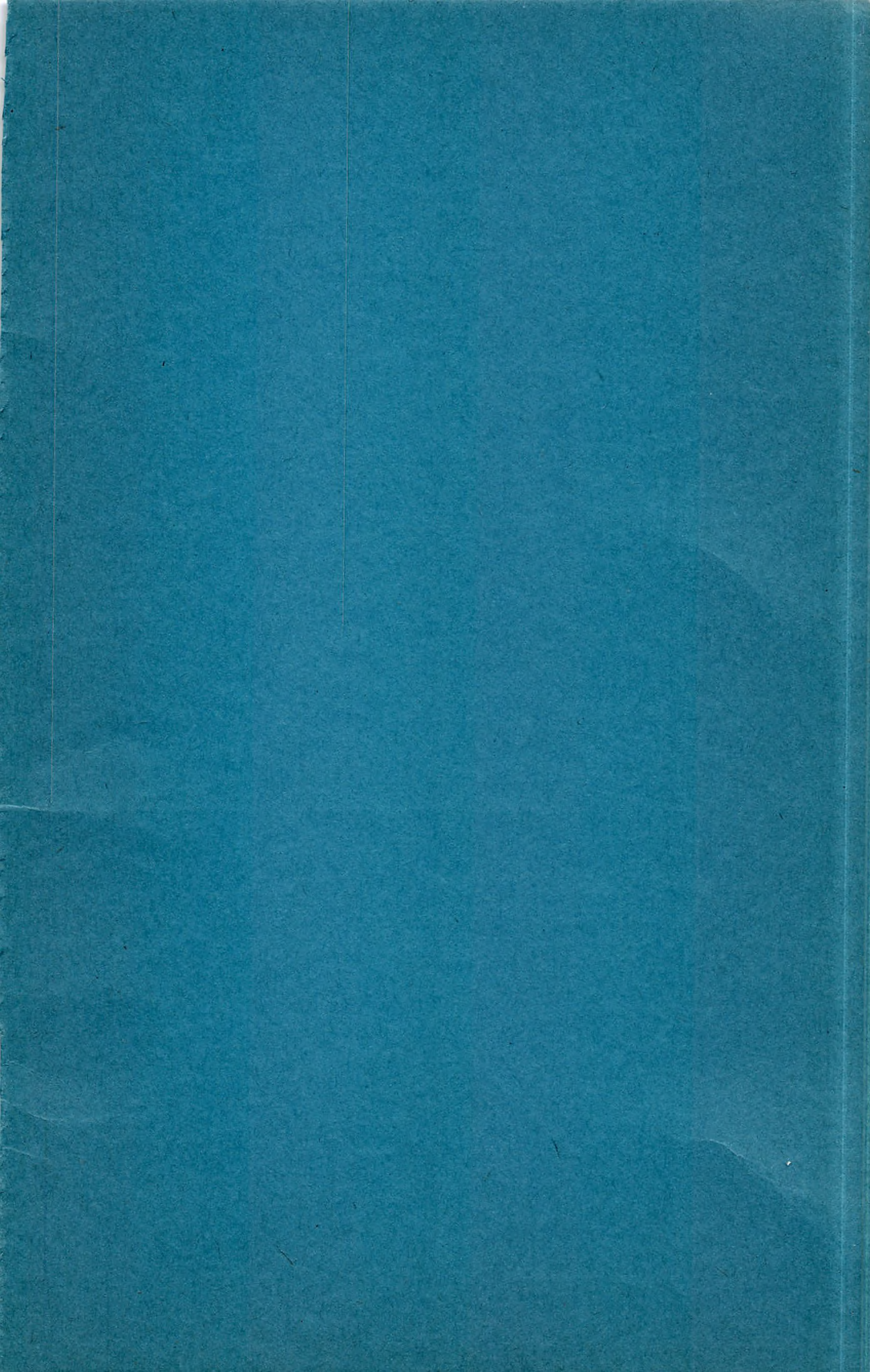


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The Knower of the Atman

From the Vivekachudamani of Shankara

When a great soul has found perfect tranquillity by freeing his mind from all distracting thoughts and completely realizing the Truth, then he no longer needs sacred places, moral disciplines, set hours, postures, directions or objects for his meditation. His knowledge of the Atman depends upon no special circumstances or conditions.

In order to know that a jar is a jar are any special conditions required? Only that our means of perception, the eyes, shall be free from defect. This alone reveals the object.

The Atman is eternally present. It is revealed by transcendental experience, which is not dependent upon place, time or rituals of self-purification.

I do not require any special condition or proof in order to know that my name is Devadatta. Similarly, for a knower of Brahman, the knowledge that "I am Brahman" does not require any proof.

The Atman, shining with its own light, causes this apparent universe. But how can anything in this universe reveal the Atman? Apart from the Atman, these appearances are worthless, bodiless, unreal.

The Vedas, the Puranas, all scriptures and all living creatures only exist because the Atman exists. How then can any of them reveal the Atman, which is the revealer of everything?

This Atman shines with its own light. Its power is infinite. It is beyond sense-knowledge. It is the source of all experience. He who knows the Atman is free from every kind of bondage. He is full of glory. He is the greatest of the great.

The things perceived by the senses cause him neither grief nor pleasure. He is not attached to them. Neither does he shun them. Constantly delighting in the Atman he is always at play within himself. He tastes the sweet, unending bliss of the Atman and is satisfied.

The child plays with his toys, forgetting even hunger and physical pain. In like manner, the knower of Brahman takes his

delight in the Atman, forgetting all thought of "I" and "mine."

He gets his food easily by begging alms, without anxiety or care. He drinks from the clear stream. He lives unfettered and independent. He sleeps without fear in the forest or on the cremation-ground. He does not need to wash or dry his clothes, for he wears none. The earth is his bed. He walks the highway of Vedanta. His playmate is Brahman, the everlasting.

The knower of the Atman does not identify himself with his body. He rests within it, as if within a carriage. If people provide him with comforts and luxuries, he enjoys them and plays with them like a child. He bears no outward mark of a holy man. He remains quite unattached to the things of this world.

He may wear costly clothing, or none. He may be dressed in deer or tiger skin or clothed in pure Knowledge. He may seem like a madman, or like a child, or sometimes like an unclean spirit. Thus, he wanders the earth.

The man of contemplation walks alone. He lives desireless amidst the objects of desire. The Atman is his eternal satisfaction. He sees the Atman present in all things.

Sometimes he appears to be a fool, sometimes a wise man. Sometimes he seems splendid as a king, sometimes feeble-minded. Sometimes he is calm and silent. Sometimes he draws men to him, as a python attracts its prey. Sometimes people honor him greatly, sometimes they insult him. Sometimes they ignore him. That is how the illumined soul lives, always absorbed in the highest bliss.

He has no riches, yet he is always contented. He is helpless, yet of mighty power. He enjoys nothing, yet he is continually rejoicing. He has no equal, yet he sees all men as his equals.

He acts, yet is not bound by his action. He reaps the fruit of past actions, yet is unaffected by them. He has a body, but does not identify himself with it. He appears to be an individual, yet he is present in all things, everywhere.

The knower of Brahman, who lives in freedom from body-consciousness, is never touched by pleasure or pain, good or evil.

If a man identifies himself with the gross and subtle coverings within which he dwells, he will experience pleasure and pain, good and evil. But nothing is either good or evil to the contemplative sage, because he has realized the Atman and his bonds have fallen from him.

During an eclipse, the shadow of the earth falls upon the sun. The ignorant, who do not understand what has happened, say that the sun has been swallowed up by the darkness of the eclipse — but the sun can never be swallowed up.

In the same manner, the ignorant see the body of a knower of Brahman and identify him with it. Actually, he is free from the body and every other kind of bondage. To him, the body is merely a shadow.

He dwells in the body, but regards it as a thing apart from himself — like the cast-off skin of a snake. The body moves hither and thither, impelled by the vital forces.

A log of wood is carried by the river to lower or to higher ground. His body, carried by the river of time, enjoys or suffers the effects of past actions.

In past lives, while he still dwelt in ignorance, he created certain karmas. In this present life, he apparently enjoys or suffers their effects. But now he has reached illumination and no longer identifies himself with the body. His body moves among external objects, and he seems to enjoy or suffer the effects of past deeds — just like a man who is still ignorant. Really, however, he is established in Brahman, and merely inhabits the body as a calm, detached onlooker. His mind is clear of all distraction, and unmoved, like the pivot of a wheel.

He neither directs his senses toward external objects nor does he withdraw them. He stands like an onlooker, unconcerned. He does not desire the reward of his actions, for he is intoxicated by the Atman — that nectar of pure joy.

He who renounces the pursuit of any aim, either in this world or even in heaven itself, and remains absorbed in the Atman, is indeed the Lord Shiva Himself. He is the excellent knower of Brahman.

Even though he dwells in the body, he is eternally free. He has reached the blessed goal. He is the excellent knower of Brahman. When the body falls from him he becomes merged in Brahman. He attains Brahman, the one without a second.

An actor remains the same person, even when dressed to play a part. The excellent knower of Brahman always remains Brahman, and nothing else.

When an illumined soul has attained oneness with Brahman, his body may wither and fall anywhere, like the shrivelled leaf of a tree. What does it matter? For he has already freed himself from body-consciousness, burning it away in the fire of knowledge.

The illumined soul lives eternally conscious of his oneness with Brahman. He tastes continually the joy of the Atman, the one without a second. In putting off this garment of skin, flesh and bone he does not have to consider if the place, the time or the circumstances are suitable.

To be rid of the body is not liberation. Nor is a man set free by external forms of renunciation. Liberation is the cutting of the knot of ignorance in the heart.

Does a tree gain or lose anything because its leaf falls in a ditch and not in a river, or in sacred ground rather than in an open field?

The destruction of the body, the sense-organs, the life-breath and the brain is like the destruction of a leaf, a flower or a fruit. But the Atman, like the tree, still stands. The Atman is not affected — it is the real Self, the true being, the embodiment of joy.

The scriptures define the Atman as 'pure consciousness' — thereby showing that it is the eternal truth. Only the outer coverings die. They are made of ignorance, concealing the Atman.

'In truth,' say the scriptures, 'the Atman is immortal' — thereby showing that it stands indestructible among the things that change and perish.

Stones, trees, grass, grain, straw, cloth and all other substances, when burnt, are reduced to ashes. The body, the senses, the vital forces, the mind and all other physical manifestations, when burnt by the fire of knowledge, become Brahman.

Darkness is merged in sunlight, its opposite. So also, this apparent world is merged in Brahman.

When the jar is broken, the ether within it becomes one with the surrounding ether. When the coverings are destroyed, the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman.

When milk is poured into milk, oil into oil, water into water, they blend in absolute oneness. So also the illumined seer, the knower of the Atman, becomes one with the Atman.

He who has become liberated in this life gains liberation in death and is eternally united with Brahman, the Absolute Reality. Such a seer will never be reborn.

Some Reflections on Time

Aldous Huxley

Time destroys all that it creates, and the end of every temporal sequence is, for the entity involved in it, some form of death. Death is wholly transcended only when time is transcended; immortality is for the consciousness that has broken through the temporal into the timeless. For all other consciousnesses there is at best a survival or a rebirth; and these entail further temporal sequences and the periodical recurrence of yet other deaths and dissolutions. In all the traditional philosophies and religions of the world, time is regarded as the enemy and the deceiver, the prison and the torture chamber. It is only as an instrument, as the means to something else, that it possesses a positive value; for time provides the embodied soul with opportunities for transcending time; every instant of every temporal sequence is potentially the door through which we can, if we so desire, break through into the eternal. All temporal goods are means to an end beyond themselves; they are not to be treated as ends in their own right. Material goods are to be prized because they support the body which, in our present existence, is necessary to the achievement of man's Final End. Moral goods have many and very obvious utilitarian values; but their highest and ultimate value consists in the fact that they are means to that selflessness, which is the pre-condition of the realization of the eternal. The goods of the intellect are truths and, in the last analysis, these are valuable insofar as they remove God-eclipsing delusions and prejudices. Aesthetic goods are precious because they are symbolic of, and analogous to, the unitive knowledge of timeless Reality. To regard any of these temporal goods as self-sufficient and final ends is to commit idolatry. And idolatry, which is fundamentally unrealistic and inappropriate to the facts of the universe, results at the best in self-stultification and at the worst in disaster.

Movement in time is irreversibly in one direction. "We live forwards," as Kierkegaard said, "but we can only understand backwards." Moreover the flux of duration is indefinite and inconclusive, a perpetual lapse possessing in itself no pattern, no possibility of balance of symmetry. Nature, it is true, imposes

upon this perpetual perishing a certain appearance of pattern and symmetry. Thus, days alternate with nights, the seasons recur with regularity, plants and animals have their life cycles and are succeeded by offspring like themselves. But all these patternings and symmetries and recurrences are characteristic, not of time as it is in itself, but of space and matter as they are associated with time in our consciousness. Days and nights and seasons exist because certain heavenly bodies move in a certain way. If it took the earth not a year but a century to move round the sun, our sense of the intrinsic formlessness of time, of its irrevocable one-way lapse towards the death of all the entities involved in it, would be much more acute than it is at present; for most of us, in those hypothetical circumstances, would never live to see all the four seasons of the long year and would have no experience of that recurrence and renewal, those cosmic variations on known themes, which, under the present astronomical dispensation, disguise the essential nature of time by endowing it, or seeming to endow it, with some of the qualities of space. Now, space is a symbol of eternity; for in space there is freedom, there is reversibility of movement, and there is nothing in the nature of a space, as there is in that of time, which condemns those involved in it to inevitable death and dissolution. Moreover, when space contains material bodies, the possibility of orderliness, balance, symmetry and pattern arises — the possibility, in a word, of that Beauty which, along with Goodness and Truth, takes its place in the trinity of manifested Godhead. In this context a highly significant point should be noted. In all the arts whose raw material is of a temporal nature, the primary aim of the artist is to spatialize time. The poet, the dramatist, the novelist, the musician — each takes a fragment of the perpetual perishing, in which we are doomed to undertake our one-way journey towards death, and tries to endow it with some of the qualities of space: namely, symmetry, balance and orderliness (the Beauty-producing characteristics of a space containing material bodies), together with multi-dimensionality and the quality of permitting free movement in all directions. This spatialization of time is achieved in poetry and music by the employment of recurrent rhythms and cadences, by the confinement of the material within conventional forms, such as that of the sonnet or the sonata, and by the imposition upon the chosen fragment of temporal indefiniteness of a beginning, a middle

and an end. What is called 'construction' in the drama and the narrative serves the same spatializing purpose. The aim in all cases is to give a form to the essentially formless, to impose symmetry and order upon what is actually an indefinite flux towards death. The fact that all the arts that deal with temporal sequences have always attempted to spatialize time indicates very clearly the nature of man's natural and spontaneous reaction to time, and throws a light on the significance of space as a symbol of that timeless state, towards which, through all the impediments of ignorance, the human spirit consciously or unconsciously aspires.

There has been an attempt on the part of certain Western philosophers of the last few generations to raise time from the position to which the traditional religions and the normal sentiments of humanity had assigned it. Thus, under the influence of evolutionary theories, time is regarded as the creator of the highest values, so that even God is emergent — the product of the one-way flux of perpetual perishing, not (as in the traditional religions) as the timeless witness of time, transcendent to it and, because of that transcendence, capable of immanence within it. Closely allied to the theory of emergence is the Bergsonian view that 'duration' is the primary and ultimate reality and that the 'life-force' exists exclusively in the flux. On another line we have the Hegelian and Marxian philosophies of history, which is spelled with a capital H and hypostatized as a temporal providence working for the realization of the kingdom of heaven on earth — this kingdom of heaven on earth being, in Hegel's view, a glorified version of the Prussian State and in the view of Marx, who was exiled by the authorities of that State, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, leading 'inevitably' by the process of the dialectic to the classless society. These views of history make the assumption that the Divine, or History, or the Cosmic Process, or *Geist*, or whatever the entity which uses time for its purposes may be called, is concerned with humanity in the mass, not with man and woman as individuals — and not with humanity at any given moment, but with humanity as a succession of generations. Now, there seems to be absolutely no reason for supposing that this is the case — absolutely no reason for supposing that there is a collective soul of succeeding generations capable of experiencing, comprehending and acting upon the impulses transmitted by *Geist*, History, Life-Force and all the rest. On the con-

trary, all the evidence points to the fact that it is the individual soul, incarnated at a particular moment of time, which alone can establish contact with the Divine, to say nothing of other souls. The belief (which is based on obvious and self-evident facts) that Humanity is represented at any given moment by the persons who constitute the mass, and that all the values of Humanity reside in those persons, is regarded as absurdly shallow by these philosophers of history. But the tree is known by its fruits. Those who believe in the primacy of persons and who think that the Final End of all persons is to transcend time and realize that which is eternal and timeless, are always, like the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Taoists, the primitive Christians, advocates of non-violence, gentleness, peace and tolerance. Those, on the contrary, who like to be 'deep' in the manner of Hegel and Marx, who think that 'History' deals with Humanity-in-the-Mass and Humanity-as-successive-generations, not with individual men and women here and now, are indifferent to human life and personal values, worship the Molochs which they call the State and Society, and are cheerfully prepared to sacrifice successive generations of real, concrete persons for the sake of the entirely hypothetical happiness which, on no grounds whatsoever, they think will be the lot of Humanity in the distant future. The politics of those who regard eternity as the ultimate reality are concerned with the present and with the ways and means of organizing the present world in such a way that it will impose the fewest possible obstacles in the way of individual liberation from time and ignorance; those, on the contrary, who regard time as the ultimate reality are concerned primarily with the future and regard the present world and its inhabitants as mere rubble, cannon-fodder and potential slave-labor to be exploited, terrorized, liquidated or blown to smithereens, in order that persons who may never be born, in a future time about which nothing can be known with the smallest degree of certainty, may have the kind of a wonderful time which present-day revolutionaries and war-makers think they ought to have. If the lunacy were not criminal, one would be tempted to laugh.

Holy Mother

Amiya Corbin

Except for the occasional visits to her village home, and the still less occasional excursions to Calcutta, Sarada had not left the sheltered seclusion of the temple where she had lived for upwards of fifteen years. She knew very little of the outside world. Her only concern had been service to her husband and devotion to God. All the hopes and aspirations of her young womanhood had been directed solely toward that one purpose. She knew nothing else.

Under the guidance of her husband and spiritual teacher, Ramakrishna, the slumbering divinity within her had been awakened, until, to him, she had become a living manifestation of the Divine Mother he worshipped. Ramakrishna had early learned to look upon all women as Mother, but his attitude toward his wife was something much more than that. He saw the divinity, he felt the holiness before which, in later times, even the foremost of his great disciples prostrated in trembling awe.

Already many of his women disciples, young and old alike, had begun to look upon Sarada as their Mother, their spiritual advisor and their friend. Her warmth and tenderness drew all to her. And it was to them again that she turned for human consolation in her hour of darkness and despair. For, with the passing away of Ramakrishna, Sarada suddenly found herself standing at the threshold of an entirely new phase of her life. During the years she had lived at the temple with her husband, she had shared with him his small pension, but now, with his passing, the pension was stopped and she was left to face the world homeless and penniless.

At first, out of the zeal and devotion of their hearts, the young disciples of Ramakrishna wanted to beg for her food. She was their Mother, and already they felt the stirrings of a certain responsibility. But the plan was impracticable since she had nowhere to live. So it was decided that, for the time being, she should stay at the home of one of her friends until plans could be made for her future.

During the last days of his illness Ramakrishna had given Sarada two explicit instructions. One was that she should go to all

the places of pilgrimage that he himself had not visited, and the other was that she should go to his home at Kamarpukur, live on whatever she could get, be it merely "boiled rice and greens," and spend her days in prayer and meditation.

Thus it was that, two weeks after the passing away of Ramakrishna, Sarada set out on a pilgrimage with a small party of his devotees. Their destination was Brindavan. On their way they stopped at many of the well-known places of pilgrimage so dear to the hearts of India. At Benares they visited the temples of the different sects and religions, and often, while she watched the performances of the various ceremonies and religious rites, Sarada would be seen to go into ecstasy, losing all consciousness of her external surroundings.

After many days the little band of pilgrims reached Brindavan. Brindavan, city of temples; city made holy by its association with the memories of the Lord Sri Krishna, his consort Radha, and the shepherdesses. It is quite certain that Sarada, from earliest childhood, was thoroughly steeped in the lore of the divine play of Brindavan, so that, as soon as she caught her first glimpse of the holy city, it is but natural that she should be stirred to the very depths of her being. She recalled the story of the inconsolable grief of Radha at separation from her beloved Lord Krishna, and, at that moment, an almost unendurable yearning for God filled her own heart. And she wept. All the pent up emotions of the past few weeks gave way before a torrent of grief which engulfed her. For many days her weeping lasted, until, out of that very anguish of longing there came fulfilment. For once again the Master came to her, bringing the same assurance of his nearness, a nearness she could no longer doubt. And in her heart there came a peace and joy she had not formerly known.

Following this assuagement of her grief, Sarada began a period of intense meditation. Hour after hour she would sit, lost in an ecstasy so profound that neither the flies nor the mosquitoes nor any other of the myriad annoyances could disturb her.

Sometimes she would take long walks alone along the sandy banks of the river Jumna, unmindful of time and distance, and always when her friends would go after her to bring her back they would find her in a high state of spiritual exaltation.

To all who watched Sarada during her stay at Brindavan it was evident that she had completely identified herself with her holy surroundings. She seemed wrapped in holiness. Before she left the city she made a complete circle of it and all its suburbs which were in any way connected with the memory of Sri Krishna. Although it was a walk covering many miles, she seemed not to tire. Often she would stop suddenly, and, to her companions, it appeared as if she were in some way recapturing memories of a half-forgotten past. At such times they would question her, but, though she would turn to them and smilingly beckon to them to proceed, she offered no explanation for her conduct. Truly has it been said by Swami Brahmananada, one of the greatest disciples of Sri Ramakrishna: "It is impossible to understand the Mother's greatness, unless she herself reveals it. Only through the grace of Sri Ramakrishna is it possible to recognize the Divine Mother in her." And this remark is given further emphasis by an extraordinary spiritual experience Sarada had during her stay at Brindavan.

One day it happened that, after much searching, Yogen found her seated in her room completely lost in samadhi. Try as she would she could not rouse her. Over and over again she repeated the name of the Lord in her ear, but to no avail. In alarm she called for Yogen Maharaj, a member of the party and an intimate associate of the Master. He came, and after much repeated effort of the same means finally succeeded in bringing Sarada's mind down to a semi-conscious state. After some moments she whispered: "I will eat something!" And to those who heard, it was as if the Master himself had spoken! For, whenever the Master's mind began to return from the super-conscious to the conscious plane he would express a desire for something to eat. And for this reason. Only he who is desireless attains to samadhi, and he who is without desire cannot normally live. Ramakrishna came to teach mankind, and in order to do this, it was necessary that his mind should remain on the normal plane. Thus this simple desire for food or drink would serve to hold his mind down. Therefore, when Sarada expressed the same desire, those who heard it were astonished. And as they watched her acceptance and manner of eating the offering placed before her, their astonishment grew; they knew that she was at one with the Master. Eagerly Yogen Maharaj asked her several questions on spiritual matters, and the answers she gave

were identical with the answers Ramakrishna had given. Later, when they questioned her about it, Sarada herself admitted that she had been completely identified with Ramakrishna at that time.

Thus it would seem but natural that, during this year of great spiritual attainment, Sarada should begin her ministry.

Many years before, Ramakrishna had made it known to Sarada that he expected her to complete his mission. And now the time had come. For once again, in vision he came, telling her to give initiation to Yogen Maharaj whom he himself had not initiated. At first Sarada remonstrated. Wasn't it too soon? Wouldn't people criticize her for taking disciples so soon after the Master's passing away? Besides, although Yogen had been with her on all her travels, she had never spoken directly to him. How was she to approach him? With such questions as these Sarada tried to put off the inevitable moment when she should begin the work for which she had come.

But when the Master came to her even a third time, when he gave her the very mantram she was to give to her disciple, she knew her time had come. Through one of the women she approached Yogen and advised him of the Master's request, only to learn that he, too, had seen the Master, and had been instructed to take his initiation from her.

So, at the appointed hour Sarada placed before herself the photograph of the Master and the little tin box containing his relics. She then sent for Yogen, and, motioning him to sit near her, seated herself for worship. Very soon her mind soared and she entered into samadhi. And it was while she was in that highest state of communion with God that she gave the mantram of initiation to her first disciple.

Spiritual Unfoldment

Swami Yatiswarananda

1. I wish to give you a simple talk on a subject which is little understood in the West. It is about the centers of consciousness connected with our own body and mind but of which we know very little. A knowledge of the centers and their working will certainly help us in living a better life, if we decide to live it. Let me quote from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.

They (the devotees) were singing hymns to the accompaniment of musical instruments. One of the songs had particular reference to the six lotuses marking the different stages of the Yogi's progress toward union with the Universal Spirit. At the close of this song Sri Ramakrishna said — The six lotuses mentioned in the Science of Yoga correspond to the seven mental planes mentioned in the Vedanta. When the mind is immersed in worldliness, it makes its abode in the lowest lotus at the end of the spine. Sexual desires rise when the mind is in the second lotus, near the sexual organ. When it is in the third, near the navel, the man is taken up with things of the world — eating, drinking, sense pleasures. In the fourth mental plane, the heart is blessed with the Vision of Divine Glory and he cries out: "What is all this!" In the fifth plane the mind rests in the throat. The devotee talks only on subjects related to God and grows impatient if any other subject comes up in the course of conversation. In the sixth plane the mind is localized between the eyebrows. The devotee comes face to face with God; only a thin glass-like partition, so to speak, keeps him separate from the Divine Person. To him God is like a light within a lantern, or like a photograph behind a glass frame. He tries to touch the Vision, but he cannot. His perception falls short of complete realization, for there is the element of self-consciousness, the sense of "I," kept to a certain extent. In the last or seventh plane it is perfect Samadhi. Then all sense-consciousness ceases and absolute God-consciousness takes its place. In this state the life of the saint lingers for twenty-one days, after which he passes away. During these days he ceases to take any food.

Milk, if poured into his mouth, runs out and never gets into the stomach. Some sages, who have reached the seventh or highest plane and have thus attained to God-consciousness, are pleased to come down from that spiritual height for the good of mankind. They keep the ego of knowledge, or, in other words, the Higher Self. (Swami Abhedananda's edition of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.)

2. In order to understand something of the mystery of Spiritual unfoldment, it is necessary for us to know something of our true nature and the states of consciousness we all pass through in life. Swami Shivananda, one of the great disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, who was then the head of the order, remarked — "The greatest achievement in spiritual life is to know one's true nature. You realize what you are." It is a shame that we cover up our spiritual nature and identify ourselves with what we are not. The Spirit becomes folded in the coverings made by ignorance and must be unfolded. It is then that it realizes its true nature — eternal, ever pure, enlightened and ever free.

Spiritually illumined souls tell us that we are essentially spirit. Owing to ignorance, the spirit forgets its own nature and becomes individualized. Ignorance is like a strong drink. It makes one forget oneself and create fantasy. So we take the non-eternal to be the eternal, the non-self to be the Self. Ignorance breeds egoism. Our ego comes to be further identified with the mind, senses and body — all of which combine to form our human personality.

We are caught in these three states of consciousness —

- a. *The waking state* in which the mind is partly conscious of our physical body and is also conscious of the physical world.
- b. *The Dream State* or the sub-conscious plane in which we are conscious of our subtle body and also conscious of a subtle world.
- c. *Deep Sleep or the unconscious state* in which we remain in our causal body in tune with a causal world, out of which the dream world and the physical world come into existence.

Men of knowledge tell us that beyond the above three states there is the super-conscious in which one gets beyond all forms of body, in which one realizes one's pure spiritual nature. This experience is possible in complete spiritual unfoldment.

In our conscious state we are identified with the physical body. We then think we are short or lean, young or old, white or dark. When we identify ourselves with the mind, we experience pain or pleasure, misery or happiness. When identified with the ego, we think, I am the doer, I am bound or free.

Patanjali, the teacher of Yoga covers the entire life of man, when he says: "The spirit is identified with empirical-knowledge, misconception, fancy, sleep and memory."

We must get rid of our identification and realize our true spiritual nature. This we cannot do simply by wishing. If wishes were horses everybody would ride them. Let us always remember the story of the little girl: her brother had set a trap to catch birds. She thought it was wrong and cruel. First she wept . . . After sometime she became cheerful again. The mother asked her the cause . . . She said: "First I wept, then I prayed for my brother to be a better boy. I also prayed that the trap would not catch any birds. Then I went out and kicked the old trap to pieces."

We must break all old bad habits of thinking, feeling and acting, form good moral habits, and guide our thoughts, emotions and actions by the spiritual ideal.

4. We have hypnotized ourselves and must get ourselves de-hypnotized. We must remove our false identifications one by one.

Teachers of Yoga tell us we must rise above our false identifications step by step.

I. By *concentration on gross matter*, we discover the nature of the body and feel "I am not the body."

II. By concentration on finer matter, we discover that we are not the senses.

III. By concentration on the mind we find that we are not the mind.

IV. By concentration on the ego we are finally led to the experience that we are not the ego. We are really the pure Spirit. As layer after layer of false identification are given up, our consciousness rises from lower to higher planes.

By moving horizontally we also move vertically. Similarly by moving vertically we also move horizontally. By rising to higher planes, we can force our consciousness more and more from the limitations of the gross, subtle and even the causal.

As the mind becomes pure as the result of moral disciplines, prayer, repetition of the Divine name or holy text, and meditation, we develop the power of introspection. We then discover within ourselves the "secret stairs" of the mystics — a secret elevator with various landing stages connected with different planes of consciousness.

Some of you might think I am using a strange language. It certainly needs explanation.

5. Let me put my ideas as clearly as I can. We all know how our thoughts, feelings and activities change with the change of our moods. These moods have something to do with the centers of consciousness with which we may be connected at particular times.

Schopenhauer says sex becomes the focus of the will as the child grows into the youth. One then lives in a new world of thoughts, emotions, and actions.

We feel the stomach when we are very hungry.

We feel the heart when we are swayed by deep emotions.

We feel the point between the eyebrows when our thoughts are clear and luminous. Ordinarily these centers of consciousness shift too many times during the course of the same day. How often we move from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the ridiculous to the sublime. Sometimes we are on a higher floor and then all of a sudden we fall to the cellar; or from the cellar we rise very high in order to fall again to a lower plane. This may be illustrated with the analogy of the elevator.

1. Sometimes the elevator does not move. We are not able to rise to a higher floor of consciousness.
2. Sometimes we may go up but are not able to get out of the box; the elevator door does not open. We may attain concentration but remain stuck in our ego, and are not able to have an expansive consciousness.
3. Sometimes we may go up and reach a particular floor but are not able to come down when we wish.

It is necessary for us to get a clear conception of the various centers of consciousness and their functions.

6. In describing super-sensuous things, sometimes we are forced to use the language of the physical. This is what is done in describing the Kundalini, the coiled up — Serpent Power — the

Spiritual Power latent in man. It is likened to a coiled up snake lying asleep at the base of the spine. This is called the "basic" center. The next center is in the region corresponding to the genital organ. The third center is in the region corresponding to the navel. The fourth center lies in the region corresponding to the heart. The fifth center and the sixth center correspond to the throat and the point between the eyes respectively. The seventh and last center is indicated as the thousand-petalled lotus in the brain.

Each center is a point of contact between the soul and the cosmic spirit on a particular plane of consciousness. The first three centers, from the bottom up, are connected with the animal life of man; as, eating, drinking, sense enjoyment, and sex pleasures. Man's first spiritual awakening comes when his consciousness rises to the center in the heart.

The Chakras or centers of consciousness are sometimes described in terms of physical plexuses and ganglia with which they are connected. But they must not be identified with them. As Arthur Avalon remarks in "The Serpent Power," these Chakras or "lotuses" or centers of consciousness are extremely subtle centers which vitalize and control the gross bodily tracts indicated by the various regions of the vertebral column and the ganglia, plexuses, nerves, arteries and the organs situated in those respective regions.

Kundalini or the coiled up serpent power is consciousness in its creative aspect as power. In Yogic language it lies asleep – coiled up – at the base of the spine. In the spiritually awakened the power flows through the spiritual channel called Sushumna. This spiritual channel exists side by side with two other channels called Ida and Pingala. These are said to exist to the left and right of the spinal column, while Sushumna is in the center. Picture three channels which have their junction at the basic or lowest center. The central one is the spiritual channel, while the other two are connected with man's ordinary physical and psychological life. In the average man the energy that gathers at the junction of the channels flows only through the two side ones but not through the central channel. So all energy is side tracked and expresses itself in ordinary – worldly – thoughts, feelings and activities.

The Importance of Purity

7. Here is something for all spiritual seekers to note. Those who practice spiritual disciplines without physical and mental pur-

ity are not only wasting their energy from the spiritual point of view but they are also running the risk of gathering too much energy which, flowing through the worldly channels, might intensify their worldly life, including sex life, and thus harm them greatly. A forced sudden rise of the Kundalini is dangerous. Remember Sri Ramakrishna's parable of the farmer who worked hard to irrigate his field and water his crops but later found that all the water was being lost through rat holes. So worldly desires are the holes through which the energy flows out into the worldly channels in the case of the worldly man.

In all high spiritual paths great stress is laid on the practice of continence. In the Hindu religious system the student is asked to observe strict continence and never to depart from it consciously. When he enters the householder's life, he does not throw all self-control to the winds. He holds the ideal of a remarkably controlled life before him. Sri Krishna in His last message in the Bhagavatam said, "The practice of continence except for the purpose of procreation, the performance of the regular obligations of life, — these with purity, contentment and kindness to animals are among the duties of a householder." The ideal householder is a great hero. He lives the spiritual ideal in a world full of temptations.

While an exception is made in the case of those living the family life, raising children and serving society thereby, all other spiritual seekers should strive to transmute the energy that expresses itself as sex energy and sexual thought into spiritual power. This greatly helps in the awakening of the latent spiritual consciousness and its flow to higher centers of consciousness, bringing new light and blessings to the aspirant.

8. Purity of the body and mind along with sincere spiritual striving ensures spiritual progress. The practice of concentration without sufficient purity is dangerous.

(a) If the energy that is increased through concentration cannot move along the spiritual channel, it may express itself outwardly in the form of violent passions in an extrovert, harming oneself as well as others.

(b) In the introvert the gathered up energy may not find an outward expression. In that case it may form an awful whirlpool in the individual, shattering his nerves and mind and making him a complete wreck.

(c) In some cases, as the mind is stirred through meditation, all the good and evil things lying hidden in it may come to the surface with a tremendous vehemence and bring about a physical and mental collapse. Those impure souls who want to play with the "serpents" always come to grief.

(d) In some others again the stored up energy may manifest itself as cheap psychic powers of clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought reading and such powers which make those persons egoistic and spiritually bankrupt.

(e) In some cases again there may be a partial awakening of the latent power. The spiritual power may rise to a higher center but fall down with disastrous results, stimulating the worldly desires. But for a sincere soul following the moral disciplines along with the practice of prayer, Japa — repetition of the Divine Name, and meditation there is absolutely nothing to be afraid of. For him the spiritual life is very safe.

Awakening Spiritual Consciousness

9. Whatever be our spiritual path, Hindu, Buddhistic, Christian or Sufi, the three stages we all have to follow are:— purification, meditation or contemplation and experience of the Divine Reality or Godhead. Here arises the question, how are we to begin meditation with a view to awakening our spiritual consciousness? One of us once asked our spiritual teacher, Swami Brahmananda, "Sir, how can Kundalini, the latent spiritual consciousness, be awakened?" This is what the Swami replied, "According to some there are special exercises to awaken it but I believe it can best be done through Japam and meditation. The practice of Japam is specially suited to our present age. There is no other spiritual practice easier than this. But meditation must accompany the repetition of the Mantram, the divine name or the holy text."

There are various forms of meditation upon God as Father, Mother or as Effulgent Light and so on. Making the heart the center of your consciousness, think of the Divine Spirit there in any form you like. Repeat the divine name or holy text, dwelling on the divine aspect it represents. This is a simple form of meditation but later on it leads to real meditation, which helps in the bringing about of the union between the individual soul and the Supreme Spirit.

The holy word and holy thought have great power. As one repeats the divine name and meditates on the Divine Spirit one should feel that the holy vibrations and thoughts are making the body, senses, mind and ego purer and purer. Breath becomes rhythmic. The vital energy becomes harmonious. Mind becomes pure and calm. The ego tends to become cosmo centric. This leads to spiritual unfoldment stage by stage.

The repetition of the Divine Name accompanied by meditation produces a divine music which clears the spiritual channel, awakens the sleeping serpent power and enables it to move along the vitalized higher centers. As consciousness rises higher and higher, it moves both along the horizontal and perpendicular lines. The soul and the Oversoul are drawn closer together. This is symbolized in the Upanishads by the analogy of two birds of beautiful plumage who reside in the same tree. The lower bird looked up and at last realized that they were one. To use Yogic phraseology, the lower bird is the individual soul sitting at the base of the spine. The upper bird is the Supreme Spirit sitting in the thousand petalled lotus in the brain. Individual consciousness flowing along the spiritual channel of Sushumna reaches the topmost point, realizes its union with the Supreme Spirit. This is the ascent of the soul to the highest spiritual point and experience. Most souls do not return from this state to the domain of phenomenon again. But as Sri Ramakrishna says: "Some sages are pleased to come down from that spiritual height for the good of mankind." They see the One Spirit shining in all and are full of divine love. It is they who bring us the message of the Super Conscious. Let us offer our salutations to them. May we follow in their footsteps. May they bless us in attaining spiritual unfoldment, unity and bliss.

With Swami Turiyananda at Kurukshetra

Swami Atulananda

Although the sun eclipse of 1907 was still a few days off, Kurukshetra was already crowded with fifty thousand pilgrims from all over India, when Swami Turiyananda alighted from a packed train that halted at the little railway station. It was evening of the first day of the great religious festival. The rest houses and temporary shelters and tents were filled with men, women, and children, all huddled together like sheep in their folds. We went from place to place but could find no shelter and there remained nothing to do but spread our blankets with other pilgrims under the protecting branches of a magnificent banyan tree. So using our little bundles as pillows we sat down and rested.

Presently a woman approached us and, with palms folded against her breast, asked whether we had had supper. When the Swami answered that we had not yet eaten she hastily retreated, and, from her own camp, brought us milk, wheat cakes and a vegetable curry. Simple as the meal was, we both enjoyed it heartily. Then we rolled ourselves in our blankets and lay down to sleep.

I was watching the brilliant stars through the branches of the tree when, after a while, I saw the Swami sit up.

"What is the matter, Swami?" I asked.

"Gurudasa," he answered, "now you are a true Sannyasin."

"That is what I want to be, Swami," I responded, and I quoted from Swamiji's "The Song of the Sannyasin":

"Have thou no home. What home can hold thee, friend?

The sky thy roof, the grass thy bed; and food

What chance may bring; well cooked or ill, judge not.

No food or drink can taint that noble Self

Which knows itself. The rolling river free

Thou ever be, Sannyasin bold. Say *Aum tat sat, aum!*"

"That is it! That is it!" the Swami exclaimed. "We are Mother's children; we have nothing to fear. She gives and She takes. Blessed be Her name." Then followed one of his familiar eulogies of Swamiji. "He was the true Sannyasin. In luxury and poverty he was the same. He knew that he was the Atman, the witness, ever free. Weal or woe meant nothing to him. The world was his

stage. And how well he played his part. He lived for the good of others. There was no selfishness in him. He had no axe to grind. He lived and preached the Master's message. Our Master used to say: "He can do anything he pleases. Nothing can spoil him!"

Then, after a little pause, "But we have to be careful. Maya is so powerful. We are so easily caught and deluded."

"But," I interposed, "Mother can protect us."

"You are right, Gurudasa; never forget that. Always trust in Her. What is life without Her? It is all sham and humbug. She alone is real."

Another pause, and then: "Now try to sleep a little. Tomorrow we may find a better place."

I tried to sleep but could not. The experience was so novel and thoughts came rushing into my mind. The Swami was lying down again but I don't think he slept any more than I did. It must have been long after midnight when I saw him get up.

"Gurudasa, it is raining," he said. "We must get shelter somewhere!" I had not noticed the sudden change in the sky, but as I listened I heard rain drops falling on the leaves of the tree. We got up and with our blankets over our heads went in search of shelter. But, as before, we found every place filled. The Swami, however, was determined to get in somewhere. And so against the loud protests of the pilgrims, we pushed our way into one of the open sheds. There was a great hubbub, loud voices and sleepy voices, abuse and discussion of which I understood very little. I thought they would throw us out bodily. But suddenly the noise quieted down and a little room was made for us. We laid down wedged in between other pilgrims like sardines in a box. We were out of the rain anyhow, and presently I fell asleep. When I awoke in the morning I found that a child was using my legs for a pillow. I was sore all over, for I had been lying on a hard earthen floor which was none too smooth.

As I said before, we were in an open shed, that is, it had only three walls. And now the sun was shining through the open space. Many of the pilgrims had already gone out to wash themselves at the well nearby. We followed their example, and when we returned we found the shed half empty, for many of the pilgrims had gone in search of better lodgings.

I asked the Swami how he had succeeded in getting inside the shed when the opposition was so strong. He laughed and said, "You don't know us yet. We make a big noise but there is nothing back of it. You, in the West, take everything so seriously. Here you will see two men talking and gesticulating as if they were going to murder one another. But five minutes later they sit and smoke together and talk as if they were old friends. That is our way. These people are not educated but they have good hearts. When they saw that we were really in trouble they made room for us even though it inconvenienced them. I told them that you were a stranger in a strange land, and a sannyasin. At once they became curious and wanted to know all about you. Then they said, 'Come, brothers, we will make room for you.' You will always find it so. Sannyasins are respected all over India, especially by the poor. They are simple and kind-hearted; not sophisticated like some of our educated people. Swamiji loved the poor. His heart bled for them. 'They are my gods!' he used to say. That is why our Mission works so much among the poor. All over India we have centers for them. We educate them and give them free medical treatment. We serve God in the poor."

After a while he said, "We are on the battlefield of Kurukshetra where Sri Krishna preached the Gita." Then he began to chant from memory the second chapter. A few pilgrims came and listened. He chanted in a loud voice with much feeling. I was thrilled with the beauty and rhythm of the Sanskrit text.

Just as the Swami finished chanting, a man approached us. He scowled and said, "What are you doing in my shed?" Swami replied, "We are Sannyasins, we are taking shelter here." "Who is the Sahib?" he asked. (We learned later that he suspected me of being an English spy in disguise.) Swami told him who I was and that I had come to see the religious festival and bathe in the holy waters of Kurukshetra. At this he became quite amiable and said, "You may both stay here as my guests. I will supply you with food." He called a servant and told him to place some straw under our blankets. Then, saluting us very humbly, he went away.

When he had gone, Swami said to me, "See how Mother plays! Now we can be at peace. Do you think you can stand it?"

"Yes, Swami," I replied. "I am sure I can."

A little later a servant brought us food — unleavened wheat

cakes and molasses. He brought this every morning. And every evening, for nine days, we had wheat cakes and lentil soup. Sometimes our host would come and ask how we were getting along. There were other pilgrims in the shed but we had sufficient room to spread our blankets. These pilgrims cooked their simple meals on little earthen stoves built against the inner wall. As there was no outlet for the smoke the air often became suffocating, and it made my eyes smart. But we did not complain since it could not be remedied. We got along very well except that I suffered from fever now and then. I was, however, able to move about. On the days when I had fever, I could not eat the coarse food, and Swami, full of tender solicitude for my health, would buy me a cup of milk.

In the evening many would come to converse with the Swami and to receive spiritual advice from him. He would talk for hours till late in the night, never tiring. He was always ready to speak on religion. After our morning bath and meal we would go about among the pilgrims, visit other Sannyasins and holy places. We were shown the exact spot where Sri Krishna delivered the Gita to Arjuna; the place where Bhishma expired at his own will, his body resting on a bed of arrows, and many other places sanctified by tradition. There was an enormous banyan tree in whose branches Sadhus lived in little shelters made of leaves and twigs. Most interesting of all was the great concourse of different monks of different sects. There were naked monks and those who wore only cloths, the rest of their bodies besmeared with ashes from the sacred fire. Others wore salmon-colored robes and turbans. Some had long shaggy hair bleached by the sun and hanging down their shoulders or coiled like a little tower on top of their heads. Then there were shaven monks, and Brahmacharis in white tunics. It was the most motley crowd I had ever seen.

Erudite pandits and Sannyasins held discussions or read and chanted from the Vedas, while sitting crosslegged under the trees or in front of their little tents or straw huts. One monk had taken the vow of perpetual silence; another took food only when it was offered to him. One monk in a red robe had taken the vow to remain standing in one place for nine days, his arms resting on a trapeze attached to the limb of a tree. There was something to interest us wherever we went.

Then came the day of the eclipse, when everyone must bathe during the auspicious hour when twilight enfolded us. The crowds were so vast and the rush so great that though the reservoirs were of enormous dimensions it was difficult to enter the water. But we succeeded in dipping three times when the eclipse was full. It was a grand spectacle, this bathing in the sacred waters by thousands of enthusiastic devotees.

Afterwards we discussed the merit of bathing and other religious performances. Swami said: "It all depends on our mental attitude, on our faith and belief. Where there is true devotion the result is good. It purifies the mind. We must try to see Mother in everything. That will make us spiritual." Then he quoted from the Chhandi, "To that Divine Mother who dwells in all living beings in the form of Consciousness, we bow down again and again."

"She is in everything and She is everything. She is the river, She is the mountain, She is all." "That is a grand vision. Our Master had that. He did not see the Ganges, he saw only Brahman."

When the festival was over we separated. The Swami remained at Kurukshetra for a few days as the guest of a man who took him to his home at Anup Sahar, and I left for Delhi and other places on my way to the Belur Math.

Sri Ramakrishna and the Religion of Tomorrow¹

Swami Prabhavananda

East is East, and West is West, but the time has now come when Swami Vivekananda's dream of a perfect civilization, by the merging of the East and West, should be realized.

Before we can understand what the nature of such a civilization would be, we must understand what the West has to contribute and what the East has to contribute. Then only can we see how they could meet for the benefit of all mankind.

What are the predominating characteristics of the modern western civilization? They can be summed up as a scientific spirit, rationalism, and secular humanism; these again can be traced back to classical antiquity.

It was the Greek mind that laid the foundation of natural science, which means that everything must be tested and proved by experiment and reason. That was the foundation of Greek civilization, and that is the basic principle of the modern West.

Also we find that the Greek mind concerned itself with the natural man, the man as he is known to himself, his bodily desires, and his mental powers. True it is that in such ancient Greek thinkers as Pythagorus and Plato, a certain mystic element is found, yet the Greek mind as a whole was never influenced by this mystic element.

In the Mediaeval Age we find that the two great religions, Judaism and Christianity, influenced the thought of the West. Their chief contribution was the insistence upon the insufficiency of the intellect and upon the importance of historic revelation. Both Judaism and Christianity took their stand on revelation: God reveals his will to his lawgivers and prophets.

Superficially this may seem very good, but when righteousness is practiced — not for its own sake — but because of authority, there is bound to grow narrowness and fanaticism. Whenever a man bases his life on authority, in the name of religion, his reason is stifled. He becomes a fanatic. That is why we find that when

¹Summary of a lecture.

fanaticism became rampant, most irreligious deeds were done. Down through the ages the name of religion has been marred by bloodshed, killing, and by murder.

With the Renaissance came intellectual and scientific advancement, bringing new ideas in social living. But, with the growth of these new ideas, traditional religion was thrown aside, and morality went down. The object of all striving and action was to enrich the physical man, gratify his bodily desires, and satisfy his intellect.

But now the present chaos of the world has brought us to a period of rethinking. In every country thinkers are beginning to look with suspicion upon the past and present way of life. Are we travelling the right path? How can we live in peace and harmony? We have reached the pinnacle of the old civilization — the scientific and rationalistic outlook of life, and we find ourselves standing on the brink of a volcano.

We have reached the point where we see only darkness, destruction, and annihilation: we are at a period when we must reconsider and readjust ourselves. Everywhere there is the cry to go back to religion. We must base our life on spirituality. That is the cry in the hearts of thinking people. That is the cry in the hearts of the masses.

Now let us see what India has contributed and what Sri Rama-krishna, the prophet of modern India, has contributed.

We have already mentioned the form of traditional religion of the West, based on revelation and authority. We have shown that if we give up our scientific and rationalistic attitude, religion becomes narrow fanaticism. Furthermore, it is not possible at this period of our growth of human civilization to give up that spirit of rationalism. When we look to India, we find a reconciliation between revelation and rationalism. We shall come to this point later.

Religion has always been, and is still, the predominating influence on the mass mind of India. True it is that, as India came in touch with the western civilization, a type of hybrids was developed who considered religion to be the cause of her degeneration, her slavery to a foreign nation, and who wanted to "throw out the baby with the bath water." But they could not succeed, because religion has been the one deep-rooted, predominating in-

fluence in the cultural life of India.

In this connection it is interesting to note that there have been great politicians, great statesmen, born in India in the past few years; but India, as a whole, did not respond to their pleadings and preachings. There is one man, Gandhi, who today exerts the greatest influence over the people of India. Is it because he is a politician or a statesman, or is it because he is a mahatma — a religious man? Thus you can see, if you study and understand India, that howsoever degraded India may be, she responds only to religion and to a religious teacher.

Now let us see what form of religion India possesses. There, also, we find that religion is based upon revelation — the same as Judaism and Christianity. But instead of this revelation having to be accepted on authority alone, it is based fundamentally on experience. As one of her great teachers, Shankara, pointed out, "In matters relating to Brahman, the scriptures are not the only authority. There must be a personal experience." To state simply on authority of revelation that God is, to state simply on authority that we must practice such and such as good, and avoid such and such as evil, because that is the law — the command of God — is not sufficient; it does not work in the hearts of people. To know and believe that God is, means that there is a possibility of experiencing him in one's own life. That must be the guiding principle in the life of a spiritual man. Why should I do that which is good and avoid that which is evil? Because by doing good we reach God, and by doing evil we go into greater darkness. Because this has always been the attitude regarding religion in India, there has never been a stifling of the rationalistic spirit.

Religion to the Hindu is the direct experience of God, union with the Godhead. It is not enough to believe that God is, the living presence of God must be felt. Next, faith in that living presence must be transformed into the vision of God; the words of the scriptures must be transformed into vision. You must come directly and immediately into union with God. That is the definition of religion given in the Indian scriptures.

There comes, however, a rise and fall to every civilization. Though religion has been truly defined in the scriptures, at times this truth becomes forgotten. Whenever this forgetfulness comes to India, we find great spiritual giants rising out of her very soil in

different ages to revive that spirit. In this present age when India first came into contact with the western world, as already stated, there was a real degeneration of religion. But fortunately for India, and fortunately for the world, there came one of the greatest prophets, one of the greatest illumined souls the world has ever produced. His name was Ramakrishna.

Ramakrishna lived near the city of Calcutta, a city engulfed by the greatest tide of western civilization that ever swept over the people of India. At this period in the history of Bengal, there were born many great thinkers, great writers, but all were imbued with the spirit of the West, and along with them there grew youth movements which sought to inculcate the western civilization. It was the fashion among the young men of Bengal of that time to think that, to be westernized, meant to drink whiskey and to eat beef.

Unknown and unrecognized for a time, Sri Ramakrishna lived in a temple nearby, practicing his spiritual disciplines in the solitude of the temple. His one ideal, his one purpose of life, was to see God, to experience Him. He worshipped God as Mother. Although he did not go to any school or college, and hardly knew how to read and write, he had the scientific temper and rationalistic spirit of a true scientist. He would ask, "Mother, are you real? Are you true? If you really exist, why don't you reveal yourself to me?" Thus he would pray from day to day, and when the temple bells would proclaim the approach of evening, he would cry out, "Mother, another day has passed, and I have not seen you." To him life was empty, life was a vanity, without the realization of God. He determined the value of all things by one standard: "Does it help me to realize God?" He would take a piece of gold in one hand and a lump of dirt in the other, and say to himself: "This is gold and this is dirt. People give their lives to find this piece of gold. Does it give me God? Yes, I can build a house, I can live comfortably with gold, but does it help me to realize God?" Then he would reply, "Gold is dirt, and dirt is gold," and throw both in the river.

Such was the man living in a temple in India at a time when India was madly chasing the western culture, and this was the man, who, through his yearning, realized God the Mother. He saw Mother and he talked to her. Following this first experience of God, he wanted to experiment with the other religions of the world.

He followed the teachings of the different sects of India; he followed the religions taught by Christ and Mohammed; and by following each one of these religions he came to the realization of the same ultimate Reality. Then was it that he proclaimed, with authority, "The many religions are so many paths to God."

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that, "When the lotus blooms, bees come to gather the honey." The seekers after God began to gather around him, and to those who came to him with the earnest, sincere longing for God, he gave the vision of God. Their lives were transformed. However, Sri Ramakrishna did not limit the vision of God to his disciples or to the people of India. He said, "I have many children in far off countries whose language I do not know, and they will all come to me." He had a vision wherein he saw himself in the center and many people from foreign lands gathered around him, and they were all God-intoxicated. In this vision he saw the future of mankind; he saw that many a soul would be born who would drink of the love of God.

But this does not mean that all the people of the world will come to accept the personality of Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna is only a symbol of a truth, an embodiment of certain spiritual principles. Let us see what those principles are.

God is not merely a hypothesis, He is. God can be realized and must be realized in this very life. Religion is eternal. It has no boundary. It is neither of the East nor of the West. It is neither Hinduism nor Christianity, nor Buddhism nor Judaism. The world is not saved and can never be saved by merely believing in creeds which accept a particular faith; it can be saved by wisdom only. It is not that any or all of the existing religions of the world will be wiped out and that there will be one world religion. Sri Ramakrishna experimented with the existing religions and found that they are all true, inasmuch as they are the ways, the paths, to realize the one God. He came to bring harmony; he came to fulfill and not to destroy.

Now, what about humanism, the prevalent religion of the West? The general welfare of the body and the mind cannot be ignored. You cannot ignore the physical and intellectual man. India, during the past few centuries — not the India of old — has ignored the external aspect of man, while the West has ignored the inner man by her humanistic ethics and secular outlook of life.

In the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna we find how, instead of ignoring humanism, he elevated it to the level of the spirit. In this connection I will mention one incident. One day Sri Ramakrishna was in a very high spiritual mood, and, in that mood he was, as it were, talking to himself. There were many disciples present, and amongst them was young Naren (Vivekananda). Sri Ramakrishna quoted a well-known teaching of Sri Chaitanya, repeating over and over again: "Compassion for mankind!" Then he said: "Compassion — compassion — no! No! No! Not compassion — but service!" Naren listened attentively to these words, and as he left the room, he said: "I have learned a great lesson today. If I live I shall some day give this truth to the world." And what did Vivekananda preach? He preached the ideal of service to God in man. When we learn to see God within ourself, we learn to see Him in all. We learn to see that our own good lies in the good of all mankind. Thus it is that humanism becomes spiritualized. The ignorant way is to strive to enrich our life on earth, and the spiritual way is to try to find out how best we can live on earth in order that we may reach God.

To sum up: the scientific temper and rationalistic spirit are not opposed to religion and revelation, if by religion we mean experimenting with the truth and experiencing the truth of God. Intellect when elevated and expanded becomes revelation. To accept religion and revelation without this spirit of experimenting and experiencing the truth of God, leads man to fanaticism. Intellectual culture and scientific temper, unless expanded into revelation, leads to its own destruction.

Intellect and revelation are to be harmonized, humanism is to be elevated to the spirit, morality or ethical life is to be spiritualized, external decorum is to be guided by inner cheek. In this way harmony can be established between the civilizations of the East and the West.

