

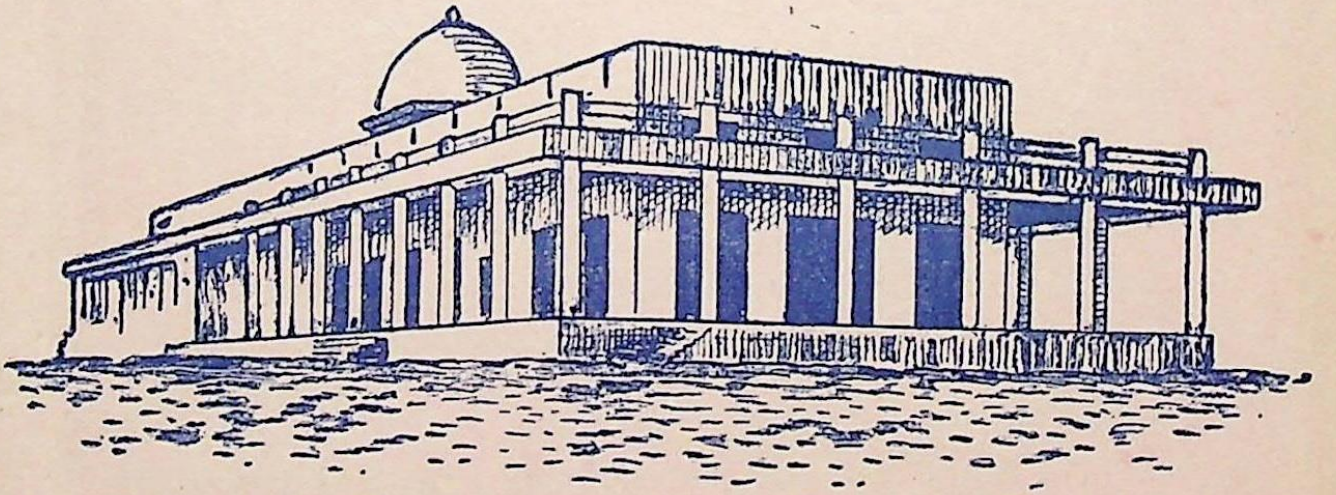
10/81

Pathway to God

(A Quarterly Journal of Spiritual Life)



आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्य : ।



SRI GURUDEVA MANDIR

**ACADEMY OF COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY AND
RELIGION, BELGAUM.**

Vol. XVI

No. 1

October 1981

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(Report for quarter ending 30-9-1981)

The Vaikuntha-chaturdashi Nama-Saptah' will begin in Gurudev Mandir on 6th November and last for 5 days, ending on 10th November. Persons desiring to participate in this Saptah should inform the Secretary about a week in advance to enable him to make arrangements for their stay in the mandir.

The seminar on 'Samarth Ramdas' will be fixed in about November. The following persons have agreed to read their papers (in Marathi) and to take part in this seminar (1) Dr. P. M. Upadhye, Bombay. (2) Dr. Shrikrishna Deshmukh, Savyasachi : Murgud. (3) Shri Suneel Chincholkar, Sajjangad. (4) Dr. Vasant Rao Vaidya, Chaphal. (5) Padmashri Baburao Gokhale; Karad. (6) Shri M. S. Deshpande, Athani. (7) Sou. Shalinitai Javadekar, Baroda (8) Dr. B. R. Modak, Dharwad. (9) Dr. R. S. Godbole, Mokshadham-Machnur. (10) Shri Anna Bhagavat, Jamb. (11) Shri Mukundswami Gore, Tembu.

If any other person desires to read a paper in the seminar, he may write to the Secretary who may allow him to do so, if time permits.

NEW DONORS (Rs. 500/-)

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(1) Prof. M. V. Patankar, Aurangabad. (2) Shri Gopalrao G. Arole, Pune. The next Number of Pathway to God will be devoted to articles on 'Shri Samartha Ramdas'. Interested persons may send in their articles before about the middle of November this year.

Pathway to God

(*A Quarterly Journal of Spiritual Life*)

Editor :- Prof. K. D. Tangod, M.A.

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PRAYER

नरान् स्तुत्वा नीचान् उदरभरणासक्तहृदयो
दयोदाराधाराऽ मरवरनुतत्वत्पदयुगं ।
न वा वंदे विष्णो तदपि भववारीशपतितं
पते माया मायावरणहरणात् रक्ष नृहरे ॥

श्री विष्णु स्तुतिः

by Sri Satyasandha Teertha

Being interested in filling the belly by praising inferior men, I am not saluting thy feet, O Lord Vishnu, the substratum of qualities such as benevolence, generosity etc., extolled by gods including Brahma, the Lord of Lakshmi, Narasimha. Even then protect me fallen in the ocean of samsāra by removing the veil of ignorance (putting an end to the bondage of prakṛti).

ॐ

Shri Gurudeva

Dr. R. D. Ranade



Born : Jamakhandi
3-7-1886

Samadhi : Nimbai
6-6-1957

E d i t o r

RELIGION AND CULTURE

Of all the forms of human creative genius, the most fascinating are, undoubtedly, religion and culture. The two would also represent the exclusive marks of human social and spiritual life. They are, by all means, the most effective guides of human behaviour for they play a vital part in moulding human personality. It is these extraordinary possessions of man that mark the line of demarcation between the human and the sub-human.

The concept of religion has been sought to be interpreted in various ways. As a matter of fact, the forms in which religion expresses itself vary so much that it is rather difficult to agree upon its interpretation acceptable to one and all. However, a true religion involves three things, viz : the idea of a superhuman or divine power, a set of reciprocal duties and obligations between man and the superhuman power and a system of rituals, beliefs and practices through which man seeks to communicate with the divine power. In the words of Arnold Green, "Religion involves a system of beliefs, symbolic practices and the objects governed by faith rather than knowledge, which relates man to an unseen supernatural realm beyond the known and the controllable."

Religion, centred around faith in a higher being, has since the creation been a marked feature of human life. Man is as much a religious animal as he is a laughing or a society -

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building animal. Religion is as peculiar to him as any other activity to distinguish him from other animals. In the opinion of Radin, religion has both physiological and emotional parts. While the physiological part expresses itself in such acts of the followers of a religious faith as kneeling, closing eyes and praying with folded hands, equally fundamental is the presence of an emotional attachment to a power beyond human control.

Spirituality, consisting in the pursuit of the ultimate object of all religious endeavours which is God-realisation or attainment of the Absolute Reality, constitutes the value of religion. Since God or Absolute Reality is in essence supernatural and a matter of faith, practically the whole of religion falls outside the scope of science.

The issue as to whether or not religion is compatible with science has been of interest to all social scientists and philosophers. That they are opposed to each other has been the contention of good many thinkers. It is on record that dogmatic religion has opposed science and interfered with its development by all possible means. In support of this line of thought, Sumner and Keller write 'It is as difficult to find any religion which has welcomed free enquiry as it is easy to cite eminent enquirers who have been executed or persecuted by religious authorities.' Such a train of thought purports to establish a fundamental incompatibility between science and religion. Thus, the outlook of science is one of observation and test and therefore science does not accept anything within its purview which has no empirical value. Religion deals with something unseen or supernatural. Religious experience does not lend itself to scientific investigation as it is entirely a matter of faith and inner revelation.

It is, however, quite illogical and unwise to make a categorical statement that science and religion are poles apart. To quote George Galloway, "There need be no dispute or misunderstanding on the part of science with religion. Science, it is said, is rational, while religion is purely a matter of

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belief or faith: the one draws sober inferences from facts, the other makes a venture on trust. Though this description is not entirely wrong, it greatly exaggerates the difference between the scientific and religious temper. Faith and reason are not to be separated and opposed in this fashion; religion is not anti-rational and science itself involves faith. The man of science goes beyond what he can prove strictly; he makes postulates which imply faith on his part. Neither in its method nor in its temper is science necessarily hostile to religion; and if science is not anti-religious neither is religion anti-scientific."

Gurudeo Ranade has eloquently revealed the fallacy of discordance between science and religion. In his own words "There is perfect reconciliation between the discoveries of science and the truths of religion. Science merely deals with the work of God. It supplements instead of supplanting religion. Religion and science are necessary co-relatives; they are the positive and negative poles of thought, of which neither can gain intensity, without increasing the intensity of the other. We are not permitted to know, nor even to conceive, the Reality which is behind the veil of Appearance. It is absolutely unknowable. It is in this doctrine of unknowableness of Ultimate Reality that we find the principle of reconciliation. The quarrel between Religion and Science lasts so long as the adherents of Religion claim a familiar knowledge of the Inscrutable mystery, and so long as the Students of Science are not aware of the surrounding ζ ocean Nescience." In the ultimate analysis, both Religion and Science coalesce in the pursuit of the Absolute Reality: the persistence of the unseen Force or the imperceptible link between the cause-effect nexus.

Let us now turn to what constitutes culture. It is a collective name for all the distinctive achievements of a human group, comprising not only such items as language, tool-making, industry and art, law and government, manners and morals, but also the material instruments or artifacts, by

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which the culture of a group is given practical effect, consisting of buildings, tools, machines, transport and communication devices, art objects and so on. Thus, the visible and tangible products of science and technology constitute the material aspect of culture while the invisible and intangible objects represent its non-material or psychic aspect. Besides being the universal and distinctive characteristic of human society, culture caters to the day to-day material as well as the emotional needs of man. The origin of culture as a unique human trait must be attributed to man's superior capacity to learn from accumulated experience and to transmit what he learns by means of symbols, the chief of which is language.

In what sense is religion a constituent element of culture of a group? Although religion is basically a social institution built up around the idea of a supernatural power or a divine being and the relation of human beings to it, in any particular culture, this idea becomes formalised into a pattern of social behaviour and a strong unifying force. Such a pattern or unifying force comes to be designated as "the religion" of a given group, uniting its members through common faith and common ways of prayer and worship.

Editor

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

OF NĀMADEVA AND TUKĀRĀM

and some aspects of religious experiences in Purana
Literature.

Dr. P. M. UPADHYE, M.A., Ph.D.

The term 'Religion' is so variously understood that it is very difficult to find the commonly accepted definition of Religion. Those who have tried to define the term have varied and sometimes opposite views. We may refer to some definitions : (a) The term religion, whatever its best definition, clearly refers to certain types of data (beliefs, practices, feelings, modes and attitudes etc.) (1). (b) Religion is the belief in spiritual beings; every definition of religion ultimately implies theories of reality (2). (c) According to Whitehead, religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness, to Macmurray, the field of religion is the whole field of common experience organised in relation to the central fact of personal relationship. Matthew Arnold defines religion as morality touched with emotion. Kant declares religion-or at least religion within the bounds of reason by itself, to be the recognition of all our duties as divine commands (3). We may also mention that religion is for simple people and so must itself be simple; perhaps it may be hoped that we have not gone too far wrong, if we have described religion as worship, dedication and trust, for all of these are possible even for the simplest of men (4). William James opines that Religion shall mean for us the feelings acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine (5).

With this background of the nature of religion, we may be able to examine the religious experience of great saints of Maharashtra viz. Nāmadeva and Tukārāma and to a certain extent religious experience in Purana Literature. From the

above mentioned discussion on religion, the following facts may be borne in mind : (a) Religion is both personal and institutional; (b) It is directly linked with morality in letter and spirit; (c) It will speak of nature of reality through the experience of religious-holy men; (d) It recognises God- the highest reality; (e) Religious experience can be indicated variously either in emotions, feelings of love and kindness, awe, joy, wonder, melancholy, inner happiness and attitude of serviceability and peaceful mind, quietitude, virtues, social as well as moral prayer and poetry, child-like innocence to look at the world and trance etc.

Swami Vivekanand rightly said in this connection that the end and aim of our Religion, as our ancient teachers put it, is the experience - 'anubhava' - of God through the steady growth in man of his spiritual awareness : that is the touchstone of religion (6). If we peep into the experiences of saint Nāmadeva, we are happy to find how his experiences are varied in character. Nāmadeva was a child-like devotee and entreats Lord Vithobā in various ways and ultimately asks Him either to favour him or kill him. He describes the experience : "My eyes are tired of waiting upon you; my heart is filled with such a condition that, O Lord, you should not delay in favouring me". His every word is bubbling with love and longing for God and God alone. One of the important characteristics of experience is the ardent love, sincere but passionless, unattached love for God. Nāmadeva says that his love can be known by Keshava alone and Keshava is Nāmā and Nāmā is Keshava. (केशव तो नामा, नामा तो केशव). The majestic influence of his divine bound love can be seen on his entire family along with a maid servant, Janabai who equivocally followed him in his religious path. In the early stage of his religious and spiritual life, Nāmadeva had expressed his tender yearnings and longings in search of God when he was beset with wild animals in the form of anger, greed and enmity. He says to Lord Vithala that he is full of sins and from top to toe he has committed many offences, but he has no chance to serve God even in a dream. He app-

eals to the Lord to favour him. He says, "O Lord" you are my mother, I am your child; feed me with your breasts. You are a cow; I am your calf. So do not withdraw your milk. You are a bird and I am your young one. So feed me with grass.—" He is so much obsessed with worldly life that he finds no shelter other than his own Lord. This is his experience on a dark night of the soul as said by Gurudev Ranade (7). These are Nāmādevā's powerful feelings in his own solitariness which constitutes 'religion' as opined by Whitehead quoted in the beginning. Moreover, his is the faith in God par excellence. Nāmādevā was aware of his human limitations which could be noticed in his Abhangas. In the later stage of his spiritual life, his experience became widened and God became the ultimate aim in his life. He desired eternal remembrance of God. He was willing to sacrifice his mind, wealth, nay, the entire life for the sake of God. He genuinely felt that he would die the moment he became separated from Lord. In the end his experience is so lofty and wonderful that he felt that he could find all worldly relations like father, brother, sister, friend in God as well as worldly possessions like wealth and health, fame, success, satisfaction, in Lord. He was of the firm faith that they were the messengers of Vitthala who had no fear of God or Death. With divine name on tongue, they could burn great sins. He took a vow to make the entire 'samsara' happy even if it is full of sorrow. Such is his religious feeling quite unique in the sense, as opined by Dr. Otto that it is distinct from pleasure or joy or aesthetic rapture or moral exaltation (8). This is also a feeling of being in a wider life than that of this worldly, selfish, little interests. This is also his sweet love to God and to mankind experienced by him. In short, we can describe Nāmādevā's religious experience as religious sentiment of personal religion, experience of a sick soul and the divided self in a worldly life; but a way to the unification of self with God, his experience of self-surrendering condition, purity of life, love for humanity and subconscious self merging gradually in cosmic conscious self—the divine experience. We can also notice in his experience the highest flight of charity, devotion and love—the three main radiant jewels which he cherished throughout his life,

Let us now turn to saint Tukārāma and his experience. Tukārāma is very popular in Maharashtra and every spiritual aspirant proceeds to Pandharpur chanting Tukārāma's name at every step with ardent devotion on his way. His abhangas are sung in all parts of the Maharashtra State by millions of people. His abhangas are in a way a graph of his life showing how he treaded the spiritual path slowly and slowly and ultimately became a great saint. His abhangas indicate varied but rich experiences in his life in the realm of religion and philosophy. Gurudev Ranade says that Tukārāma's path is humanistic and personalistic religion (9). As said earlier, his experiences are varied in character and they are expressed in his abhangas which are in a way the outburst of powerful feelings of his heart. They also paint graphically his biography and show how he rose from worldly state to the status of a holy man. Tukārāma suffered much in his life due to poverty; but he did not lose faith in God. He says that if Nārāyana were to favour him he may not get food to eat or he may have no issues to continue race etc. (न मिळो खावया अन्न; न वाढो संतान । तरी हा नारायण कृपा करो ।) His experience in the world is that there is little happiness but mountain-like sorrow (सुख जवापाडे दुःख पर्वताएवढे....।). His practical experience is that by mere constant practice, an unattainable thing can be attained (असाध्य ते साध्य करिती सायास् कारण अभ्यास तुका म्हणे). He felt that peace is real happiness; other than that is mere misery. (शांतीपरते नाहीं सुख । येरे अवघेचि दुःख ।) Through experience he came to the conclusion that mere name of Lord is all his religion (सकळ धर्म मज विठोवाचे नाम). According to him PUNYA or merit consists of doing good to others and Pāpa or sin is nothing but harassment to others (पुण्य परउपकार; पाप ते परपीडा). and truth is religion (सत्य तोचि धर्म). His firm faith is that everything is obtained by saguna-bhakti (quali-field devotion). He looked up to Lord as the soul of the world (विठला, तू जीव या जगाचा); and so he earnestly appealed to Lord to run quickly to favour him. (आता धावे धावे तरी काय पाहसी हरी). At the advanced stage of spiritual life, he experienced the very association of Lord at every step to help him

(जेथे जातो तेथे तू माझा सांगाती । चालविसी हाती धरोनिया काठी). He proudly says that the real meaning of the Vedas is known to the saints like him (वेदांचा अर्थ आम्हा ठावा); and people like him come to this world to prove the truths proclaimed by ancient sages (आम्ही वैकुण्ठवासी, अलो याचिकारणासी-बोलिले जें ऋषी, साच भावे वर्ताया). Tukārāma was conscious of his drawbacks and defects. He says in a pathetic tone (मी तव अन्यायी, अपराधी, कर्षहीन, मतिमंद बुद्धी । तुज म्या आठविले नाही कधी, वाचे कृपानिधि मायबापा). “O Lord, I am guilty, quite dull; I have not remembered you even in words. I did not listen to your prayer, but I abused many people. I did not oblige any one. In spite of this, O Lord, ferry me across the ocean of worldly existence.” Only a saint like Tukārāma can speak in such a pathetic tone about himself before the Lord. It is his real urge of realisation, not mere speculation. His prayers to Lord are nothing but states of mind superior to others and they reveal to us his spiritual longings. He could found the human empire upon love and that was his experience. His saintly character can also be seen in his abhangas. As noted earlier, Tukārāma’s experience about the presence of God indicates a sense of friendly continuity of the ideal power within our own life and willing self-surrender to its control. He had positive pleasure in sacrifice and asceticism. He rightly says, “ जे का रंजले गांजले, त्यासी म्हणे जो आपुले । तोचि साधू ओळखावा, देव तेथेचि जाणावा.” This view is full of human kindness. He did not hanker after popularity; he desired sweet love of God. He displayed saintly methods against his foes as creative energies to turn them into friends and this is indeed a divine gift of these saints like Tukarama to mankind. His petitional prayers to Lord are quite noteworthy. In fact, prayer is soul of religion; because intercourse with God is realised by prayer, prayer is religion in act and this is seen in Tukārāma’s abhangas. He saw all things in God and referred all things to Him. This is the short review of the religious experience of Tukārām.

Both Nāmadeva and Tukārāma had subjective as well as

objective experience. Subjective experience was seen in the inner state of mind and objective experience was noticed in the sum-total of whatever at any given time they thought of with reference to universal Consciousness. Both of them heard divine voice and experienced sudden raptures of the divine presence. Uneasiness was also noticed in their earlier stage; but in later stage it gave rise to calmness and bliss, which was a stage for salvation.

Both had a different kind of experience due to their mental set-up and other circumstances. But the feeling on one hand and the conduct on the other were found always the same in their cases. This is, what we can say, quite unique in the field of religious experience with reference to Nāmadeva and Tukārāma. Both of them had firm belief in divine religion and their experiences also centre around this religion. Their religion has no caste-class-creed bar and therefore their experiences speak of universal religion—one God and one Religion.

Coming to Purana literature, we find that the Purana literature is full of narratives of saints and devotees like Pralhada, Dhruva, Jada Bharata and others, and divine biographies of incarnations of Lord Vishnu. It is not possible to deal with all Puranās in this short article. As such, we will take at random some examples from Vishnu and Bhagavata Puranas which constitute the very essence of Bhakti Yoga. The story of Pralhada in the Vishnu purana will reveal his experience. Pralhada ways felt the presence of Lord and he was therefore not afraid of any punishment inflicted on him by his demon father. The glory of the divine name of the Lord is sung beautifully in the 6th chapter of the 2nd book of this Purana.

Every page of the Bhagavata Purana is replete with eloquent hymns in praise of Lord. Glories of God are sung, devotion is noticed throughout the Purana. Rasalila of Krishna depicted in the 10th book of Bhagavata Purana is full of love-experience in trance. There are beautiful prayers in

both these Puranas and they may speak of religion in act. Meditation on the form of Vishnu in the 1st chapter of II book of the Bhagavata Purana is nothing but the voice of silence experienced by a devotee. The saints and the devotees experienced the grace of God at every step as described in these Puranas.

On the basis of this short survey of religious experience of Nāmadeva and Tukārāma and few aspects thereof in the Puranas, we can come to the conclusion as follows :

(a) In all experiences whether personal or impersonal, there is faith par-excellance; (b) devotion to Lord either through prayer or service or worship is a dominating factor; (c) experiences show loss of worry, the very presence of peace, happiness and harmony in all conditions; (d) they indicate perceiving truth not seen before and as such there is a sense of newness in their experience;(e) divine light and divine sound are noticed in their experience; (f) there is a feeling of true saintliness; (g) There is a marvellous touch of emotional flavour in their experiences; (h) it is in a way psycho-physical experience, subjective as well as objective experience.

We may conclude in the words of Swami Vivekanand. He says "Experience is the only source of knowledge, religion is not taught as a science of experience. This should not be. There is always however a small group of men who teach religion from experience. They are called mystics. And these mystics in every religion speak the same tongue and teach the same truth. This is the real science of religion. As mathematics in every part of the world does not differ; so the mystics do not differ. They are all similarly constituted. Their experience is the same and this becomes law." (10) This is quite true with Nāmadeva, Tukārāma and Purana literature.

One note may be added here that the religion was the backbone of the society and religion dealt with truths of metaphysical - world and these saints expressed

their thoughts or gave vent to their experience under the garb of religion which consisted of prayer, worship, high moral standard, practice of virtues and vows and devotion to Lord. With this background, religious experiences of saints of India can be better understood and their expressions be found in the cases of other faiths in the world. This is quite unique comparatively in the field of religious experience of various religious-holy men of different faiths in the world.

- 1) E. R. Ethics. Volume -10 Page 662
- 2) -do- 663
- 3) The Modern Predicament. Page 59 by H.J.Paton 1955
- 4) -do- 71 -do-
- 5) The varieties of Religious Experience by William James-1929 page 31-32
- 6) Swami Vivekananda's Synthesis of Science and Religion : Institute Booklets -6, 1967 (Calcutta) Page 57
- 7) Mysticism in Maharashtra by R. D. Ranade. Page 192
- 8) Quoted in the Modern Predicament by H. J. Paton. Page 135
- 9) Mysticism in Maharashtra, by R. D. Ranade page 9
- 10) Ibid. Page 23.

ARJUNA'S EXPERIENCE IN THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE BHAGAVADGITA

ITS MYSTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

ARVIND SHARMA

It is quite well-known that Arjuna suffers an attack of nervousness in the first chapter of the Bhagavadgītā¹. His condition is vividly described :

O Kṛṣṇa, when I see these kinsmen present here in act to fight my limbs grow faint; my mouth is parched, trembling lays hold upon my body, and my hair stands erect; Gāṇḍiva slips from my hand, and my skin is afire; I cannot stand; my brain seems to reel. 2

It is, however, not as well known that Arjuna has another fit of nervousness in the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. On seeing the cosmic form of Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna's "heart quakes with fear". 3 And Kṛṣṇa assures him :

Tremble not thou, nor let thy spirit be perplexed, looking on this so awful form of mine. 4

And Arjuna's hair again stood on end as before ! 5

The external signs in both the cases are the same, yet the experiences are far apart. Indeed even the experiences have a common element of fear—but in one case it is the fear brought on by cowardice, 6, in the other case it is the fear caused by God's terrifying self-disclosure. 7. It is the purpose

1 Bhagavadgītā 28-30 etc.

2 W. Douglas P. Hill, *The Bhagavadgītā* (Oxford University Press 1969) p. 79.

3 Ibid., p. 165.

4 Ibid., p. 166.

5 See Bhagavadgītā I. 29; XI. 14.

6 Bhagavadgītā II. 2.3.

7 Bhagavadgītā XI. 25-35.

of this paper to show that similarities in external neural data may conceal vital differences in inner spiritual experience.

II

Arjuna's first experience can hardly be described as spiritual. Indeed, although he adduced ethical reasons for not fighting, the experience can hardly be called ethical. It was a case of loss of nerve. Arjuna was all ready to give in.

Alas, a grievous sin have we determined to commit, in that for greed of sovereignty and pleasure we are prepared to slay our kin ! If Dhritarāṣṭra's men, with weapons in their hands, should slay me in the fight, unresisting and unarmed, that were happier to me !

And

Thus spake Arjuna on the field of battle, and sat down upon the chariot seat, dropping his arrows and his bow, his soul overwhelmed with grief. 1.

Not only grief, Arjuna is also horrified at the "sin that lies in the destruction of the family." 2

This is one picture of Arjuna. The external symptoms may be noted : (1) faint limbs (2) parched mouth (3) trembling and (4) horripilation.

III

It needs to be noted that superficially the symptoms he showed when he faced the *mysterium tremendum* 3 in the

1 W. Douglas P. Hill, op. cit., p. 81.

2. Ibid., p. 80.

3 "Rudolf Otto gives the whole scene as an example of the place of the numinous, the *mysterium tremendum* in religion" (S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā* [London : George Allen & Unwin, 1958] p. 282).

form of Kṛṣṇa's theophany involved (1) trembling (2) faltering voice (3) fear. 4 The closeness between his situation after seeing God or after the fear of God was put in his heart and his situation after being seized with cowardly fear cannot be overlooked. Does the Gītā contain a hint here that identical physical states are no indicators of similar spiritual states ?

4 Bhagavadgītā XI. 35.

Mystic's Service to Society

We are full of joy when we are in the contemplation and realisation of God. That state of beatification is itself our liberation. Liberation is not to be found after death. But still to know God, to do His work, to enjoy His presence and to devote oneself to His service are exactly what a Mystic ought to do.

- R. D. RANADE

NARAYANA GURU

by SWAMI SHAKTIDHARA

Narayana Guru was born in 1854 in the small village of Chempazhandi near Trivandrum in Kerala State. He attained **Mahasamadhi** in 1928. Although his father, Madan Asan was a farmer, he was also well versed in astrology and Ayurvedic medicine, and was himself a teacher. Once a week the local people would come to his house to hear discourses on the **Mahabharatha** and **Bhagavad Gita**. His son Nanu, who was to become Narayana Guru, was sometimes asked by his father to give the discourse, for the father knew that his richly endowed son was destined to live an all-out spiritual life, and perhaps exert an influence which was much needed at the time.

Narayana Guru's early life among the people of Travancore is admirably presented by his disciple, Nataraja Guru in part one of "The Word of the Guru" (pub : Pai & Co., Ernakulam, Kerala State). Narayana Guru stood for the unitive wisdom embodied in the Advaita teaching of the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, as well as the wisdom of South Indian Saivism found in the teachings of Tiruvalluvar, Tirumular, Shantalingaswami and others. He was greatly influenced by the Tamil tradition because he spent many years wandering in Tamil Nadu, where he learnt classical Tamil, called Sangam Tamil. This enabled him to compose works in the language, but unfortunately only a few are extant.

There is no doubt that Narayana Guru made a unique contribution to Kerala during his lifetime, not only in teaching basic life principles which touch all humanity, both by word and example, but what is equally if not more important, by being the first known philosopher-sage to compose a body of spiritual literature in the language of Malayalam. This is too often forgotten, but the fact of the matter is that before

he presented these compositions to the public, there was no coherent body of original Malayalam spiritual writing, unlike in the rest of South India, where there are many traditions of illustrious age.

The Guru realised that merely engaging in activist reform without referring to basic wisdom principles, would be putting the cart before the horse. In his early life he sponsored and sometimes personally contributed to whatever made humans better and wiser, all the time stating in clear and simple language what the guiding principles should be. He solved every problem as it came his way, yet he did not have a single program of action in and of itself. At first he was regarded with scepticism by most people, when he offered a simple practical solution to those questioning him, but they finally discovered that what he offered was correct, and gradually he was recognised as a wise man, not only by those who sought his help, but by many others, those in particular who stood on the top on the theocratic social ladder in erstwhile Travancore State.

Narayana Guru's practical wisdom is found in a few of his earlier writings, such as Jivakarunya Panchakam, Anukampa Dasakam and Jati Mimamsa. In these compositions he stressed the unitive way, holding to the common value of kindness and compassion, as well as pointing out the basic oneness of humanity, coming from the self-same Source. Our fellow humans should be recognised for their inner qualities or gunas which determine their karma or vocation, and not from mere secondary things like self and power or class and caste. The Guru did not create a new caste of "backwards", but thinking positively and in a forward manner stressed the oneness of humanity. Along with this went Kindness to Life, to all life, and not only human life. About killing animals for eating, he says by doing this we become the tiger's equal. In the Jivakarunya Panchakam he equates Dharma with non-killing, and humourously yet pointedly asks if we would regard as a favour the killing of ourselves!

It is in the Guru's practical wisdom that we see an echo of the earlier Mahayana Buddhist teaching, which joins together wisdom and compassion. The great Mahayana teacher Sahara says, "Wisdom without compassion will become cold and heartless, while compassion without wisdom will become sloppy emotionalism." "Both must go together. Ahimsa itself is essentially an attitude of mind towards life as much as it is an action, just as it was with the Buddha, Ramalingaswami, Basavanna and Jnanadeva, the latter teaching in the Jnanesvari (XI|I.7) : "So whatever is done through the organs constitutes the actions of the mind. If there is no trace of non-violence in the interior itself, how can it (non-violence) overflow through the organs outside ?" (R. K. Bhagwat translation).

From the practical side of Narayana Guru's teaching we go on to the pure wisdom aspects which terminate in moksha. In works like Brahma Vidya Panchakam and Nivritti Panchakam he lays the foundation of spiritual life, following in the line of Sankaracharya (e.g. Vivekachudamani) and the over all tradition of Advaita Vedanta. He explains the importance of the principle of Guruhood and shows how the earnest seeker approaches the spiritual teacher, and the dialogue which must ensue, so common in the Upanishads. The Guru also reveals the basic mental endowments that the seeker must have, such qualities as sama, dama, titiksha, mumukshutvam, etc. He then goes on to present his vision of the Absolute in such works as Atmopadesha Satakam and Darsana Mala. The first is a one-hundred verse composition in Malayalam and is of a highly intuitive and mystical nature. He puts on record his own personal spiritual experience in the light of the non-dual Absolute.

The Darsana Mala is in Sanskrit and reflects a more sober presentation. The work is in ten chapters with ten verses to each chapter. It culminates in the tenth chapter called Nirvana Darsana which describes the various types of spiritual seekers. Narayana Guru also wrote a didhiti or gloss to this work, at the request of some of his

disciples, and this has been translated into English by the Guru's disciple Nataraja Guru. For the interested reader this translation is available in serial form From "Guru Message", Gurukula Island Home, Ramanthali P.O., Cannanore Dist., Kerala State - 670308.

In an article of this size, meant to serve as an introduction to Narayana Guru, we cannot go into any great specific detail about the many points in his Advaita philosophy. His dynamic spirituality was felt during his lifetime by the people at large in many different ways and for many different reasons. He is still a name in Kerala for all, and for some, more than a name. Narayana Guru was a social teacher in the sense that he stood for a basic grass roots wisdom, which, when correctly understood will solve the problems created by the minds of men; he was also a great spiritual teacher who stood for the non-dual wisdom of the Absolute. He was not a simplistic political platform reformer caught in the whirlpool of incessant activity, but rather he stressed wisdom before action in the same way as the Bhagavad Gita (IV. 37). In verse 43 of his Atmopadesha Satakam Narayana Guru declares :

By Nature's action caught, and turned,
Men of good action too, alas, keep turning round !
Mis-action to counteract, non-action avails not :
Gain-motive bereft, wisdom one should attain.❧

❧translated by Nataraja Guru with a commentary, Gurukula Publishing House; Srinivasapuram PO, Varkala, Kerala State 695145

WHO WAS KRISHNA

By BIRAJA KUMAR TRIPATHI

When man becomes reckless; when he acts or behaves not in accordance with the divine will; when selfishness, hatred, jealousy and such other beastly qualities become rampant in the world, when jungle society becomes a better kindergarten than human society, God feels the necessity of descending down to earth to set things right. God incarnates himself in different forms – “Sambhavami ātmamāyayā”(1) to establish right conscience in the world. He acts as a break to man’s unholy actions; the animality in man is never allowed to increase beyond a certain limit or to dominate over his rationality. As God is the creator of the world, it is believed that it is equally His responsibility to free it from evil forces. When Adharma dominates over Dharma and undivine force establishes itself as the master of the world, the real Master comes forward to its rescue and frees it from evil. In the Bhagavata, it is therefore said, “Whenever right conscience wanes and unright conscience increases the Almighty Lord Hari creates Himself”(2) Sri Krishna was God Himself (Swayam Bhagavān) and He came down to Earth in the right moment to replace injustice by justice, falsehood by truth and safe guarded the virtuous from the vicious. In the Bhagavad Gita, Kṛiṣṇa said.

Yadā-Yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata
 abhutthanam adharmasya tadā tmanam srujamy aham.
 paritrānāya sādhunām vināsāya Ca duskrutam
 dharama samsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge-yuge(3).

The character study of Krishna is both amazing and thrilling in the sense that His actions and behaviour; love and

1 - Gitā - IV, 6

2 - Srimad Bhāgavata. IX, translation from Dr. Radhakrishnan

3 - Gitā - IV, 7 and 8

anger; courage and confidence; casual sports and shrewed politics speak of a higher man; a super man; nay God Himself. As a diplomat or as a driver; as an emperor or as a lover; as an adviser or as a warrior. He was without a second. His was a master mind in every sphere of life. His majestic and mighty personality is on the lips of everybody, be he a child or the aged, His lovely and charming personality attracts all men in equal measure irrespective of age, sex and religion. That Krishna was no other than God Himself is the immediate and spontaneous feeling of everybody. While confessing His own divinity, He Himself has said—

“.....Fly to me alone. Make me thy single refuge ! I will free thy soul from all its sins”. (4)

This is the divine assurance given by Krishna to Arjuna in the Kurukshetra battle field where the battle royal was fought between the Pandavas and Kauravas; good and evil forces. According to all religions, such an assurance suits in the lips of God alone. “This divine assurance is the life and light that a world, filled with sins and darkness, needs.” (5) This is an assurance from the infinite God only to the finite man. No finite being can give such an assurance to his fellow beings. God alone can offer such a promise, can ask finite men to sacrifice and surrender everything to Him. The language of the above passage of the Gita clearly signifies that the conversation was going on between members of two different species, one belonging to the higher and the other to the lower. It was certainly never between two human beings; on the other hand it was between Nara and Narayana; Man and God, one confidently commanding, while the other, obeying the commands with folded hands. Krishna went further to assert that He is the creator of the entire universe.

4 - The song celestial - Edwin Arnold, p-109

5 - Rāmāyana - P-260, Rajagopalachari

“.....Whatsoever in the seed of all existences that am I, O Arjuna; nor is there anything, moving or unmoving that can exist without Me’’. (6)

The life of Krishna provides a definite and clearcut answer in regard to His own divinity. It is full of miracles and readers are thrilled all through. His divinity was crystal clear right from the moment of His birth. The escape of Vasudeva with his new born son (Krishna) from the well guarded prison cell of King Kamsa is a miraculous event that creates awe and wonder in the mind of the readers and speaks of the birth of God in the human form. Vasudeva's shackles are shaken off, well-armed prison guards got drowned in deep sleep and the prison doors stood ajar. All this happened automatically like magic in a trice. In fact it was the magic of the supreme magician - Krishna. Lifting up of Giri Govardhan was another such miraculous deed of Krishna. Krishna, a child then, opposed the idea of worshipping Indra which was a custom then in His society. Instead, He asked his friends to worship Govardhan Hill itself. But it was an insult intolerable for Indra. On the appointed day when all arrangements were made for the worship of the hill, Indra demonstrated his wrath by causing torrential rain. All ran helter skelter and the festival came to an abrupt end. But who could kill them whom Krishna protected? Krishna lifted the hill a few inches up from the ground and all his friends took shelter underneath with shouts of joy and felicitation to Krishna. When the rains subsided all the Gopies assembled before Him with folded hands and said, “Govinda, You are our God now. We shall never have you for our rasa’’. (7)

Yasoda, His foster mother, was baffled to see the whole Universe; Viswa Rupa, inside the mouth of Krishna. The whole crowd at Mathura was dazed to find the *misshappen Trivakra shapely* simply by the divine touch of Krishna. “Trivakra rose from the ground and tried to stand up in the way she was accustomed to. But she felt something strange

6 - Bhagvad Gita, P-267; Dr. Radhakrishnan.

7 - Krishnāvātāra, Vol I. K. M. Munshi.

coming over her, a sudden influx of energy..... Almost with a shock, she realised what has happened to her..... Lord; Lord; you have made me shapely and straight. She muttered and flung herself at Sri Krishna's feet, trailing her long hair over his feet, in ineffable gratitude." (8) Akrura[‡] too was lucky and blessed to have such divine experience. This happened when he was taking Krishna and Balaram in his chariot to Mathura. On the way, they broke their journey near the bank of the river Yamuna. Akrura went inside the water for bath while the two brothers sat in the chariot. But he was struck with amazement to find both of them inside the water. But how could that be? So he came out of the water but was much more surprised to see both of them in the chariot as before. He made the second dive and., this time to verify his eye sight and to his utter surprise he again found both of them inside the water. It was not a case of defective vision but a case of God-realization. When Akrura regained his balance and grasped the whole situation, he narrated his feeling in the following manner –

“Oh Lord whatever there is unusual supernatural on earth, water or in the sky, all is established in thy universal form. When I have known you in essence, what residue of supernaturalness is left which has not come within the orbit of my vision “ (9)

These are some of the few instances selected for our purpose. Such examples can be multiplied ad infinitum. The life of Krishna is full of marvels, miracles and mysteries. That He is God Himself is manifested in every moment of his life. His divinity was transparent in His thought, speech and action, but it was exposed in toto when He revealed His

8 – Krishnāvatāra. Vol. I – K. M. Munshi

9 – Srimad Bhāgavata.

‡ - His maternal uncle.

Divine Form to Arjuna in the battle field. But as a finite man Arjuna was not capable of seeing the infinite Form of Lord. The Infinite Form is too much for finite eyes or Mamsa Cak-sus. So Krishna was kind enough to provide him a pair of Divine eyes or Divya Cakusus, and revealed His Divine Cosmic Form. Arjuna no more saw his charioteer and in his place he saw the most awesome sight which was beyond his imagination, comprehension and description. In the Viswa Rupa he saw the Lord pervading the entire universe. The phenomenal world slowly disappeared from his vision. The finitude of the things of the world vanished; each particle now revealed the whole or the infinite. Every finite particle now mirrored the infinite; each was charged with divinity; all was God and God was all. He saw the Infinite Lord all around him and was unable to see the beginning, the middle or the end of Him.

“nā ntam na madhyam na punas tava dim
pasyāmi visvesvara visvarupa” (10)

It was too big a sight for him; Nara was unable to measure Nārāyana. Slowly his bewilderment disappeared; the restless and terror-struck Arjuna gradually became calm and cool. He was now convinced that he saw God Himself. Arjuna thus reached the final stage of his Sadhana; attained the summum bonum of his life and was undergoing the happiest moment of his life. Addressing the Lord with folded hands he said, “You are the imperishable, the supreme Being to be realized. You are the great treasure house of this Universe; You are the imperishable guardian of the Eternal Dharma. You are the ancient Purusa. I deem.” (11)

This is not the end of Viswa Rupa; Arjuna continued to witness many more unique and wonderful events in the body of the Infinite Lord. The blazing fire emanating from His mouth was heating and burning the entire Universe. The three worlds - the heaven, the earth and the hell - were trem-

10 - Gitā - XI 16

11 - Gitā - XI 18

bling with fear, unable to bear the very sight of the Lord. The Lord had assumed a Ghastly Form; He was out to destroy the wicked and evil and protect the virtuous. The Form He had taken was both terrible (Ugram) and wonderful (Adbhutam). It was terrible for those who were doomed; whose death was imminent. Arjuna saw such people entering the fiery mouth of the Lord and getting perished. But jubilant saints and seers; sages and siddhas were welcoming the arrival of Lord; singing hymns and prayers in praise of Him. They were now safe in the hands of God.

“Svasti'ty Uktvā maharsi siddhasamghā
Stuvanti tvām stutibhih puskalābhi”. (12)

Arjuna further was dazed to see all the sons of Dhritarastra, Bhisma, Drona, Karna and his own men all entering the flaming and gaping mouth of the Lord and were munched to death. Death is inevitable; man is mortal; he cannot escape his death. Whether Arjuna killed them or not, they were all doomed, no one could save them. Arjuna realized now that he was not the person to kill them; he was only an instrument in the hands of God. Things were pre-determined, the Divine will reigned supreme. It could not be otherwise because of his reluctance to fight. His job was merely to carry out the will of God; the war was only an outward show, things had already been decided.

Arjuna could no more withstand the ghastly form. It was a tremendous sight, a mysterious sight too, a mysterium tremendum. He was totally baffled and bewildered and so requested the Lord to withdraw this terrible Form and reveal His charming and lovely fourarmed Form - the Form of Visnu. (13)

Prior to the revelation of the Cosmic Form, Krishna was merely a friend, philosopher and guide to Arjuna. But after seeing this Form, Arjuna realized who his sakhā (friend) was.

So from that moment onwards Arjuna revised his previous relationship with Krishna and treated him as God.

“Honour and worship be.....
 Glory and praise.....to thee
 Namō Namaste, cried on all sides”. (14)

The descent of Krishna had a definite purpose of which He Himself was fully aware. Whether it was the horrible massacre of Kurukshetra battle or the bloody end of the Yadu dynasty; whether it was the ghastly murder of Dusasana or the unjust and merciless killing of Abhimanyu, He was all smiling and remained completely untouched and unaffected all through. When truth was installed and evil routed, there was no need of Him; His time was up. A hunter mistook Him for a deer and shot an arrow. The all-smiling and all-merciful Lord blessed the hunter and gave up the mortal frame and returned to His abode. But this was not so in the case of Rāma, the hero of Rāmāyana. Rāma was completely ignorant of his own divinity and was fully engrossed and entangled in the earthly māyā. He never knew he was God Himself. On the contrary he led the life of an ordinary human being infected with sorrow and suffering. “You should look upon Rāmā, Laxmana and Hanumān like your own father, elder brothers, who are ever eager to help you..... The despair and the grief that the man Rāmā experienced, Krishna never knew ... In every episode of Krishna, we see the difference between the two characters”. (15) All the qualities of an ideal man, ideal brother and ideal ruler have been bestowed upon him abundantly and so a man can hope to have the qualities of Rāmā but no man can aspire to have the qualities of Krishna even in his dreams and here lies the difference between the two characters. Commenting on the character painting of Krishna, Dr. adhakrishnan writes, “The form given to him is indicative of all - comprehensiveness. The peacock feathers of His head are the variegated colours which

14 - Song Celestial, P-72, Edwin Arnold

15 - Rāmāyana, P-295. Rajagopalachari

flood man's eyes. The colour of His complexion is that of the sky, the garland of wild flowers typified the grandeur of the solar and stellar systems. The flute he plays upon, is that by which he gives forth His message. The yellow garment with which He decks His person is the halo of light which pervades space, the mark on His chest is the emblem of the devotion of the devotee which He proudly wears out of love to man. He stands in the devotees' heart, so great is His Grace to man that His feet, which symbolise it, are put one over the other, so that they may have their full effect". (16) It is therefore rightly said, "Krishna tu Bhagavan Swayam". (17)

16 - Indian Philosophy, Vol. I P-544, Dr. Radhakrishnan.

17 - Srimad Bhāgavata.

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"Ātmanivedana is the crowning phase of the devotional life. The surrender of the self to God is so complete that in the blissful unitive life of God-realisation, there remains no trace of egoism or of the consciousness that the body has got any reality of its own. There would be no wonder if the whole of the perceptible world would vanish like a dream before the eyes of one who has realised the Brahman"

- DASABODHA

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∴ Necessity of Initiation

SWAMI MUKTANANDA PARAMAHANSA

All religions are paths to the Absolute. Although the ultimate experience is the same for all, the paths which lead to it are many.

No matter what religion a person may follow, he must practise sadhana. Many people practise austerities and pursue different spiritual disciplines for years on end but remain far from true religious experience. The reason for this is that they lack the grace of the Guru.

According to Shaivism : *gurur vā parameshvari anugrahikā shaktiḥ* "The Guru is the grace-bestowing power of God." The primary ingredient in sadhana is grace. Without grace, self-effort cannot transcend the level of the mind and intellect. It is said that when God is pleased He leads you to the Guru, and when the Guru is pleased he leads you to God. The *Narada Bhakti Sutras* say : *labhyate-pi tatkripayaiva* - 'Contact with great beings becomes possible by God's grace.'

The Guru bestows grace in the form of initiation. All the scriptures stress the necessity of initiation. As the *Kularnava Tantra* says : *vinā dikshā phalam na syāt* - "There is no fruit without initiation." The initiation referred to here does not consist of external rites or ceremonies. *Shaktipāta eva dikshā* - "Shaktipat alone is initiation." When the Guru bestows Shaktipat on a seeker, he awakens in him the dormant Kundalini energy. This initiates a process of the total purification of the seeker on all levels of his being. It is this process carried out by the awakened Kundalini which is responsible

∴ From a letter addressed to the Members of the Academy.

for the countless experiences which occur along the spiritual path : inner lights, inner sounds, visits to various subtle planes, the Blue Pearl, and many others. The ultimate goal, however, is merging into God. I have explained all these experiences at length in my book *Chitshakti Vilas* or *Play of Consciousness*.

Once again, the key which unlocks the door to the higher spiritual realms lies with the Guru. As the *Shiva Sutras* say : *guru rupāyah* - "The Guru is the means." I cannot stress enough the importance of the Guru. I myself wandered throughout India on foot for twenty-five years practising various spiritual disciplines, but it wasn't until I met my Guru, Bhagavan Nityananda, that I was able to attain anything worthwhile. All *sādhanās*, religions, techniques, and spiritual practices bear fruit only when they are accompanied by the Guru's grace.

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One must take utmost care to see that the Guru one wishes to resort to is he who has himself realised God and who has the capacity to make others also realise Him, though he might be indifferent to the occurrence of miracles, which he thinks, are the work of God only.

- SAINT RĀMADĀSA

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GITA AND THE PRACTICE OF UNTOUCHABILITY

Professor B. Kuppuswamy, Bangalore

In his essay, 'A Vindication of Indian Philosophy', Ranade, dealing with *Bhakti* wrote "I believe that *bhakti* does not consist in religious ceremonials, in pilgrimages and in formal idol worship; it consists in love to God and through this, in love to man. We cannot love man so well as when we know that he partakes of the same divine nature, which is in us. Love to humanity must be based on love to God; if it is not, it is bound to have a shaky foundation. It is the love that we bear to God that inspires us with love to man; and those who love man otherwise love him accidentally and not essentially" (cited M. S. Deshpande *Dr. Ranade's life of light*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1963, p. 84).

Thus, according to Ranade, love of God is the essence of *bhakti*, and love of God leads inevitably to love of man, since *bhakti* makes us realise that all human beings partake of the same divine nature.

The aim of the present essay is to find out whether the ideas and ideals enunciated in the *Gita* support this ideal of love of God and love of man and to examine the implication of such an ideal to the practice of untouchability which has been practised right through millennia by the Hindus.

Such an examination is particularly necessary in view of the fact that the year 1981 has seen large scale exodus by Harijans from Hinduism to Islam and has created consternation in the religious as well as political authorities. In fact, this is probably the first time in the history of Hinduism that the mathadhipatis have awakened themselves to the perils to Hinduism wrought by superstitious beliefs and practices. For centuries mathadhipatis, it is well-known, never bothered when millions got themselves converted either to Islam or to Christianity in the last 1300 years, ever since Mohammed Bin

Kasim gained a foothold in Sind in 712 A. D. (Pannikar, A Survey of Indian History, p. 113).

In his long chapter 'Islam and India' (p. 113-143), Pannikar has made two acute observations. He has written, 'Even the most orthodox Kings of ancient times, the Bharasivas and the Gupta of the North and the Pallavas and the Cholas in the South never claimed to be the champions of a creed or the upholders of a society' (ibid. p. 130). This is, no doubt, a very important feature of Hinduism, its secular and non-religious outlook. But, Islam introduced "a conception of human equality. a pride of one's religion" which, as Pannikar points out, "split Indian society into two sections from top to bottom and what has come to be known in the phraseology of today as two separate nations came into being from the beginning. Two parallel societies were established on the same soil" (ibid p. 131). Communal tensions of the most terrible kind, partition of India, and the two Indo-Pakistan wars, are all the middle 20th century consequences of this split.

Today, it appears as if we are witnessing a new phase. All these centuries the conversions from Hinduism to Islam or Christianity were predominantly, if not exclusively based on coercion by those in power or on hope of material benefits. However, in 1981, the Harijans appear to be moving out of Hinduism because of their disgust for the exploitation by the so-called caste Hindus and by the hope that the Muslim brethren would protect them from physical torture by the caste Hindus in the villages. This is indeed a new feature. The caste Hindus in the cities now know that untouchability cannot be practised in the urban context. The industrial labourers and the fourth grade office staff are all well-dressed and so it is impossible to find out who is touchable and who is not. But the situation in the rural society is quite different. The Harijans there are not only poor but recognisable because they are living in the outskirts of the village. In rural society there is face-to-face contact. So the caste-Hindu can never forget that he is socially superior. He has a contempt for

the Harijan even if the latter is richer, better educated and socially better placed, than himself.

The rural society is completely birth-based, a society in which ascription, not achievement is the determining factor.

Does the *Gita* enjoin untouchability ? There is the well-known verse in the V Chapter :-

विद्याविनयसंपन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।
शुनि चैव स्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥ (V. 18)

The men of self-realisation look with an equal eye on a brahmana possessed of learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, a dog and even a dog-eater.

Real religious outlook should make a person *samadar-sinah*, one who can see all human beings and living beings with an equal eye. Two categories are expressed in this verse: (a) the brahmana with learning and the man who eats dog's flesh. These are the two extremities in the human society; and (b) human beings, cows, elephants and dogs, that is, living beings. As Radhakrishnan writes, "This view makes us look upon our fellow beings with kindness and compassion. The wise see the one God in all beings and develop the quality of equalmindedness which is characteristic of the Divine". (The Bhagavadgita p. 182).

It is clear that this verse condemns unequivocally the practice of untouchability.

The next verse proceeds further and asserts :-

निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म तस्माद्ब्रह्मणि ते स्थिताः ॥
(V. 19)

The Brahman is flawless and the same in all. Therefore are these persons established in Brahman.

Commenting on these two verses Sankara disagrees with those who quote Gautama Dharma Sutra (XVII. 20) which

asserts, 'where one's equals are honoured in a different manner and where persons who are one's equals are not honoured in the same manner as oneself, food must not be eaten.' Sankara points out that treating all human beings alike (V. 18) is supported by the verse (V. 19). He says, *Chaitanya*, consciousness, has no attributes. Brahman is homogeneous and one. Proceeding, Sankara says, 'It is only to those who are egoistic and who identify the self with the aggregate of the body and the like, that the Dharma Sutra quoted above is applicable' (Mahadeva Sastri, *The Bhagavad Gita*, 1929, pp. 171-173).

Elsewhere, Krishna affirms

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः । (IX. 29)

"I am the same to all beings; to Me there is none hateful or dear". This is indeed an unequivocal declaration in the *Gita* regarding the equality of all human beings.

In two famous verses of the *Gita*, this ideal of equality is very forcefully expressed.

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।
ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः ॥
योमां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥ (VI. 29-30)

"He whose self is harmonized by yoga, sees the self abiding in all beings and all beings in the self. Everywhere he sees the same".

"He who sees Me everywhere and sees all in Me, I am not lost to him, nor is he lost to Me."

Commenting on the 29th verse, Sankara writes, "He sees all beings-from Brahma the Creator, down to a clump of grass as one with the self; and in all the different beings, he sees the same".

Finally, reference may be made to two more verses in the thirteenth chapter which emphasise the concept of equality.

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम् ।
 विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥
 समं पश्यन्ति सर्वत्र समवस्थितमीश्वरम् ।
 न हिनस्त्यात्मनात्मानं ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥

(XIII. 27-28)

“He who sees the Supreme Lord abiding equally in all beings, imperishable in the perishable, he verily sees,”

“When he sees the Lord present equally everywhere, he does not injure his self by the self and then he attains the Supreme goal.”

Commenting on this, Sankara writes, “The Supreme Lord exists, without any difference, in all living beings from Brahma downwards”.

CONCLUSION

Thus, these various verses in the different chapters of the *Gita*, and the commentary on them by Sankara, clearly show that there is no evidence whatever for the practice of untouchability in the *Gita*.

The only sanction for this practice in society is custom. It is one of the tragic facts of Indian society and culture that social behaviour is governed neither by ideals enshrined in the Vedas or the *Gita*, nor by any rational and compassionate considerations, but wholly and solely by customs, however outdated that custom be and however contrary to the prevailing laws such customs are. This is true, alas, not only of the ignorant masses, but also of the highly educated elite in Indian society.

It is little wonder that the Harijans who are today quite aware of their political, economic and educational rights, as

a result of reservation in legislatures, jobs and educational institutions, demand social rights also.

The illiterate village people, belonging to the so-called higher castes, do not want to give up their social superiority, and treat the members of these groups as "born" inferiors, which no achievement on their part can ever wipe out and equalise them.

What Gandhi realised in South Africa in 1893, ninety years ago, the Harijans in the villages are realising today, namely, that the caste barriers are as strong as the racial barriers in South Africa.

While the Indian Government is fighting in the United Nations Organisations to see that the coloured people in South Africa are treated as human beings, the illiterate rural folk of high-caste groups are denying equality to the brethren of their own religion in the villages. They are trying to see that social hierarchy based on *birth* is maintained in a democratic socialist society !

This is the situation that Hinduism is, for the first time, facing. Continued ill-treatment of Harijans will inevitably lead to mass exodus to Islam and bring a new dimension to the communal problem in the 80s which may be much worse than what was faced in the 40s of the 20th century.

Will Hinduism be guided by the *Gita* in practice in the social field ?

SADGURU

Prof. B. R. MODAK, M.A. Ph.D.

The greatness of a Guru is pointed out by the Śvetaśvatarā Upaniṣad as follows :-

यस्य देवे परा भक्तिः यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।
तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते मनीषिणः ॥

“The knowledge of all the objects is revealed to the man, who has great devotion towards God and similar devotion towards the Guru.”

It is but natural that a man should be devoted to God; because He creates the universe, protects it and helps His devotees. But why should a man be devoted to a Guru? The word Guru literally means ‘great’. This greatness belongs to the Guru due to various reasons. Guru is usually an elderly man; his knowledge, experience and penance are higher. Hence a disciple is devoted to his Guru.

Sometimes we find that the father himself is the Guru. Thus we find in the Taittiriya Upaniṣad that a student called Bhrigu approaches his father Aruni and requests him to give instruction regarding Brahman. His father tells him – “That from which these beings are born, that due to which they live, to which they proceed and into which they enter, that is Brahman”. Bhrigu practises penance and comes to know that food is Brahman. His father asks him to practise more penance and find the higher truth. Accordingly Bhrigu practises more and more penance and comes to know that *prāṇa*, *manas* and *Vijñāna* is Brahman. Finally he realises that *ānanda* (bliss) is Brahman. Thus a Guru directs his pupil properly and helps him to progress on the spiritual path.

There is a similar story in the Chandogya Upaniṣad. A student vetaketu by name returns home after his study is

over He is puffed up by his learning. His father asks him "Have you known that by which everything becomes known?" Śvetaketu asks him "How can everything be known by knowing one thing?" The father says – "By knowing a clod of clay everything made of clay becomes known. 'Jug', 'pitcher' etc. are mere names arising from speech. Clay alone is the reality therein." Then the father quotes various examples and finally tells him that he is Brahman (*tat tvam asi*). Thus a Guru is expert in resolving difficult problems through easy examples.

In ancient times a Guru was highly honoured even by a king. At the time of coronation the king used to say – "I am not punishable." Then the Guru used to point out – "You are punishable by Dharma" (*dharmadandya asi*). In the Rāmāyaṇa we find that when Vishwamitra asked Dasharatha to send Rama and Laxman for protecting the sacrifice, Dasharatha could not refuse.

A Guru tests his students variously to know their intelligence, honesty and courage. In the Mahabharata we come across a Guru called Dhaumya. A pupil called Upamanyu lived in his hermitage. The pupils of the hermitage used to go into the city to collect alms, and the food brought by them was distributed to the pupils by the Guru. Once he sent Upamanyu to the forest to tend the cows, without giving him any food. The next day Dhaumya saw that Upamanyu was as fat as before. He asked - "What did you eat yesterday?" Upamanyu replied honestly, "I begged alms a second time for my food." Dhaumya told him - "You should not seek alms a second time." The next day Dhaumya again sent Upamanyu into the forest without giving him any food; but later he found that Upamanyu was as fat as before. He asked him – "What did you eat yesterday?" Upamanyu replied "I drank the milk of the cows." "You should not drink the milk without my permission" the Guru ordered him. Again on the third day he sent Upamanyu to the forest without giving him any food; but later found that he was stout as before. "What did you eat yesterday?" asked the Guru. The student

replied – “I ate the froth that was coming out from the mouth of the calves while they were sucking the teats of the cows.” “You should not do that” told the teacher “because thereby the calves remain hungry.” The next day again the Guru sent Upamanyu to the forest without giving him any food. Upamanyu was very hungry. He ate the leaves of the arka plant in the forest. But thereby he lost his eyes. While returning he fell into an old well.

In the evening Dhaumya saw that Upamanyu did not return. He went into the forest and shouted - “Upamanyu, where are you ?” He replied from inside the well - “Here I am in the well. I have become blind by eating the *arka* leaves.” Then the Guru told him-“Praise the divine Ashwins. They will come and grant you sight.” Accordingly Upamanyu praised the Ashwins. They came, brought him up and blessed him with good eye-sight. They offered him *apupa* (cake) saying “You are hungry. Eat this.” Upamanyu replied – “I will not eat without offering it to my preceptor.” The Ashwins were highly pleased and they said “You will attain all knowledge.”

There is an interesting episode in the Mahabharat which tells us how a student becomes perfect in his knowledge due to his faith in the preceptor. Ekalavya went to Dronacharya to learn archery, but Dronacharya refused to teach him as Ekalavya was not a Kshatriya. Hence Ekalavya made out of clay an image of Dronacharya. Every morning he used to bow down to that image and practised with the help of his bow and arrows. Soon he became expert. Once Dronacharya went to the forest for hunting along with the Pandavas. The dogs accompanying them started barking. Ekalavya discharged his arrows so skillfully that the dogs were silenced, but not wounded. Dronacharya was amazed at this. He went to Ekalavya and asked who his preceptor was. Ekalavya replied that his preceptor was Dronacharya. Dronacharya said that he had never taught him. Then Ekalavya took them to the image and said “I practise under the direction of this.” “Do you consider me as your preceptor ?,” asked Dronacharya. “Yes”

replied Ekalavya. "Then you have to pay me fees" said Dronacharya. "I am prepared to give what you ask" told Ekalavya. Dronacharya asked him to give the thumb of his right hand. Ekalavya complied immediately.

In the Gurucharitra, Dattatreya has said that the person or object from which we learn a virtue is our Guru. He says that he has learnt the quality of forbearance from the Earth. Hence the Earth is his Guru. He learnt from the tree the quality of looking equally at a friend or a foe. Hence the tree is his Guru. That is how a man learns many things from many objects and persons in his life.

Jñāneśvara has said – "Let us prepare a good seat in our heart and establish on it the 'feet' of the Sadguru. Let us offer a handful of flowers in the form of devotion."

Swami Rāmadāsa has written 31 verses in praise of Sadguru (Dāsa-bodha, first Daśka, fourth Samāsa). He says therein that it is impossible to describe Sadguru, because Sadguru is incomparable. One may compare Sadguru to the sun. But when the sun sets, darkness returns; whereas the darkness of ignorance destroyed by Sadguru never comes back. One may compare Sadguru to the ocean, but the ocean is saltish. One may compare Sadguru to the mountain Meru; but the mountain is hard, whereas Sadguru is soft-hearted. One may compare Sadguru to the sky; but the sky is *nirguṇa*, whereas sadguru is full of auspicious qualities. Thus Sadguru can never be compared to any object howsoever great.

There is an Abhanga in Marathi which describes Sadguru as follows :

"Guru is the king among saints. Guru is a solace to my heart. There is no God other than Guru, though we search in the three worlds. Guru is an ocean of bliss; Guru is a store-house of love; Guru is a mountain of courage that never shakes. Guru helps the truthful; Guru is a mother to the devotees, Guru is the wish-fulfilling cow (*Kāmadhenu*)

which milks in the house of the devotees. Guru is the adornment of devotion, Guru is the chastising of the body, Guru cuts away the sins and wards them off variously. Guru is the root of detachment. Guru is only the Great Brahman. Guru releases immediately the bonds of the subtle body. Guru applies the ointment of knowledge to our inner sight and shows us the real wealth. Guru grants prosperity and blesses us with Self-knowledge. Guru advises that our body itself is Varanasi. He has given us the saving *mantra*. Hence the meditation on God goes on continuously."

The advice of a Guru is not mere words. The advice is backed by the strength of his penance. Hence the advice becomes effective. There is a telling episode in the life of Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa :- Once a lady came along with a boy to Paramahansa and said - "My son demands Rasagulla sweets everyday. Kindly advise him not to do so" Paramahansa sat in silence for a moment and then said - "Please bring him next week." Accordingly the next week she came again and requested him to advise her son. Paramahansa remained silent for a moment and said "Kindly come next week." When she came again the next week, Paramahansa advised the boy not to demand sweets often on account of economic reasons and also for the sake of health. The boy accepted the advice obediently. Then the mother asked a pertinent question "Why did you not advise him last week or the week before?" Paramahansa replied - "When you uttered the word 'Rasagulla' the week before, desire arose in my mind to eat Rasagulla. I underwent Sādhanā to remove that desire. When you came here last week, that desire still persisted. I practised more Sādhanā. To-day that desire did not arise. Hence I advised this boy and the advice became effective. If I had advised him previously, the advice would have been mere words which vanish into the thin air when uttered."

There is one more incident from the life of the Paramahansa. Once a man came to him and asked "Have you seen God?" "Yes" replied the Paramahansa. "Will you kindly

show me God ?" asked the man. "Yes" replied the Paramahansa. "Now I am going to the river for a bath. Come with me." Accordingly they went to the river. The man was bathing near the Paramahansa in the river. Suddenly the Paramahansa caught him by the neck and forced him into the water. The man remained in that position for half a minute. Then he suddenly rose up. The Paramahansa asked him - "What happened ?" The man replied - "I felt that I would die if I did not come up and breathe." The Paramahansa told him - "If and when you will feel that you can not live if there is no vision of God, you shall see Him; not otherwise."

Ramakrishna Paramahansa was very eager to see the Goddess Kāli. He engaged himself in severe Sādhanā. Every evening bells were rung at the Ārati of the goddess Kāli. When Ramakrishna heard the bells he used to say to himself "One more day from my life is over, but there has not been the vision of the Goddess." With this thought he felt extremely unhappy and he would roll on the ground in agony. It was due to thin keenness that the Mother Kāli appeared before him. Ramakrishna became Paramahansa and a mere touch of him, made Narendra the famous 'Swami Vivekananda.'

A Kannada poet Bhavatāraka by name has composed a devotional song in which he says - "Is not Sadguru the great God? He shows us the path which perfect people have trodden and removes from our minds all difference. Having come to this ocean of life, if we remember him knowingly or unknowingly; he gives us a vision of the highest truth. He cuts away the snares of attachment, destroys our sins and asks us to meditate on God. Thus he brings us light. He brings salvation to those who have faith in him. Hence he is the great Brahman incarnate." It is said in another kannada song that one does not attain emancipation unless one becomes the slave of his Guru.

The seventy-first birth-day of Shri. Gurudeva Ranade was celebrated at Jamkhandi in 1956. While speaking on

this occasion of Amrita Mahotsava Shri. Gurudeva Ranade said - "He who shows us the secret form (*gupta rupa*) of God is a Guru - thus my Guru used to define. Guru is one with the secret form of God."

Shri Nimbargi Maharaj was a great saint. His disciple Shri. Bhausahab Maharaj was a saint of no mean order. The disciple of Shri. Bhausahab Maharaj was Shri. Gurudeva Ranade. He was unique. From the *vyāvahārika* point of view he was Dr. R. D. Ranade (M.A., D. Litt), Professor of Philosophy, Dean of the Faculty, Vice chancellor etc. But from the *pāramārthika* point of view he was a Sadguru. His life had spiritual orientation since his boyhood. He grew up to be a philosopher and an ideal Master. His mystic experience elevated him into Divinity. His philosophic words raised thinking humanity to the Divine Kingdom. He was of supreme service to the devotees by calling their attention from moment to moment to the perfection and greatness of God. He spent most of his time in Divine contemplation and for spreading the gospel of God-devotion. He toured to many places and taught people how to proceed on the pathway to God. He laid stress on the development of virtue as a pre-condition to spiritual progress. He advised people to spare more time for contemplation. His life was spiritualised and he exerted to make the lives of his disciples more and more perfect.

The spiritual tradition has come down to us since times immemorial and it will continue in this holy land of ours till eternity.

CHRISTIAN BELIEF IN GOD TO-DAY THE SITUATION IN WESTERN COUNTRIES

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For Christians belief in God has always been fundamental. If God is not real Christianity collapses. This at once points to a major difference from Hindu thought. Hindu philosophy has seen many debates between those who affirm and those who deny the existence of *ishwara*, yet while this debate is important it is not fundamental, for Hindu philosophy can exist without *ishwara*. This difference reminds us of the limits of translation. 'God' is usually translated in Hindi and Sanskrit by *ishwara*, but while there is some overlap in the meaning of these two words the differences are much more important than the similarities.

Bearing this in mind, let us now consider a brief and necessarily superficial outline of the nature and content of Christian faith in God. Christians believe that there is only one God who created and sustains all that is. This faith did not originate from the speculations of philosophers who considered the nature of the universe. It arose out of the historic experience of a particular people, the Jews, history which is contained in the first part of the Bible, the Old Testament. The Jews believed that God had set them free from slavery in Egypt and settled them in the land of Palestine. They also came to believe that he provided for their material needs. So they came to see him as saviour and refuge, and provider. More than this, their prophets and priests taught that God made demands on them, especially the demand that they should be 'holy', reflecting in all aspects of their common life the nature of God himself, for God was supremely 'the Holy one'.

This demand was possible because of the belief that God had created man and woman 'in his own image', that is,

although there was always the immeasurable distance and difference between God the Creator and man the created, there was at the same time something in man which was akin to God which made possible both some likeness to him - hence the demand to be holy - and communion with him in prayer and worship. Moreover prayer is never merely asking God to supply our needs, it is the joyful and humble communion and fellowship with the one who made us and loves us. The Old Testament also describes how the Jews came to believe that this God was in no sense theirs alone. He was the God of all the earth and of all men. They also discovered, slowly and painfully, that their faith did not entitle them to special privileges or to national success and greatness, rather it involved them in much suffering and loss.

Whether therefore this faith was true or false, one thing at least is certain. It was not simply the projection of their own dreams and desires onto some imaginary heavenly being. For the God who made demands on his people, and who taught them through failure, loss and suffering was not easy or comfortable to live with.

Christian faith starts with this Jewish foundation and adds to it faith in the Lord Christ. Christians see in Christ not only a great ethical teacher and a moral example for them to follow, but the focal point, or perfect revelation of the nature and purpose of God. During the first four Christian centuries philosophers tried to find the most satisfactory form of words in which to express this faith. In particular they asked how could Christ be both fully divine and fully human, and how could he be related to God the Creator. This led to the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity. It is these doctrines which are the focal point of debate among Christian thinkers to-day, for the old beliefs have to be expressed in new forms in every age.

To go into all the details of this debate would take a whole book, not a single short paper. so I emphasise one point only. If God supremely revealed himself in Christ, then

Christ is the true image of God. This has certain implications both negative and positive. Negatively, though material things like mountains, rivers, trees and plants, may bear witness to God's creative powers, they do not tell us anything of his *nature*. More important, words, whether of the Bible or of subsequent Christian doctrine are of secondary and not primary importance. It is Christ who reveals God and not a form of words. Christ is permanent, the words we use about him are not. That means we are not tied for all time to a single form of words. indeed we are continually searching for language which will better express what we believe. To this important point we shall have to return later.

Positively, Christ was and is a *person*. Now here we have a difficulty. The only word by which we can translate 'person' into Hindi or Sanskrit is *vyakti* and this word is even more inadequate than the word *ishwara* is to translate God. I must therefore try to explain a little more fully the meaning of this word person, and its adjective personal. Because God reveals himself through this person (and not through things or words) God himself is in some sense personal. This does not mean that God is an individual (*vyakti*!) among other individuals. It means that the language of persons and personal relationships provides the least unsatisfactory analogies (*drishtant*) for speaking of him. In the words of a great fifth century Christian philosopher, St. Augustine, we use the word person 'not that it might be spoken, but that it might not be left unspoken.'

The Bible uses many personal images to point to the relationship between God and man - a father and his children, a king and his subjects, a husband and his wife, a master and his servants, a friend and his friends. Most suggestive of all, Christ himself is described as the servant of men. In him God the Creator stoops down in love and humility to serve the men whom he has made, and to accept full responsibility for the evil which has infected his creation. These analogies are *possible* because man is made in the image and likeness of God and therefore the language of relationship can truly

point to him, yet they are also *limited* and not to be taken literally, for it is not words which reveal God, and there always remains the infinite distance between the Creator and his creation.

Again, because 'personal' is the least inadequate word to point to God, his activity in the world is best described in words expressing creative will and purpose for these are precisely the most significant attributes of persons. Christians believe that the creation is the expression of God's loving purpose for all men and all beings and that God will finally bring that purpose to completion at the end. That means that we take time and history seriously. Within God's purpose alone the life of man can find meaning and fulfilment.

Such, in very crude outline, is the substance of Christian faith in God as it has been traditionally understood. However, since the time of the European Enlightenment at the end of the 18th century this faith has been subjected to serious attack. The attack has come from four main sources.

First, the natural sciences have produced accounts of the nature of the universe, the earth and the life of man and other beings which allows no place for God. Science works on the principle of a continuous chain of cause and effect, somewhat like the Hindu philosophical tradition of *karyakaranabhava*. Every phenomenon is explicable in terms of what has preceded it. This means that God cannot be introduced as an explanatory cause alongside other causes in the chain. If he is so introduced he will eventually be pushed out. This indeed is precisely what has happened. I can remember as a boy hearing padres saying in their sermons: 'Science has explained many things, but it cannot explain life, for life is a gift of God.' But now the scientists can not only explain life, they can also create it. They have made God unnecessary.

More than this, the natural sciences greatly diminished the significance of man. Copernicus showed that the earth

was not the centre of the universe. The geologists proved that the earth was much older than the Bible appeared to allow. Darwin showed that man had emerged over a long period from other forms of life, and that this process could be satisfactorily interpreted in terms of chance mutation and natural selection without any appeal to a divine purpose or creator. If the known history of the earth, as discovered by the geologists is taken as a period of twenty four hours, then man appeared twelve seconds before midnight. How then could such a creature have any ultimate significance, much less be the centre of God's purposes ?

The *second* challenge has come from the social sciences and from psychology. The key names here are Marx, Durkheim and Freud. These men all produced accounts of the origin and growth of religion without reference to God. God was simply the imaginary projection of human needs and desires, whether economic, social or psychological. These men stood Christianity in its head. Instead of God creating man, now it was man who had created God in his own image.

The *third* challenge has come from the study of history. Like the sciences history too explains things in terms of a continuous chain of cause and effect. It shows how men and movements are influenced by their environment. The historians showed that far from being infallible the Bible was a very human book, reflecting the language and thought forms of its own time and place. They also pointed out that it contains many internal contradictions. For instance the four Gospels contain four different accounts of the life of the Lord Christ and these cannot be harmonised with one another. The study of history has also opened up other religions which make their distinctive claims on man's allegiance. History in fact makes everything relative, but if that is so then what becomes of the absolute claims of Christianity ?

(The study of history has the same effect on the claims of Freud and Marx. Freud's theories were for the most part

based on the evidence of a small range of middle-class Austrian patients, Marx's on the conditions of Victorian England. Therefore the same critique can be made of their theories as of the Bible. Their theories are influenced by their own place and time. Against the claims of history it can be argued that the statement 'History makes all claims relative' is itself an absolute claim which cannot therefore be made on a historical basis. The critics of religion also have their weaknesses |)

The *fourth* challenge has come from the philosophers. Kant and Hume pointed out certain serious defects in traditional Christian claims about God. More recently the linguistic philosophers have dismissed Christian claims, not because they are untrue but because they are meaningless.

Now in attempting to summarise these four challenges in a few short paragraphs I have, again, grossly oversimplified a very complex and still changing situation. Before moving on to the next part of the subject one further point must be made. Throughout the modern period both the critics of Christianity and its defenders have held certain common and largely unexamined assumptions: the 'God' in whom they believed or disbelieved was a being among other beings, a cause among other causes. He dwelt in a separate transcendent and metaphysical realm, protected so to speak by the traditional doctrines as if by his policemen. Christian belief was a coherent body of verbal propositions about God and faith meant giving the assent of the intellect to these propositions as to any other body of proofs. These propositions were based on the divine revelation of the Bible and Christian tradition, they were not reached by the normal processes of observation of the empirical world. In other words Christian faith was assumed to function in the same way as scientific proof, while not being available to the methods of scientific investigation.

What has collapsed in the modern period is precisely this body of assumptions. But the question is, was this ever the true faith of the church? Were the men who wrote the Bible

and the early Christian thinkers quite as foolish as some of their modern critics and detractors, and defenders ?

Thus the modern attack on Christian faith has had the wholly beneficial effect of compelling contemporary Christian thinkers to ask just what we mean by faith in God. Ironically they have turned to contemporary philosophy for help, for philosophy in the West to-day is concerned with 'the meaning of meaning'. These scholars are saying that statements about God have the same *grammatical* structure as our ordinary everyday language, but a different *logical* structure. For example the two statements 'Mohun is good' and 'God is good' are grammatically the same, so it can be and commonly is assumed that like Mohun, God is one being among other beings. Yet in logic these two statements are different. When I say 'God is good' I mean 'infinitely good'. The word 'infinitely' suggests that I am using the word 'God' and the word 'good' in a logically strange way. As one contemporary theologian. John Macquarrie has written: 'We have no understanding of what the word "good" could literally mean when applied to God, for it must transcend any notions of goodness that we may have. Yet we are entitled to use it because it is more appropriate to say that God is good than that he is not good, for he is the *prior enabling condition* of all goodness whatsoever'.

In the same way to say 'God exists' is grammatically but not logically similar to saying 'Mohun exists'. For God is not, like Mohun, simply a being among other beings, he is the prior enabling condition of all beings. So too, we address him as 'he' not because he is a person among other persons (and most certainly not because he is male as opposed to female) but because personal language is the least inappropriate language we can use - the same point which St. Augustine made fifteen hundred years ago.

Now if this is the only way we can properly speak about God, this has its effect on doctrine - those statements we

make about him. Doctrine does not refer to some separate *realm* apart from and above our ordinary everyday experience, rather does it refer to all-embracing *dimension* which alone gives meaning to that experience.

This word dimension is the heart of our argument. Let us therefore use an analogy to clarify its meaning. Consider the example of a poem written in ink on a piece of paper. A scientist can examine the chemical elements of the paper and of the ink. His explanation is total in that he accounts for all the ink and all the paper. We cannot say that some of the ink marks are natural and others the direct work of the poet, suspending the scientific process, for the poet is not one scientific element among all the others. He is beyond the scientific process and works through it. Yet if the scientist claims that his chemical explanation is the whole meaning of the poem, he may be a good scientist but he is a very stupid man.

Next, let us suppose that a linguistic expert looks at the poem. He analyses the language into its constituent parts – nouns, verbs and so on. His explanation is also total, not a single word is unaccounted for. He has seen one dimension of the poem, the scientist has seen another. Neither has grasped the meaning of the poem, all they have done is to explain the materials – paper, ink and words – which the poet has used to express his meaning. To discover the meaning it is necessary to see a third dimension in the poem, one which embraces the other two and gives them a higher significance than they could possess on their own. This dimension is not *apart* from the words, it is both within them and yet more than they. In traditional Christian language, it transcends them.

Like all analogies this one is far from perfect, but it does demonstrate a way of speaking about God to-day, a way which is very close to the earliest Christian tradition.

We have already seen that the discovery of this approach

owes much to that very analytic philosophy which has provided one of the four challenges to belief in God. Now if in fact an enemy can be turned into an ally in this way might not the same prove true of the other three challenges? Let us see if this can be so. Let us look again at the social sciences and psychology. As we have seen, these have attacked Christian belief in God because it has directed men's attention and energies away from the realities of this world to some imaginary world above. This makes religion escapist and harmful. Christians have to be honest and admit that there is much truth in this criticism. Yet to have a wrong belief about God does not disprove his existence, it merely proves the stupidity of the believer. Sometimes Indian people have said to me 'You are our mother and father.' To this I reply 'It is impossible for me to be your mother. If I were your father I think you would look more like me than you do.' However, I do not think that the fact that these good people have wrong ideas about me proves that I do not exist!

If language about God is, as we have seen, to be located not in a separate realm but in a separate dimension then the challenge can be met. This is already happening. The German theologian Juergen Moltmann has helped us to recover the *future* as an essential category of Christian thought and life. This has opened the possibility of a real dialogue with Marxists about the future goals of society. Christians, particularly in South American 'liberation theology' have begun to take the political dimension of life with a new seriousness. Yet this is not wholly new. The Old Testament prophets took politics seriously, and Karl Marx was himself a Jew.

The challenges of the natural sciences can also be met in the same way. Indeed we have already implicitly dealt with this in the analogy of the poem, where the chemical account of the paper and ink is comparable to any account of the world given by the natural sciences. We have also noted that many western thinkers feel that the natural sciences have made man a creature of recent appearance and of

no significance in the vast cosmic drama. Yet who has made these wonderful discoveries about the age of the universe and the vastness of space? Man himself has made them! Does not this suggest that there is something very remarkable about this creature man?

Fourth, we have to reconsider the challenge of historical research. As we have seen, this has made incredible the old notion that the Bible is an infallible book which was, so to speak, let down from heaven. Its language and thought-forms are conditioned by the time and circumstances in which it was written. But far from being a disaster for Christianity this is liberation, for it means that we are no longer bound to use outmoded ways of thinking which are untenable for modern man. The Bible can be seen as bearing witness to that dimension of personal relationship and creativity which gives the other dimensions their true place and holds them together in unity. As we have seen, it is in this dimension of the personal that language about God is to be located.

This last point ties in with the one we made at the beginning of the paper. If God is best spoken of in personal terms then we constantly have to find new ways in which to express our faith in him. It is the strength of Christianity that it must and can continually adapt itself to new circumstances in this way. Therefore faith is not giving intellectual assent to a fixed and final set of propositions or proofs, for these are always open to change and improvement. The best I can say of any verbal formulation of my faith is that it is the best formulation I can make at the moment. I hope that in ten years time I shall be able to produce a better one. Faith must always include intellectual assent, that is, it must be able to justify itself before the claims of reason and logic, yet faith is more than these things, it is the commitment and trust of the whole person to the personal God.

In past times men thought of God as if he were a king and men were his subjects. No doubt this unconsciously and reflected the kind of societies in which they lived. We can now see

that this view was degrading both to men and to God. If the picture which I have outlined in this paper has any claim to truth then we have to think of both God and man in a very different way. God has given man great, even terrifying powers, power to destroy himself and this planet in nuclear explosion or irresponsible use of natural resources, or else to create a new society and a new world. Man is now in control of his own evolution. If there is indeed a God who has created man, he is no tyrant, indeed he has set man free and handed over most of his own powers to man! Yet properly understood the power of God was never the power of a tyrant to do anything he wanted. It was the power of love. Christians see in the Cross and Resurrection of the Lord Christ the power of a love that will never admit defeat. It is as if God says to man 'Do to me the very worst you can, you will never destroy my love for you. I am with you for ever.' The humility of God secures the dignity of man. If there does indeed exist such a God as this, then even in days such as these man can dare to hope for a better future.

THE FIFTH YOGA

Prof. S. G. DESHPANDE

Devotional scriptures prescribe *kirtana* as one of the means of God-realization; and devotional singing has played an important role in the spiritual lives of many a great saint. It is beyond doubt that music serves as a medium to sing the glories of the Lord and to give vent to the aspirant's spiritual emotions. But is music only an ancillary supplement of this type; or does it have an intrinsic value as a full-fledged spiritual discipline 'on the same footing as other valid means of realization' ?

Let us have a look at the field of Indian classical Music from without, and see what even such a casual peeping reveals. The field is permeated by a religious aroma. The relation of the teacher and the taught is sacred. The ideal teacher teaches his student charging little or no fees. Some have even taken up the responsibility of maintaining deserving students. The student, in his turn, bears an attitude of reverence, thankfulness, obedience, humility and service towards the teacher. An aged woman singer, before starting her performance, touched the feet of a young boy present simply because he was a son of her teacher. What a marvellous illustration of the maxim '*Guruvat guruputresu*' ! The *Gurukula* system of education has long disappeared from most other fields of learning; but it has been alive till recently in the field of music. 1.

The religious halo in the field of music has a much deeper significance than might be realized. An authority of our times on music as well as religion says : "Some argue that music, being an art, has no connection with religion or spiri-

1. - Prof B. R. Deodhar, *Gayanacharya Pt. Vishnu Digamber* (Marathi), Akhila Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal, Bombay, 1971, P.4.

tuality. But that is not correct. Because art is an expression or a symbol of Nature, and it unveils as well as represents the exquisite beauty of Nature, which, in its turn, is the representation of the world - essence, Atman, that pervades, sustains and animates the whole universe. Art unfolds the immanent as well as transcendent beauty and blessedness of the Atman that shines behind Nature, and as such art ever goes hand in hand with religion and spirituality.

“Music in India is a superb creative art, infused with a religious feeling. Music is a spiritual *Sadhana* that uplifts the consciousness of man to the highest. It is not just a subtle fabric of tones and tunes, of fancy and dream, but is a dynamic spiritual expression.....” 2.

The same view is voiced forth by Swami Adidevananda when he says: “In India music is not understood as a mere symphonic arrangement of sounds with a view to produce sense appeal. But on the contrary, it is the easiest path direct to the realization of the Divine through the intense concentration on the musical vibrations, which open, as it were, the windows of the soul to the attainment of Brahmanana. Therefore the Nada – *Sadhana* is on the same footing as other valid means of realization.....” 3.

Great saints have vindicated the efficacy of music as a spiritual discipline. Swami Vivekananda who was an adept in music as well as an illumined soul, says with authoritative certainty that music is the best way to remember God for those who understand it. A great illumined brother disciple of Swami Vivekananda and the spiritual son and disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Brahmananda also gives an authoritative verdict in this regard. He says : “.....God can also

2. – Swami Prajnanananda, *A Historical Study of Indian Music*, Anandadhara Prakashan, Calcutta, 1965, PP. 30-34.

3. - *The Vedanta Kesari*, Sri Sri Ramkrishna Math, Madras, Vol. LXVIII, No. 8 (August, 1981), P. 284.

be approached through music. Music is 'Sound-Brahman'. This truth is experienced if one meditates." 4. Though Brahmananda did not sing much himself, he loved music; and always had a band of musicians or a singer with him. 'One day a fine musician was playing musical Scales, Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) went into a spiritual mood. A devotee complained that no devotional songs were being played. This jarred Maharaj. He turned to the devotee and said : "Don't you realize that sound is Brahman ?" 5. These are not casual remarks of an ordinary enthusiastic lover of music, but words with deep significance coming from the lips of one whose external form had 'nothing inside it but God', and whatever he said came 'directly from God' 6. Swami Abhedananda, another illumined disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, also says that music is 'the best medium that leads sincere seekers after truth to Divine Knowledge (Brahmajnana)' 7. And it was Swami Abhedananda who inspired his discipie, Swami Prajnanananda mentioned above, to pursue music as spiritual *sadhana*. 8

Pandit Vishnu Digamber Paluskar, a pioneer in the rejuvenation of Indian Music, had met on Mount Girnar an ascetic who appears to have been a *Sangita-Siddha*. 9 Pt. Paluskar was a master-musician; but when he heard the singing of the ascetic, it cast such a spell upon him that he immediately became prepared to renounce, and humbly requested the ascetic to teach him that type of superb music. That the ascetic considered music as a means to illumination and had practised it as such, is implied by a significant remark made

4. – Swami Prabhavananda, *The Eternal Companion-Spiritual Teaching of Swami Brahmananda*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1971, P. 226.

5. – Ibid., P. 129

6. – Ibid., P. 5.

7. – Swami Prajnanananda, Op. Cit, P.ix.

8. - Ibid.

9. – Prof. B. R. Deodhar, Op. Cit. PP. 18-19.

by him while conversing with Pt. Paluskar; the ascetic said, ".....This attainment (i.e. the superb musical ability) is possible only when renouncing everything and surrendering oneself to the Lord, one practises. It requires superhuman penance."

Pt. Paluskar himself was a sincere *Sadhaka* in his own way. That he was a spiritual seeker is revealed by certain facts about him. He was given to repeat the Divine Name; and he believed so much in the efficacy of the Divine Name that he would refuse to take medicine when ill, believing uncompromisingly that *Rama-nama* itself is the remedy for everything. 10. He was much fond of the Tulasi Ramayana on which he used to discourse. 11 He had a firm conviction that the Lord looks after his devotees. 12 He exhibited the highest regard for saintly personages. After once receiving a sacred gown as *prasada* of the Lord, he started wearing it during his discourses. 13. Later, he started wearing similar gowns for ever. Paluskar in his photographs appears more a *R̥ṣi* than a maestro with his ascetic gown, beard, and above all, his indrawn look.

In fact, all great musicians have lived dedicated lives. Devotion and dispassion are characteristic of them, 14 though in some of them spiritual aspiration might have been vague and undeveloped.

The foregoing evidence proves that music has a definite relevance to spiritual life, and that there have been aspirants who pursued music as the chief spiritual discipline, if not the sole.

Tradition recognizes four principal ways of attaining spiritual illumination. They are popularly known as *Raja-Yoga*,

10. - Ibid., P. 119.

11. - Ibid., P. 60.

12. - Ibid., P. 64.

13. - Ibid., P. 94.

14. - Ibid., PP. 115, 116-17.

Karma-Yoga, *Bhakti-Yoga*, and *Jnana-Yoga*, (the way of attaining illumination by a total cessation of mental modifications, the way of disinterested and dedicated action, the way of loving devotion to the Divine, and the way of Knowledge and discrimination, respectively). Spiritual illumination is the discovery of the Pure, Infinite, Conscious Essence of man, variously called *Brahman*, *Atman*, *Puruṣa*, God etc., and this discovery naturally follows when a perfect state of mental tranquillity is attained. Thus, all spiritual disciplines have mental tranquillity as their pen-ultimate goal which immediately culminates into spiritual enlightenment.

Raja-Yoga prescribes the eight-fold path (the *aṣṭanga-Yoga*) to attain such a state. The whole technique of the *Raja-Yoga* may be expressed, for brevity, in two terms – purification and concentration. We have already seen that great musicians are saintly and pure. As to concentration, no good music is ever possible without it. A singer of a very high order loses himself in his melodies so completely that he would be oblivious of everything else. Music, rightly pursued, thus naturally culminates in the cessation of mental modifications to achieve which the *Yogins* prescribe *Pranayama*, *Dharana* and other techniques.

Karma-Yoga is a discipline of dedicated action. One who practises this discipline engages oneself in an action as a dedication to the Divine, without a thought of reaping good fruits or avoiding bad ones. Now, mastering music requires a very hard and prolonged effort¹⁵; and this can hardly be done unless one, in some way, considers the pursuit as a self-less duty and dedication. Moreover, the well-trained musician has to continue his practice for ever after the period of initial training to maintain the quality of his music. Again, while singing or playing, the musician must concern himself with his music alone banishing all thought of the results; otherwise he cannot sing or play well. This agrees in toto with

15. - Ibid P. 6

the celebrated maxim of the *Bhagavadgita* "Thy concern is only with action and never with its fruit", which is a crucial aspect of *Karma-Yoga*. 16

Bhakti-Yoga is a discipline of intense love for God considering Him as the dearest of all dears. Complete self-surrender at the feet of the Lord, constantly remembering Him, and submitting to His will without reservations constitute *Bhakti-Yoga*. The *Bhakta*, unlike other types of *Sadhakas*, depends like an innocent child upon God than his self-effort. And just as the child cries at the separation from its mother, the *Bhakta* too cries-this is called prayer, which is an important aspect of *Bhakti-Yoga*. The *Sadhaka-Bhakta* wants to cry to the Divine. But, exactly like a young child he does not know what has happened to him, and what exactly he wants. Moreover he does not have any definite notion of the vaguely felt Divine. Such a prayer can hardly be expressed through articulate language. Music, bereft of language, can do that. One can laugh and weep through music. Perhaps, the 'dark nights of the soul' experienced by spiritual aspirants would become lighter and bearable if one pursues music. Besides, music can be applied to devotional heart - pourings in language.

Jnana-Yoga is an intellectualistic discipline wherein a constant effort is made to discriminate between the Real and the unreal renouncing everything that is realized to be unreal. Such a discrimination ultimately leads the aspirant to an immediate realization of the Real. We have already seen that good musicianship is invariably connected with dispassion for the worldly trifles. This renunciation of the impermanent and the unreal happens more or less unconsciously with musicians. Again music, being the expression of *Sound - Brahman*, unites the musician with it while he is engrossed in singing or playing.

Music, thus, is a harmonious blending of all the different *Yogas*; a blessing for the seeker in the form of an *all-in-one* prescription. Swami Vivekananda advocates the simultaneous practice of all the four *Yogas* as the ideal of spiritual life. Music by its very nature, is a synthesis of all the four paths, the ideal *Fifth-Yoga*.

REVIEWS

(I) Autobiography of Gurudev R. D. Ranade

A Discovery

By V. C. KELKAR

Publisher : I. P. Q. Publication PP. XI+74 Price Rs. 12/-
University of Poona

When someone commented that Dr. Ranade has said much about other mystics but he had not said anything about himself, Dr. Ranade suggestively replied that it could be easily known through what he had said about other mystics. Mystics are ordinarily reticent about their spiritual attainments, and when they express these they do so through other saints' words.

The book under review is a happy attempt to cull such autobiographical statements spread over Gurudev Ranade's works. Mr. Kelkar also adds short comments indicating the autobiographical character of the statements.

Gurudev Ranade was a modern mystic and philosopher who gave a rational justification of spiritual attainments. As he himself has said, a mystic need not be a philosopher but if he is one, he can be of immense benefit to the seekers after truth. Gurudev had verified in his own personal experience the statements of mystics gone before him. He had confirmed the otherwise hypothetical statements of mystics by his direct experiments; nay, he had so much qualified himself as a mystical scientist that he could detect flaws in the expressions of earlier saints and warned the future mystics to be meticulous in this regard so that they may not be misinterpreted (see p. 50). Besides being a mystic of high order, Ranade was also a great scholar well-versed in Indian and Western philosophy. As such, he was singularly qualified for the task of justifying mysticism in philosophical terms. He

says referring to Kant with a ring of authority, all his own... "So I felt the necessity of supplementing the three great critiques of Kant... by a new critique, namely the Critique of Intuition or Spiritual Experience." (p. 47). Gurudev addresses to the modern man who, in his unwarranted boarful intellectualism, is inclined to look down upon spiritual life, dismissing it as out-of-date and superstitious and successfully demonstrates the rationality of spiritual life. On the other hand he warns the "believers" to ward off superstitions which have no place in a genuine spiritual life. Gurudeva's works thus serve a two-fold purpose; they awaken the boastful modern materialist from his slumber and goad the believer cautioning him not to allow stray cattle of superstition to enter religion,

The autobiographical selections from Gurudev Ranade presented by Mr. Kelkar must be welcomed with gratitude. They would serve as an incentive to understand religious life in general, to study the original works of Ranade, and above all, to live a spiritual life.

S. G. DESHPANDE

(2) GLIMPSES OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

John Spiers

Publisher : C. S. Gupta : Satsang Sewa Samiti; PP. 322
Gandhi Bazar; Bangalore-4. Price Rs. 12/-

This is a collection of nine articles of John Spiers on different topics such as (1) What India Means to Me; (2) A Warrior Rishi; (3) Wisdom Antique Home; (4) Pagan Hinduism in the World Today etc. They appeared in the Journal - Brahnavadin and are selected in an intelligent way. Swami John Spiers, a Scotch by birth, came to India in 1930. In the article "What India Means to Me", he describes why and how he came to India. Out of the East, Light; Out of the West, Laws; and he came to India to seek Light. He asserts that in India, full respect is given to all the great religious

figures like Jesus and a text from Islam. "One does not find this generosity of spirit in Christian or Islamic countries". He therefore settled down in India, took *Sanyasa* and built his *Ashrama* near Bangalore.

In the article on "Warrior Saint", the author has spoken of the Life and Teaching of Narayana Guru, a great Mystic of this century and a saint and social reformer. He condemned as wasteful many long-established customs and rituals. "Do'nt think of caste", he would say and untouchability was not followed by him.

In a third article, "Why Communication is so difficult", he explains what should be communicated and when. "Vivekanand put his own life, his own spiritual experience into his "communications". When he did quote from the texts or what Ramakrishna said, he did so to confirm as evidence of what he had already experienced, or he quoted in order to criticize or question" (P. 121). On the other hand, today there are men who "pretend to be great authorities and write a lot of rubbish, bad translations of texts, childish assessments of the world's wisest men, writing pages of commonplace rubbish, filled with a flow of Sanskrit. But inside saw dust" (p. 123). "They may achieve temporary attention as a novelty value or as brief entertainment, enough to fill their pockets and return to India to enjoy themselves".

In the article-What Shall I Read, the author has told us to distinguish between Literature of the hour and Literature for all time and exhorts to read good books, like the B. Gita, the Bible etc. The education of today is criticised: "The scientific materialist attitude is encouraged and philosophy more or less discredited, if not banned outrightly in the name of being "Secular" as the Indian Constitution declares" (p-223).

One may pick up any article from this book and he will find it interesting and instructive. The publisher deserves our thanks for placing this beautiful volume in the hands of the reader and for quite a cheap price.

P. J. Rao

NIMBAL ASHRAMA NEWS.

The new board of trustees have provided for railway crossing to the South of the Railway Station in Nimbai and there is now an approach road upto the Ashrama throughout the year. The vehicles can now reach the Ashrama without any difficulty even during the rainy season. Tree planting has also been taken up on a large scale to maintain a cool and serene atmosphere for the Ashrama.

Government has sanctioned water project for the Ashrama area. The cost of the project may go upto about Rs. 80000/-

All possible facilities are now provided in the Ashrama. A jet pump and electric motor are fixed for the new bore well and adequate water supply is made available for the sadhakas. Electric lights are provided to the residential quarters. Street lights are also provided. Lodging and boarding arrangements are made as comfortable as possible within the available means.

The annual function of Shravana was performed in a befitting manner. About 200 sadhaks participated in the meditation and devotional programmes daily from 3-00 A.M. to 10-00 P.M. for full one month. The congregation increased to more than 300 persons during the last 3 days of the month. The saptah ended on 29th August 1981 with offerings of flowers on the Samadhi of Shri Gurudev. Revered Sharakka Naik and Sou. Shakuntalatai Apte led the flower offering programme. The number of younger generation is on the increase and these disciples were all happy and enthusiastic. Throughout this month, Shri R. P. Kulkarni delivered discourses and pravachans, which were inspiring and instructive.

5 During the last 3 days of the saptah, accomodation was found to be inadequate. The board of trustees has now

sanctioned a plan of new buildings costing about rupees five lakhs. The plan was exhibited in the Ashram for inspection of the sadhaks. A circular has been issued inviting liberal donations from them. Special facilities will be provided for donors of Rs. 18000/- or 10000/- for occupation of double or single rooms respectively. Funds are coming in and the board expects to start the work soon.

After the Shravan Saptah was over, the daily programmes are being held as usual from 3 A.M. to 10 P.M. for the benefit of the sadhaks. On account of the facilities provided in the ashram, the number of sadhaks, particularly from the younger generation, coming to stay in the ashram, is gradually increasing and Nimbai is developing fast as a spiritual centre, as contemplated by Shri Gurudev Ranade.

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