

# Vedanta

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384 JULY - AUGUST 2015

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**Sri Sadasivendra Saraswati**

*Swami Ghanananda*

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**From A Carmelite Cloister**

*Saint Therese Of The Child Jesus*

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## Divine Wisdom

### Brahman Alone Is

(From the *Vivekachudamani* of Shankara)

I dwell within; I am without. I am before and behind. I am in the South and I am in the North. I am above and I am below.

The wave, the foam, the eddy and the bubble are all essentially water. Similarly, the body and the ego are really nothing but pure consciousness. Everything is essentially consciousness, purity and joy.

The entire universe of which we speak and think is nothing but *Brahman*. Brahman dwells beyond the range of *maya*. There is nothing else. Are jars, pots and vessels distinct from the clay of which they are made? Man drinks the wine of *maya*, becomes deluded and begins to see things as separate from each other, so that he talks of 'you' and 'I'.

The Scripture says: 'The Infinite is where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, knows nothing else.' In the Infinite, the Scripture tells us, there is no duality — hereby correcting our false idea that existence is manifold.

I am Brahman, the Supreme, all-pervading like the ether, stainless, indivisible, unbounded, unmoved, unchanging. I have neither inside nor outside. I alone am. I am one without a second. What else is there to be known?

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# Editorial Willpower

(Continued from the last issue)

**W**illpower is the ability to make a conscious choice. It is closely linked with self-improvement. All of us desire to improve in life. But most of us fail due to lack of sufficient willpower.

## Do I have willpower?

Willpower is inherent in every soul. Not only is will power inherent in us we are, in fact, exercising it all the time though unconsciously. We feel weak not because we have no willpower but because we are scattering it in useless ways. A weak will is the proof of willpower used negatively.

What we need is to set definite goals in our life and strive to attain them slowly but surely. Willpower is like a muscle and can be strengthened through daily exercise. However we must have patience and perseverance. We are impatient and expect instantaneous results. That is not going to happen. The Buddha used to say that he was born hundreds of times before he achieved illumination. We too can develop a strong will following definite steps.

## How to develop willpower

### Desire and willpower

*.... grit. ... If a tortoise once tucks in its limbs, it won't put them out again though you may cut it into four pieces.* (Sri Ramakrishna)

Desire is the most important factor in developing the will. Desire lies at the very root of will. Man's will is proportionate to his desire. *"As is a man's desire, so is his will. And they say that a person consists of desires. And as is his desire, so is his will; and as is his will, so is his deed; and whatever deed he does, that he will reap."*

*(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad)*

Sri Ramakrishna attained success in whatever he had undertaken within a short time, because he had immense power of concentration and never allowed his mind to deviate from his cherished goal. Whenever we have a dominating desire or purpose, that focuses our vital energy and generates a strong driving-power; along with this the willpower also becomes strong.

The opposite of a strong will is impulsiveness. Impulsive people are weak, feeble-minded and have no grit whatsoever; they are swayed by innumerable desires and are incapable of concentrating. When a person has no fixed ambition or goal, but moves according to the impulse of the moment, his energy is not centralized and he is incapable of any sustained act of will. This is pure weakness and involves a waste of time and energy.

### **Goal and will power**

*If a man with an ideal makes a thousand mistakes, I am sure that the man without an ideal makes fifty thousand. Therefore, it is better to have an ideal.* (Swami Vivekananda)

The first step towards developing a strong, resolute will is to have a definite goal in life. When we study the lives of successful people we find they all have well-defined goal in their lives. When we have definite goals we find it easy to focus our energies and monitor the results.

Willpower is invisible like electricity. Just like electricity it can be experienced only through energy in the form of thoughts and actions. Whenever our energy is focuses and carried forward to a fixed point, we have a manifestation of will. Anyone who desires to increase his will power must take up some specific exercises.

We must have a well-thought-out daily routine. We should fix a definite time for rising and hold on to it resolutely, whatever may be the circumstances. Daily spiritual practices like meditation, japa, worship, attending *satsangas*, study of scriptures, and regular exercise etc., will also become valuable exercises in increasing our willpower if we perform them with regularity, without regard to our passing feelings. We can also strengthen our willpower through less talking, avoiding harmful habits like gossip, back-biting, etc. He who slackens and acts according to his mood or circumstance advances little. Willpower is needed to overcome old habits and develop new habits. After all, spiritual life is all about creating new habits. A new habit is difficult to form so long as we yield to the old tendencies. Any action that we do can and must be converted into a spiritual practice.

Whoever is striving to develop his will should be constantly watchful not to scatter or waste his energy; we do this by the gradual elimination of all non-essential elements from our life.

## Concentration and willpower

Concentration is the key to success in any field of life, secular or spiritual. The degree of our success will depend on the degree of our concentration. It is the power of concentration which makes the difference between animal and man, and distinguishes one man from another.

Willpower is closely associated with the power of concentration. The more concentration the more is the power of will and *vice versa*. The way to strengthen our willpower is to focus on whatever we are doing at any given time. The role of concentration in spiritual progress is unimaginable. Swami Vivekananda says:

*The main difference between men and the animals is the difference in their power of concentration. All success in any line of work is the result of this. We see its results every day. ....The difference in their power of concentration also constitutes the difference between man and man. Compare the lowest with the highest man. The difference is in the degree of concentration. This is the only difference.*

However there are two types of concentration; passive and active. We must be careful to distinguish between these two. Passive concentration makes us slaves and leads us into more bondage. In passive concentration we are forced to focus, whereas in active concentration we choose our subject. What we need to develop is active concentration. This alone can lead us to God. Swamiji says:

*Everybody's mind becomes concentrated at times. ....We all concentrate our minds upon those things we love. When we hear beautiful music, our minds become fastened upon it, and we cannot take them away.....The great trouble with such concentration is that we do not control the mind; it controls us. Something outside of ourselves, as it were, draws the mind into it and holds it as long as it chooses. ....On the ethical side there is danger in the development of the power of concentration — the danger of concentrating the mind upon an object and then being unable to detach it at will.*

According to Swami Vivekananda the very essence of education is to learn how to concentrate on a subject that we choose. An educated man who has not learnt to focus his mind is literally illiterate. Swami Vivekananda says: *To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts. To control the mind, to place it where we want it, requires special training.*

## Concentration v/s knowledge

Concentration is the only means of gaining knowledge, and knowledge is its own reward. Swami Vivekananda says, *“the world is ready to give up its secrets, if we know how to knock, how to give the necessary blow. The strength and force of the blow come through concentration.”* As knowledge is power, concentration is the source of all power too. No progress, prosperity or advancement can be attained in any sphere of life without practising concentration.

Concentration is the only means of attaining realization or Self-knowledge. Spiritual progress is not possible without concentration. *“The well-resolved mind is single and one pointed”*, teaches Sri Krishna. Swami Vivekananda says, *“Concentration of the powers of the mind is our only instrument to help us see God”*.

Concentration is that training of the mind by which we can deliberately place our entire mind on a single object of our choice to the exclusion of all other objects, and hold it there, and also withdraw it at will. When the mind is really concentrated it loses all sense of time and space.

The Buddha teaches : *“If anything is to be done, let a man do it, let him attack it vigorously!”* The difference between a great man and a small man is that a great man does a “small work” in a great way and a small man does a “great work” in a small way. What makes this difference is nothing but the quality of concentration.

For the development of willpower we need two more components: self-discipline and surrender to God. We will discuss these two in our next issue.

(To be continued)

Swami Dayatmananda

What is the true meaning of the assertion that we should depend on ourselves? Here self means the eternal Self. But even dependence on the non-eternal self may lead gradually to the right goal, as the individual self is really the eternal Self under delusion.

Swami Vivekananda

## Sri Sadasivendra Saraswati

Swami Ghanananda

**K**arur is a small railway town midway between Erode and Trichy in Trichinopoly District, South India. Eight miles east of Karur there stands a village called Nerur, with two rows of Brahmin houses. A visitor to this village will be impressed with its rural quietness and beauty, its green fields and running waters. On the quietest and holiest spot in its vicinity can be seen a small temple dedicated to Siva, with a flower-garden containing several fine arati, tulasi, and other plants, untrimmed and unpruned by any hand and allowed to grow in their natural luxuriance, the tallest denizen of this garden being a big old vilwa tree. This temple was built in memory of one of the greatest of South Indian saints and sages—Sri Sadasivendra Saraswati—a remarkable Raja Yogi, whose relics are humbly treasured under a mound of earth below the tree.

Sadasiva was born of Brahmin parents in the beginning of the eighteenth century, probably in or near Tiruvichanellore, a village on the banks of the holy Cauvery.

Sadasiva was a brilliant scholar. The beauties of nature amidst which he grew quickened his natural sensibilities. The cultured and scholarly teachers under whom he studied enabled him to make rapid and remarkable advance in his Sanskrit learning, in the study of Vedanta, the Upanishads, logic and other subjects taught in his days. Some of his class-fellows like Ramabhadrā Dikshitar, Sri Venkatesa and Gopalakrishna Sastri, who themselves were famous dramatists, poets and Vedantins, have borne testimony to his worth, the depth of his scholarship, and the brilliance of his genius. He indelibly impressed them all with the rare qualities of his head and heart. Sadasiva later produced some precious works which are very helpful and inspiring to students of *Prasthanatraya* (the three bases of

Hinduism; viz., the Upanishads, the Brahma-sutras and the Gita), of Hindu Yoga and philosophy. Among them are Introduction to the Twelve Upanishads, Yoga-sudhakara (a Commentary on the Sutras of Patanjali), Atmavidya-vilasa, Siddhanta kalpavalli and Advaita rasamanjari.

In accordance with the Hindu custom, Sadasiva was married or rather betrothed when quite young.

Sadasiva left school when he was about to enter the threshold of manhood, and returned to his parents.

Delicately sensitive are the world's greatest souls. A stray blade of grass, a passing wind, and the meanest flower that blows reveal to them a whole world of meaning and wisdom, and fill them with "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." They are endowed with the power

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand,  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower:  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And Eternity in an hour.*

(William Blake)

When Buddha's heart was touched by grief at the sight of a bird struck by an arrow in his pleasure-garden, he ruminated over the grief of the whole world and eventually made it his own. When the boy Sankara learnt the truths of the Scriptures, his desire to practise them in his life was roused and he became the great teacher of humanity.

Before Sadasiva's return, his bride had attained age. His mother was therefore celebrating the event in her own house in the bride's honour. As the festivity involved more than the usual labour and as his mother had many duties to perform on that day, he could not be given his meal in time. This delay put him in mind of the delay in the life of man in doing things of greater moment, in acquiring knowledge and wisdom, in striving to live a life worthy of the great Taskmaster's eye. Thought he within himself: "If I get my meal late on account of the festivities in honour of my

wife, how can I expect comfort and convenience in my life as a householder. They say such a life is a great obstacle to concentration on God and to spirituality."

The thought is father to the deed. Sadasiva left his home, his dear mother and his girl-wife in quest of God. Spending his time in pious and holy thoughts he felt the need for a spiritual guide (Guru). Ere long however he fell in with a man of divine realization called Paramasivendra Saraswati, and received his initiation into the spiritual life from him. The guru and the disciple loved each other, and the former taught all his methods of spiritual practices. Sadasiva made great progress therein under his personal guidance and supervision.

Well read in the Sastras and endowed with a quick intelligence and memory as he was, Sadasiva proved an invincible debater. Several men of learning were wont to visit his guru. He used to cross swords with them in logic and Vedanta and other subjects. Being highly versatile and brilliant, he would bear away the palm. This was, however, a recurring source of discomfiture to the defeated antagonists. In their wounded pride and egoism, one day they complained to the guru about Sadasiva. Such querulous words had more than once reached his ears. This time, however, the guru could not put up with Sadasiva. In a tone of impatience mixed with anger he said, looking at his disciple: "Sadasiva! When are you going to hold your tongue from vain talk?"

This was a strong home thrust at Sadasiva. He made up his mind never more to open his mouth to speak. He would only live the spiritual life. He would live in constant communion with God. He took the vow of lifelong silence, received his guru's blessings for the fruition of his spiritual efforts, and left the guru's place, with the broad expanse of blue above for his roof and wide earth below for his bed.

From the first day of his vow, Sadasiva lived a life of deep and strenuous sadhana (religious practices) far away in forest caves on the banks of the beautiful Amaravati and the sacred Cauvery. His whole life was an almost uninterrupted process of God-absorption.

Often Sadasiva would not rise from his state of God-union for several months together. Once he was deeply meditating on a sandbank in a dry part of the Cauvery river-bed, by the town of Kodumudi. Soon he lost all body-consciousness and knew neither this world nor any other. Days passed by, and the river rose high in flood. Large uprooted trees and huge logs of wood from the banks were rolled down by the lusty, impetuous current which burst asunder the heap of sand on which Sadasiva was sitting rapt in meditation. Those who saw this tried to save him, but their efforts were in vain. He was taken to have perished helplessly in the floods.

Three months later, when the floods had completely subsided and the river-bed became dry again, and some of the inhabitants of Kodumudi, who had gone to the river for a bath, were digging for water in the dry sand, one of them saw his spade besmeared with fresh blood. They were at a loss to know what it could mean. They dug more but with caution and discovered the body of a man in meditation posture. As he rose and looked around, the people beheld him with awe and wonder. He then left the place for another. It was Sadasiva.

Great mental and physical powers come to the yogi who is a past master in concentration. Patanjali, the famous author of the Yoga Sutras, bears testimony to this fact and also explains psychologically how they can be attained. They are not necessarily signs of God-realization, but are attained in the striving for perfection by the yogi, who, however, paying no heed to them, marches onward with singular strength of mind to his goal of divinity.

Sadasiva is said to have possessed such powers. On the day on which the annual festival in the Sundaeswara Temple in Madurai was celebrated, when he was playing with some boys of whom, he was very fond and to whom he would distribute now and then sweets offered to him by some devotees, they all besought him to take them to Madurai and enable them to worship in the temple. At this, Sadasiva bade them mount on his shoulders and close their eyes. The next moment they opened their eyes, and to their surprise found themselves within the temple of Sundaeswara decorated with beautiful flowers of various hues, perfumed with rich frankincense and crowded by a host of devotees jostling each other to have a look at the deity within. The boys worshipped Sundaeswara and received prasad from Sadasiva's own hands. In the morning Sadasiva is said to have mysteriously taken them back and left them in their homes, where they told their mothers what happened and gave them what was left over of the prasad. This might have happened. Since Raja Yogis possess extraordinary powers of movement from place to place, as testified by Patanjali, who says:

"By making samyama on the objectivity and power of illumination of the organs on egoism, the inherence of the gunas in them and on their contributing to the experience of the soul, comes the conquest of the organs." *"From that comes to the body the power of rapid movement like the mind, and power of the organs independently of the body, and conquest of nature."*

Sadasiva used to wander like the cast-off leaf which is blown about hither and thither by the passing wind. Often he would so lose body consciousness that he would roam about stark naked. Once, in such a state of mind, he happened to pass by the harem of the palace of a Nawab, who came of a royal family. In his anger at seeing an unknown man nude near the apartments of his wives, whom even the rays of the sun would not dare to approach, the Nawab cut off one of the saint's hands. Feeling in no way perturbed by this act, Sadasiva was moving on as if nothing had

happened. Struck with awe and surprise at this indifference of the stranger, the Nawab watched him day and night, and served him out of reverence. Sadasiva asked him why he was pursuing him like a shadow, to which he replied: "Holy sir, I am overcome with grief at having thoughtlessly severed your hand. What shall I do to assuage your pain?" Sadasiva came to know of the injury of his hand only at that time. Passing his other hand over where the severed one had been, he became healed and a new hand sprang in the place of the old. He used to pass many days and months in such deep absorption that he completely forgot his body, and the whole world was effaced from his mind.

Wonderful was the passing away of Sadasiva. He went to the village of Nerur, called together the brahmins of the place, and spoke to them as follows: On the tenth day in the month of May-June, I will, as usual, commune with God, and then give up this body and be united with Him for ever. A Brahmin will arrive from Varanasi at that time carrying a Sivalinga. A few cubits from where I shall sit in meditation and renounce this cage of flesh and blood, erect a temple and install the Sivalinga therein." The village folk accordingly dug a trench and were awaiting the final hour. Sadasiva took his seat inside the pit and just then they saw a Brahmin, who, they learnt on enquiry, was coming from Banaras bearing a Sivalinga. Sadasiva's words were fulfilled. His mind rose fervently in quiet but deep prayer leaving the body behind. The temple that the villagers erected at his bidding stands even to this day. The spot purified by his relics breathes a holy atmosphere and is one of the most sacred and inspiring places of pilgrimage. Many devotees and monks visit it seeking the peace that passeth all understanding. Arrangements were made by the Royal House of Pudukottah for daily worship, annual celebrations and other functions in the temple, which are done even today.

(Reprinted from Vedanta Kesari, April, 1924-1925)

## Meditation In Monism

Swami Ghanananda

Every religion has four parts, namely, mythology and ritual, philosophy and higher spiritual disciplines. Of all forms of spiritual disciplines meditation is the highest. In it the approach to the Divine goal is made directly by the soul of man, and he ultimately realises the relationship between the soul and his Maker, and experiences God as the highest Reality. The value of meditation, therefore, is higher than that of ritual as a form of practical spiritual discipline. In studying mythology and philosophy and doing spiritual disciplines like ritual, the thought of God is present in the mind of man. But in meditation this thought becomes deepest and most intense until at last it transcends itself when the highest illumination is attained.

### I

Many sincere and honest people believe that if they sit down to think of God they will be able to meditate and obtain the fruits of meditation. They think, therefore, that they only need sufficient time to do so. When they are young or in middle age they believe that a day will come after many years of practice when they will be free from the turmoil of work and be able to devote every day to the thought of God: but such people generally find it extremely hard to meditate in their old age in spite of proper guidance and spiritual help. It goes to show that only when the mind has been trained in the earlier years of life and has kept up the habit through middle age, will it be able to meditate in the last years of life.

When a man wants to meditate for a while, but finds in a few minutes that all sorts of ideas alien to meditation rush into his mind and carry it away from the path of meditation. This shows that the mind requires training. We know that all forms of training, whether physical for the growth and development of

the body, or mental, for the growth and development of the intellect, heart or will, are the outcome of a science. Thus there is the science of meditation, which began to be studied and formulated even from most ancient times by the Indo-Aryans, and which reached the highest excellence unsurpassed among other peoples. Even in the days of the *Brahmanas* and *Samhitas*, which preceded the age of the *Upanishads*—those expressions of deepest meditateness and spiritual experience—the performer of ritual often passed into a state of communion with the Deity. In the Upanishadic period this became deeper and was specially cultivated by those who became the Seers of the *Upanishads*. The science, therefore, grew and flourished, and though it was in the hands of a few, it was kept alive. In the post-Vedic age we find its greatest teacher, Sri Krishna, teaching his disciple, Arjuna, the way of meditation; and in a subsequent period Kapila and Patanjali developed and expounded the psychological and psychic aspects of meditation. In the post-Buddhistic age Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva and others expounded the science of meditation in their commentaries, each in his own way.

Whatever the path a man may find suitable for him to follow, whether it be the path of devotion or that of knowledge, or the path of right action or that of psychic control, meditation is the most mature form of all spiritual practices. A man may hear the teachings of the scriptures and philosophies. He tries to understand and reflect on the truths so taught. But when he practises, meditation forms an important part of his disciplines. Again, when a man does all work in a spirit of dedication, his mind slowly but steadily becomes filled with the thought of God to whom he dedicates his work. His consciousness becomes so deeply coloured in the long run, that meditation becomes natural to him. This is true of devotional practices and also of the psychic and psychological disciplines prescribed by Raja Yoga. Our endeavours to live the spiritual life from the day we begin to have

an inkling of its nature till the day of Enlightenment, form a series of concentric circles which contract more and more until the Reality called God, which is their centre, is reached. In Vedanta, meditation is compared to the uninterrupted flow of oil from one vessel to another (Ramanuja).

Vedanta is studied and practised in three aspects, namely, monistic, qualified-monistic and dualistic. In monistic Vedanta the approach to meditation is similar to that in *Sankhya* except that in *Sankhya* they speak of a plurality of souls: whereas in monism the ultimate Reality is One. In *Sankhya* the practical procedure consists in eliminating *Prakriti* and its modifications—the body, mind and ego—and arriving at the spiritual consciousness called the *Purusha*: whereas in Vedanta it consists in denying the absolute existence of body, mind and ego, as well as the universe, which are only relatively real, and arriving at the One Absolute Reality called *Brahman* with which the Self of man, the essence of his being, is identical.

## II

Monistic meditation is meditation on the Absolute. As the Absolute is beyond form and beyond attributes, this type of meditation is the most difficult of all. It is not thinking of mere formlessness such as vacant space, the blue sky or the shoreless ocean. This does not constitute meditation on the Absolute. It is only thinking of the "material infinity" called *Mahakasa* or the universal space. A higher and subtler form of infinity is the mental infinity called *Chittakasa* or the space of the mind from which infinite thought-forms arise, as in the dream state. But the true Absolute, the Infinite of monism, is the Spiritual Infinity or the Infinity of the Spirit called *Chidakasa*, the Void beyond all forms and attributes. This is the negation of everything conceivable or expressible and is described in the words, "not this, nor that," of the Upanishads. This is inconceivably higher than the infinity of the universe and the infinity of the mind, for the universe and the

mind are both limited, but the Infinity of the Spirit, the *Atman* or *Brahman*, is the true infinity, the true Absolute of monism.

From the above it must be clear that monistic meditation is bound to prove difficult even in the case of those who have arrived at an intellectual conviction of the identity of the *Atman* or the Self in man with *Brahman* or the Oversoul.

Vedanta, therefore, prescribes four forms of preliminary disciplines for monistic aspirants, without undergoing which monistic seekers cannot successfully attempt their meditation. The first and foremost of these is the constant discrimination between the Real and the unreal. Day and night the aspirant is to think of the enduring Real which abides and does not change and which is, therefore, different from the passing real. He is to discriminate constantly between the Absolute Reality and the relative reality of the universe and its phenomena. Vedanta boldly asserts that not only is the universe, with its myriad forms clothed in myriad hues, ephemeral, but also the body of man and his mind including his ego. This teaching is based on the experience of the Seers.

Even this discrimination between the Real and the unreal is sufficient to help the seeker in his monistic meditation and help him realise the goal of monism. Man lives in this world, and therefore with a view to protecting his mind from obstacles to the practice of discrimination, three other forms of spiritual disciplines are also enjoined. One of these consists in the practice of the following six virtues:

(a) checking the mind from the pursuit of all objects except hearing the Upanishads and other teachings of Vedanta;

(b) checking the organs of action and knowledge from all objects except hearing the Upanishads and other teachings of Vedanta;

(c) keeping the organs so restrained from drifting along their old course to sense objects;

(d) remaining unruffled by pleasure and pain, profit and loss, prosperity and adversity, honour and dishonour, and other pairs of opposites;

(e) constantly concentrating the mind on hearing the Upanishads and other teachings of Vedanta and practising such virtues as modesty, humility, devotion, purity and service to the Guru;

(f) faith in God; faith in the Upanishads and other teachings of Vedanta; faith in the *Guru*; and faith in one's capacity to realise the Truth.

Practice of the above six virtues constitutes the second form of preliminary disciplines.

A third form consists in the relinquishment of the desire for the fruits of action in this world or in heaven, that supernatural world where souls enjoy subtle pleasures and happiness. The monist aims at knowledge and cares for nothing but knowledge.

Fourthly and finally the seeker is exhorted to create in himself a divine discontent and a thirst for liberation from the thralldom of body, mind and ego, as well as from nescience, by attaining Illumination.

These disciplines prepare the mind for steadiness in daily meditation on the *Atman*, the Pure Consciousness in man, and on his identity with the Oversoul or Transcendental Consciousness.

### III

In order to help its students in monistic meditation, Vedanta gives an unchallenged and unchallengeable definition of the Absolute Reality by declaring that It is That which remains unaffected throughout all time—past, present and future. This definition brings the conception of Reality right into the heart of man, as we shall see presently.

With a view to ascertaining the nature of Reality or what It is, the Seers of India first studied objective phenomena. They noted that objects changed with lapse of time. They were once in a subtle state and then changed into their present condition, and

from this they will again change into a subtle state. What is true of individual objects is also true of the universe as a whole. The universe also was once in a subtle state from which it evolved into its present condition, and it will again return to its subtle state in the future. Thus what we see is not a permanent reality. But we should remember that though it may change and change, it never ceases to exist; in other words the notion of existence can never be removed from our minds.

The ancient Seers further found that not only the objective universe but also the observer who saw it changed from time to time. His body and mind change with time. Nay, more, he is not the same during the 24 hours of the day and night. During day he is awake but enters into quite a different state when he sleeps and begins to dream, and when he is in dreamless sleep he is in yet another state which is different from his waking and dream states. It must therefore be clear that not only do the objective phenomena of the universe change, but there is a change also in the subjective counterpart in man.

A study of matter in the objective universe eventually led to the growth and development of science. A study of phenomena as presented to the consciousness of man in the different states of waking, dream and sleep, as well as the study of these three states in relation to the Self of man, contributed to the growth and development of monistic religion and philosophy.

An investigation into the three states of consciousness known to man, viz., waking, dream and sleep, is one of the characteristic features of Vedanta. Vedanta claims that no study of man is complete unless a study of his personality in all three states is attempted. As a result of such study we find that in the waking state the universe appears as real, tangible, perceptible to the five senses. In the dream state the universe becomes subtle and attenuated. And in deep sleep man does not see anything, does not know anything; the universe has entirely disappeared

and he is not even aware that he is sleeping; but when he wakes in the morning he remembers to have slept well or ill as the case may be. Now every act of remembrance is an act of re-cognition. This means that the cognition took place even in sleep without man's knowledge. Who could this cogniser be?

The Upanishads declare that the cogniser in sleep is Consciousness itself. It directly registers sleep without the help of mind and ego, for these don't function in sleep—it registers the fact of sleep just as at night the thermometer records the temperature and the barometer the atmospheric pressure though we are fast asleep.

Consciousness is present in our waking and dream states, but it takes the help of the mind and the ego to perceive and know. Mind and ego are its adjuncts in the waking and dream states. In the waking state we are conscious of ourselves, our pleasures and pains, joys and sorrows. We are conscious of these in the dream state also, though the time, space and causation in the dream state are of a standard different from that of the waking state. When I am awake, my identity is felt as such and such. In dream I perceive many things which are not seen in the waking state, and the ego of waking has vanished and another ego has taken its place; yet I know that another person does not dream for me; it is I myself who dream and wake up again. In sleep nothing is perceived and there is neither the ego of dream nor that of waking; yet on waking we all feel and know intuitively the identity of our personality in waking, dream and sleep. Extending the study of consciousness to the period from our birth till old age, we shall find that it was we that were born, it is we that are now living, and it is we that will grow old and die.

This notion of the identity and continuity of human personality can arise only when something exists as a background of the stages of life and states of consciousness. This is Pure Consciousness. It is behind the three states of waking, dream and

dreamless sleep, or rather It has three modes of being, called waking, dream and dreamless sleep, It is also behind all the stages of life such as infancy, youth, middle age and old age. Nay, It has been existing eternally throughout our past lives and will exist throughout the future. It is the Atman or the Self, a fact underlying all that is given by experience. "*The Pure Consciousness is that of which the personal consciousness, which is bound up with the activities of body and mind and with which alone man is normally acquainted, is a reflection in matter.*" Suppose somebody hits me, then I become conscious of pain. This is a state of personal consciousness and is a complex. From it, if I eliminate whatever is contributed by the body and the mind, what remains is the consciousness that accompanies all mental processes, which was first differentiated by Plotinus among Western philosophers and called the accompaniment—Parakolonthesis—of the mental activities by the soul. This is the light of Consciousness which manifests in both the mental and physical worlds. "It is the power of pure intelligence which being unchangeable cannot become the seat of perception, for this latter belongs to the mind." Thus Pure Consciousness is separate from mental activity. It is not a mere idea or abstraction but a Reality, indeed the greatest Reality that man can attain.

This Pure Consciousness is called *Purusha* by the *Sankhya* Philosophy and *Atman* by Vedanta. But for It, and Its illuminating power, the power to manifest mental and bodily functions, such functions would go on unconsciously and unknown. Unlike matter, It is immutable, beginningless and endless, a steady shadowless light that knows not any change. It is the immaterial part of man; It is his immortal soul, his deathless Self, the core of his being. Sankara says, "The *Atman* is *jna*, Eternal Consciousness, because It is uncreate. Eternal Consciousness is the nature of the *Atman* just as heat and light are of fire." The moment a seeker will realise It, he will intuitively realise Its identity with the Oversoul,

*Brahman*, just as when any scientist analyses a specimen of water anywhere and finds it to be H<sub>2</sub>O, he intuitively concludes that water everywhere and at all times is H<sub>2</sub>O.

In all the three states of waking, dream and dreamless sleep the *Atman* is the witness. But our goal is to be the *Atman* with nothing to witness—the *Atman* as It is, shining, in Its own glory undimmed by its adjuncts.

What has been given above is what one can learn by investigating the nature of the three states. The tearing off of the veil of Prakriti with a view to realising the *Atman* and Its identity with *Brahman* has to be attempted first by meditating on the *Atman* and then on Its identity with *Brahman*, until eventually this identity is realised. If this method is found difficult, one should begin by meditating on God with attributes, and if necessary, on God with form and attributes, and in due course follow the monistic method.

In monism we have a method of meditation which does not want us to accept any theological doctrine or dogma of any particular religion. Its philosophy and its approach are like the air and water, the gift of Mother Nature: they belong to everyone.

Monism accepts all paths and religions, yet rises above them all.

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Bear all evil and misery without one murmur of hurt, without one thought of unhappiness, resistance, remedy, or retaliation. That is true endurance; and that you must acquire. The reason why a criminal is a criminal is not because he desires to be one, but because he does not have his mind under control and is therefore a slave to his own conscious and subconscious mind, and to the minds of everybody else.

Swami Vivekananda

## An Introduction to Hindu Theology - 4

Swami Sunirmalananda

(Continued from the last issue)

### The Origins of Hindu Theology: the Vedas

The Vedas are the result of the human search for truth. The *rishis* (sages) existed since the time when human beings began to live on this good earth. The truths they discovered were preserved for posterity in Sanskrit by the process of verbal communication, until writing came to help. How perfect was their method of preservation! Here is an example: even today, despite the passing of millennia, not a single letter can be changed from the Vedas—so perfect is the recording. They had developed several sciences to preserve knowledge in this way. Their love for knowledge was not just academic curiosity or the desire for degrees. Their purpose was attaining spiritual knowledge, so their dedication to the pursuit of knowledge was total. Of all their discoveries, the discovery of the nature of God, of the individual, and of the universe are astounding—as they understood that God is both personal and impersonal, is both within and without, is beyond thought and speech, and that He is the real we, we are the real He.

Thus, Hindu theology has at least a 10,000 year-long history. Much of the sacred literature is lost—due to political upheavals and other reasons. The Âryas sought the knowledge of God in diverse ways. The recorded word, the Veda, is the result of this search for Truth. *Tattoa-vichâra* or enquiry into the nature of God, and *tattoa-jnâna* or the knowledge of God, are therefore ancient subjects, far more ancient than any known to history.

## Growth in Hindu Theological Studies

We have seen that the theology that was developed in Aryavarta, the land of the Âryas, was ancient, methodical, and living. We shall now see how the system grew. After the truths of the Vedas were discovered, they were taught to future generations. The attempts made at their preservation were scientific and systematic. How did they do it? The revealed truths were preserved in Sanskrit, the language which never changes but grows. Further, several sciences were developed to preserve the truths—meter (*chandās*), astronomy (*jyotisha*) and so on. The style of memorisation was unique and scientific.

Thus there was no chance of even a letter becoming lost from a *mantra*. They were handed over from generation to generation verbally. No effort was spared to preserve sacred knowledge. These truths were subsequently compiled and organized into four parts by Vyasa, a sage of extraordinary attainments. Vyasa accomplished the stupendous task of gathering together all the hymns of the Vedas from numerous sources. He then classified them into four big groups. These were the hymns (*mantras*), rituals (*brâhmanas*), meditations (*âranyakas*), and contemplations (*Upanishads*). These Vedas are the fundamental sources of all knowledge. Sages “saw” the eternal truths in the form of cryptic mantras, left them for posterity, and they were compiled into the existent Vedas. Also called the *shruti* because they were ‘heard’, this Vedic knowledge helped the ancient Aryans develop secular and spiritual sciences—from seafaring through agriculture to astronomy. Further down the centuries, this sacred knowledge was given a book form. Thus we now have the four Vedas, each with four parts, as books.

The Vedic sages dedicated their lives to the knowledge of God, living principally in the cold regions of the Himalayas. Theological questions about the existence, the nature and the meaning of God were asked repeatedly since the earliest times.

### **The Concept of God**

The first and the most important point is, it is not possible to understand Hindu Theology or the Hindu concept of God from the Occidental viewpoint. Orientalists and Missionary scholars have for centuries tried to superimpose their understanding of the concept of God on *Sanatana Dharma*. But they have failed. Since they have failed, they blame Sanatana Dharma as a religion having millions of Gods, and so on. All the Western concepts of “theisms” like mono, heno, poly, and so on do not fit into the scheme of Hindu Theology. We must understand this point as the vital aspect of Hindu Theology.

The first fundamental point that the student of Hindu Theology has to understand is this: in Hinduism, there is only One God. That One is the Absolute, Supreme Consciousness, and so on. God is One. Without grasping this truth, it will be difficult to follow the Hindu theological argument.

The second fundamental point of the theology of Sanatana Dharma is, it is based on revealed scripture, the *Veda*. Just as every sensible theologian of Christianity stresses the importance of Revelation by God as the foundation of theology, the Hindu too bases everything on the revealed Scripture—the Veda. The Vedas are the sources of Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism, and of all human knowledge. They are the pillars upon which the whole of human knowledge of God stands. They are the bases on which the whole of human knowledge stands, for it is through the Vedas that we really come to know what we are, what this universe is, and what God is.

We shall first of all trace the concept of God in Sanatana Dharma from the Vedas. Apparently confusing, with numerous gods and goddesses, numerous ideas and concepts—the underlying current is that there is one supreme Being. The Vedic idea of God is not clear until we come to the *Upanishads*. However, since the early Mantra period, the call for one Supreme Being is heard reverberating in the Vedas.

Continuing with the historical approach to Hindu Theology, we shall show that seeking to know God, to understand His works and His nature, had been the principal occupation of thousands of Âryas since ancient times. The first questions of the early seekers were, Who is God? What is our relation to Him? How did He create this universe, and did it do it?

First, about God. We have mentioned that each Veda is divided into four broad groups: the prayer portion (Mantra), the ceremonial portion (Brahmana), the sacrificial portion (Aranyaka) and the meditation portion (Upanishad). The very first verse of the Mantra part of the *Rig Veda* has the word *deva*, God. A few hymns later, we have the mention of the mother of Gods (Aditi).<sup>1</sup> Aditi is said to be the mother of six, seven or eight gods –as there are different numbers given in different texts. These gods are: Indra, Vâyu, Brihaspati, Mitra, Agni, Pûshan and Bhaga. There were some other gods and goddesses too, like Soma, Prithvi, Maruts, and so on. Agni, the God of Fire, played a pivotal role of being the messenger of the gods. The Vedic sages repeatedly enquired about God, about whom to adore in the verses ending with '*kasmai devâyâ havishâ vidhema?* Which God shall we adore?'<sup>2</sup> They also want to know about the origin of the universe: '*Ko dadarsha prathamam jâyamânam?* Who was the firstborn? Who has seen Him?'<sup>3</sup> The seeking for God, the desire to know His nature, the aspiration

to understand His works—all these were the dominant virtues of the Vedic peoples. Whether it is the Mantra part or the Upanishad part, the human desire and aspiration to seek to know and contact God is the one idea that runs throughout. While in the initial stages the gods were more “material” or powers ruling over different natural functions, the later stages showed the profound truth of Consciousness being the centre of attention. Apparently, this may mean that Sanatana Dharma has many Gods. We shall come to this soon.

Second, about Creation. There are several great hymns about creation and one of them is most significant, as it says that creation is an endless process. “The Eternal Laws (*Rta*) and Truth (*Satya*) were born of great heat of austerity (*tapas*). From thence was Night born, and then the great wavy ocean. From the bellowing, wavy ocean the Year (*samvatsara*) was born. This Year is the limiter of day and night and the Lord of all who live. The Sun and the Moon, the heavens and the earth, the space and the higher regions were all created by the Lord then, as it had been on the previous occasion.”<sup>4</sup> Then there is the well-known *Nâsadiya* hymn about creation, which says that in the beginning there was neither Being nor non-Being. The Hindu concept of creation is varied—from the idea that creation is eternal, to the idea that creation is an illusion, there are several concepts, to suit different minds.

The Upanishads deal only with Reality. In diverse ways, they discuss God and His nature. God, according to the Upanishads, is not the anthropomorphic “person” but the Infinite, beginningless, endless, Supreme Consciousness. Almost all the Upanishads begin with enquiry into the nature of God. “*Kim kâranam? Kutah sma jâtâh? Jîvâma kena?...What or Who is the Cause? From where were we born? Why do we live?...*”<sup>5</sup>

After the Vedas, there came into existence many other sciences and numerous works on religion and spirituality. We had the laws for social life (*smritis*), the epic-histories (*itihâsas*), the mythologies (*purânas*) and a host of other post-Vedic literature. Of all the works of the later period, the *Bhagavadgita* stands out as the most illuminating theological work. It is God's word itself. In all of these, there has been the constant quest for God, the experiences of saints, the stories of their spiritual struggles, and so on. The philosophical systems came later still. These philosophical systems were based on the Vedas. Not that newer philosophical systems were created, but the ideas were there in the Vedas and were systematically stated with the Vedas as the basis. Buddhism, Jainism and other systems too came up—all dealing with the fundamental theological questions. God with diverse names and forms and attributes is the centre of this enormous fund of literature of the Aryans, thereby that of ancient India and of Sanatana Dharma. Thus, a long and steady search for God went on the soil of India for answers to fundamental questions of life and existence and continues today with renewed vigour. This renewed vigour came from the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swamiji. They renewed the vigour of theological studies because the subcontinent had become cold and dry, owing to political invasions. Truths had been forgotten and superstitions had been substituted for spirituality. Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual practices renewed the enthusiasm for God-seeking.

### **Points to Remember**

We have had a bird's-eye view of the history of Hindu Theology. A few points must be remembered before proceeding further. For Christian theology, the Bible forms the basis, as it is the study and interpretation, principally, of the Bible that

forms the theology. For Hindu Theology, the Vedas are the basis; the Vedas were revelations. Further, while the Vedas themselves are the result of the sages' search for God, their interpretation and study too form parts of theology and philosophy. So, while interpreting and understanding the Bible leads to Christian Theology, the Vedas themselves are the beginnings of Hindu Theology. This states the antiquity of Hindu theology. It does not, however, mean that the Vedas limit the progress and scope of theology. This is another important point to note with regard to Hindu Theology. Sri Ramakrishna says it best: *"God is beyond the Vedas and their injunctions. Can one realize Him by studying the scriptures, the Vedas, and the Vedānta? (To Narendra) Do you understand this? The Vedas give only a hint."* What does this mean? Did Sri Ramakrishna mean that the Vedas were ineffective? Not so. He says that God can never be limited by anything. He can do anything, surpass anything, and can present Himself in any form or any way. So Sri Ramakrishna remarked that his experiences had gone beyond the Vedas and the Vedanta. This gives ample scope to the human being and his search for God.

Secondly, about cultural transcendence. God reveals Himself as the Veda, as knowledge. This knowledge is beyond time, place, region and religion. It has no cultural bounds or limits. Truth is universal. While the Christian Revelation is attributed by someone to be for the Christian in faith, the Vedas are for all. Sanatana Dharma and its truths are for all. There can be no cultural limitations to Vedic knowledge.

Thirdly, about faith. Hindu Theology, unlike Christian, does not begin with faith in God and the Scripture. The aspirant, without knowing anything or without having faith in anything also can search and seek God. It is not like "the Bible and the Bible alone" approach in Hinduism. His sincerity

would lead him to knowledge. Hindu Theology is essentially mystical and not theoretical.

Fourthly, the Church. There is no central authority to negate or validate the revelations or the thinking of theologians in Hinduism, as it is in Catholicism in particular. Though there have been some foolish Brahmins who tried to control interpretations from time to time, their folly has always quickly been made public. Independence, freedom from authoritative control, and liberty of thought are the hallmarks of Hindu theology. There are a few other important points but we shall go over to the next topic.

### **The Methodology of Hindu Theology**

Is a method necessary for theological studies? Stanford Murrell writes: *'Since there are various ways to build a system of religious belief, it is good to remember that the procedure a person decides to pursue will influence the final results.'*<sup>6</sup> So some method is necessary. However, method should not control creativity. Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984) holds one of the most important places in Christian methodology now. His book, *Method in Theology* (1972) is quoted widely. He says, *"Method is not a set of rules to be followed meticulously by a dolt. It is a framework for collaborative creativity.'* Creativity is the word.<sup>7</sup>

What method should be followed for theological studies? Christianity follows three methods: Inductive, Speculative and Mystical. Basing their discussion on the Bible, they use these methods to prove the existence of God, study God's nature, and so on. Of the three methods, the inductive method follows the same inductive principles that are followed everywhere— from examples or instances, going to generalisations. The law is made in the end after seeing common elements in numerous cases. The speculative method is based on assumptions from

which generalisation follows. The mystical method is based on experience. We shall discuss them in detail later.

Speaking the theological language, by and large Sanatana Dharma too follows these methods for theoretical studies in a general sense, as we shall soon see. But we must remember that certain terms like 'rational' mean different things to different people. To be rational for a dogmatic individual is to obey his scripture implicitly. To be rational for an open-minded individual is to be universal, ready to reject pet ideas when found wrong, and be open to newer ideas. To be rational is to be scientific in spirit. While for Sanatana Dharma, the third, the mystical method (in a special sense, though), is most important for God-knowledge, the other two are important too. Sanatana dharma uses other methods too, like logic, for instance. All these methods are used to know God, to prove His existence, to understand His glories and to know the nature of the universe as well as the living beings. Through these methods, again, theology is developed as a consequence of the soul's search for God.

Why does Sanatana Dharma insist so much on experience rather than on theorizing? Hinduism distinctly classifies all knowledge into two groups: sensory (*aparâ*) and supra-sensory (*parâ*). Supra-sensory knowledge means that which is beyond the intellect and the mind. The mind is not the Spirit. The mind too, for the Hindu theologian, is a sense, is limited, and is material. The Spirit cannot be attained through the material, though the mind is the greatest instrument for knowing God. This difference between Sanatana Dharma and other faiths is vital to our understanding of the importance of Hindu Theology.

Bernard Lonergan's book, *Method in Theology*, speaking in an abstruse and quite complex manner, principally deals with sensory knowledge in speaking of method. Lonergan says: 'Just

*as we move from the data of sense through inquiry, insight, reflection, judgment, to statements about sensible things, so too we move from the data of consciousness through inquiry, understanding, reflection, judgment, to statements about conscious subjects and their operations.*<sup>8</sup> The consciousness that he speaks of is relative and not the Consciousness which is supra-sensory. God is Supreme Consciousness according to all the traditions of Hinduism. To know Supreme Consciousness using the senses is impossible, though all sages declare that our mind is the instrument to reach the threshold of the Divine.<sup>9</sup> Hinduism, though giving intellectual knowledge of God its proper place, insists on its limitations too. Through the intellect, one can interpret scriptures, try to understand them, and have some vague idea about God. Through the intellect and mind, one can love God and serve Him. But to know Him in the real sense, one has to go beyond the senses. The theologian studies the experiences of saints and illumined seers. He analyses the records left behind by them and forms an opinion. This is the beginning of theology – the study of scripture and saints’ words.

Why so? For two important reasons. One, God is beyond the mind and the senses. Two, all knowledge is inherent in the Soul or Atman. The process of learning, according to Sanatana Dharma, is from inside out and not from outside in. That is, knowledge comes from within. It is inherent in the Self. So God knowledge, which is inherent, is being “unveiled” by the soul, through the process of removal of obstacles. For this, the soul uses external suggestions.

Supra-sensory knowledge is spiritual. This spiritual knowledge is what is implied in true Religion. All other knowledge is secular. True spiritual knowledge, which is inherent, is beyond the pale of the senses. So the theological methods that the theologians speak of, call them transcendence

or dialectic or whatever, cannot touch the fringes of this supra-sensory knowledge through argument or rationalisation. It is something beyond such methods. Yet, theology as a system to study God's nature is important because this helps us grow in our aspiration to have God-experience. Studying theology just for academic interest will not be complete at all as it does not serve its purpose. Hindus knew it since the beginning.

This difference is important when we discuss Indian theology. When we speak of mystical theology from the Hindu context, it is purely spiritual, supra-intuitive (*aparoksha*), experiential, sudden, and beyond thought and word.<sup>10</sup> Many sages have attained the highest since time immemorial, and many, out of compassion, have carefully left records of their experiences. These experiences are studied and theological concepts are formed. We shall now take up the method of Hindu Theology.

Before continuing, we shall briefly mention the road we have already covered till now. We began with an introduction to Theology, by defining it. We have then mentioned the history of Western theology, beginning from Greece down to the present times. We have touched the history of Hindu Theology and have shown that it is ancient, and at least ten thousand years old. Next we have discussed the method used to study theology, and have shown that Sanatana Dharma classifies all knowledge into two parts: secular and spiritual. Secular knowledge is based on sense-experience and mental movements. Spiritual knowledge is immediate and supra-sensory.

How does one acquire sense-based knowledge? Indian systems of philosophy have evolved a unique six-fold method of knowledge.<sup>11</sup> This is called the system of *pramâna*. *Pramâ* means valid knowledge. That which brings us valid knowledge

is *pramâna*. So *pramâna* is the method of knowledge. The object that we are intending to know is called *prameya-vastu*. And we who are the knowers of this knowledge are called *pramatas*. Both knowledge of the senses and subtle knowledge are gained by these six methods of knowledge. These are called Perception (*pratyaksha*), Inference (*anumâna*), Verbal Testimony (*shabda*), Supposition (*arthâpatti*), comparison (*upamâna*), and Non-apprehension (*anupalabधि*). This is a big subject in itself. All valid knowledge that we have through our senses is received by these six methods. There are philosophical discussions about the number of methods, but on the whole, these are the six.

The next is supra-sensory knowledge (*parâ vidyâ*). God is beyond the senses, the mind and the intellect. He or It cannot be known through the senses—this is one of the fundamental concepts of Hinduism. No amount of theorizing can take us to God.<sup>12</sup> All knowledge we derive from books reveal absolutely nothing when compared to the direct experience of God.

What is the method to know the supra-sensory, or God? If it is theoretical knowledge alone, there can be some well-known methods. If it is direct experience (*aparoksha anubhuti*), then we must follow a different path altogether.

In order to understand the methodology of Hindu theology, we must study the well-known classification of Hindu sadhana into the four paths: the paths of knowledge (*jnana*), devotion (*bhakti*), contemplation (*yoga*) and selfless service (*karma*). It is based on these four paths that the system of Hindu theology has developed.

1. The Speculative Method (*vichâra*): What is the speculative method in Christian theology? The speculative method frames truths and laws based on thought. This method involves the mind, naturally, and its thoughts. These thoughts, based on experiences, create concepts. These concepts become principles.

And these principles, after sufficient consideration, are postulated as verified truths. No other form of external textual influence is used here, ideally. The speculative method branches out into two parts: rationalistic, which accepts only the concepts created by the mind and reason, and dogmatic, which accepts supernatural revelations to the mind. So the speculative method of theology in Christian thought is a rational approach to truths, without being influenced by any other source. Though one wonders how this is possible, in view of the fact that the Bible enters the arena even before the theology student begins his studies, this is how it is presented.

Over to the Hindu speculative method now. Whether it is to attain the Truth or to study scriptures related to Theology, enquiry is the best method adopted by the Vedantist. The path of knowledge indicates the method of speculation. It is called *vichâra*. The process of *vichâra* is as follows: the scriptures, especially the Vedas, are infallible. They tell us about the nature of God. These scriptures are the fundamental sources of knowledge. However, the very nature of Indian scriptures is their openness to discussion. They themselves give ample scope for argument, discussion, meditation and enquiry. All are welcome to enquire and meditate on the truths that the scriptures teach. The fundamental difference here is, there is no need of faith in the scriptures as the first step to discussion. According to the path of knowledge, *shraddhâ* or faith comes later. Further, in order to understand the truths stated in these scriptures, speculation is one of the processes. So, one form of speculation is to enquire into the truths of the scriptures, and thereby come to conclusions. In fact, it is through enquiry, argument, and discussion that different systems of philosophy have come into existence.

The first form of enquiry, therefore, is to study the scripture and discuss its meaning and significance. Suppose the *Îsha Upanishad* says: '*Îshâtôâsyam idam sarvam*, all this is enveloped by God,'<sup>13</sup> the student will think and discuss with his friends about the nature of this envelopment. Each one can have a different opinion about this.

The second form of speculation is for the faithful. Spiritual seeking, according to some paths, begins with *shraddhâ*. The seeker, who studies scriptures with faith, enquires into their meanings, meditates on them, and progresses along the spiritual path.

The third, higher, form of enquiry is to negate all that is not the Reality until It is reached. This negation, popularly called '*na iti, na iti*' or '*neti neti*—not this, not this', is not mere parrot-like repetition of words. But it is the growing conviction that what we see and feel as real is in fact a systemic illusion. This is done through the power of the mind and its strength of enquiry.

The fourth form of enquiry is to positively affirm that "this is the Reality". Holding on to some idea of the Supreme Reality mentally, the seeker affirms that It is real while the rest, though apparently realistic, is not.

2. The Inductive Method: The second method of Christian theology is the Inductive method. In the Inductive method, principles are formulated based on facts collected carefully. It is like the scientist formulating laws based on experiences, facts and universality of truths.

We must study the Inductive method of Indian theology with this background in mind. In Christianity, inductive theologians study nature as the manifestation of God's relation to man. Whatever that may mean, in Aryan religions, especially Sanatana Dharma, nature is seen in not one, but in diverse

forms. Nature is illusory to some, while it is real to others. Nature is independent to some, while She is the manifestation of God's glory, to others. Nature is inert but is the Creatrix to some. Nature is, however, material to every school of thought. Nature is called *prakriti*, *maya*, and so on according to the interpretation. But to every school, nature is subservient or subordinate to the Supreme Reality.<sup>14</sup> Nature is there to teach the soul that she is finite and limited, and that God is everything. Nature leads the soul to the doorstep of God. From the ego to the body, everything is nature.

External nature, the world as we see it, is somewhat special. Can these forces of nature lead us to the Divine? From the earliest *mantras* of the Vedas, we can have some idea of the Vedic seers' struggle for knowledge. Ancient Aryans began wondering at the marvels of nature. They understood that behind the forces of nature, like thunder and rain, there are controlling powers. These powers are "gods", the shining ones, who were beings like us on the earth and attained to such states. These "gods" are not the Supreme Being, but are positions, as Swami Vivekananda pointed out. These gods change. Through the adoration of these gods, the ancient Vedic people attained to worldly and otherworldly well-being.<sup>15</sup> However, the soul had to pierce through the veil of nature to attain to the Supreme. Through the study of nature and its diverse manifestations, then, the aspirant would understand that nature is limited, material, and finite. Using this as the plank, he would go for the Infinite. This is the inductive method—going from the multifarious to the One.

3.The Mystical Method: According to Christian theology, the Mystical method is a contrast to the speculative method. While the speculative method considers only thought, the mystical considers only feeling. It's the question of the head in one and heart in another.

The Vedantic mysticism is not just feeling. It has various aspects. Mystical experience according to Hinduism is not just an emotional flicker or sensation. The whole personality is involved and the mystic undergoes complete transformation. To say the least, his ego is obliterated and he experiences supreme bliss. Hindu theology gives prominence to this method.

We shall now go to Hindu Theology proper.

(To be continued)

Footnotes :

1. *Rig Veda*, 1.14.3
2. *Rig Veda*, 10.121
3. *Rig Veda*, 1.164.4
4. *Rig Veda*, 10.190
5. *Shvetâshvatara Upanishad*, 1.1
6. Stanford Murrell, *An Introductory Study of Systematic Theology*, p.20
7. Lonergan, Bernard, *Method in Theology*, see Introduction
8. Lonergan, Bernard, *Method in Theology*, (Darton Longman and Todd, 1971) vol.12, p.9
9. *Manasaivedam âptavyam*, *Katha Upanishad*, 2.1.11
10. *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, 1.3
11. See Swami Satprakashananda, *Methods of Knowledge* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama), 1964
12. *Naishâ tarkena matir âpaneya*, *Katha Upanishad*, 1.2.9
13. *Îsha Upanishad*, 1
14. Ajo'pi san avyavâtma, bhûtânâm îshvaro'pi san. Prakritm svâm adhishtâya sambhavâmi âtma-mâyayâ. *Bhagavadgita*, 4.6
15. *Parasparam bhâvayantah shreyah param-avâpsyatha.*

## From A Carmelite Cloister

Letters From Saint Therese Of The Child Jesus

*(Written to her sister Celine between the years 1888 and 1894, and here given in part)*

**D**o not let your weakness make you unhappy. When, in the morning, we feel no courage or strength for the practise of virtue, it is really a grace; it is the time 'to lay the axe to the root of the tree' - relying upon Jesus alone. If we fall, an act of love will set all right . . . Love can do all things. The most impossible tasks seem to it easy and sweet. You know well that our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty as at the love with which we do them. What, then, have we to fear?

The other day I came across this striking passage: "To be resigned and to be united to the will of God are not the same; there is the same difference between them as that which exists between union and unity; in union there are still two, in unity there is but one." Yes, let us be one with God even in this life; and for this we should be more than resigned, we should embrace the Cross with joy.

Do not think we can find love without suffering, for our nature remains and must be taken into account; but it puts great treasures within our reach . . . We should like to suffer generously and nobly; we should like never to fall. What an illusion! What does it matter to me if I fall at every moment! In that way I realize my weakness and I gain thereby. My God, Thou seest how little I am good for, when Thou dost carry me in Thy arms; and if Thou leavest me alone, well, it is because it pleases Thee to see me lie on the ground. Then why should I be troubled?

If you are willing to bear in peace the trial of not being pleased with yourself, you will be offering the Divine Master a home in your heart. It is true that you will suffer, because you will be like a stranger to your own house; but do not be afraid—the poorer you are, the more Jesus will love you. I know that He is better pleased to see you stumbling in the night upon a stony road, than walking in the full light of day upon a path carpeted with flowers, because these flowers might hinder your advance.

It seems to me that God has no need of years to perfect his labour of love in a soul. One ray from His Heart can in an instant make His flower blossom forth, never to fade . . . We are His chosen lilies. He dwells as a King in our midst—He lets us share the honours of His Royalty—His Divine Blood bedews our petals—and His Thorns as they wound us spread abroad the perfume of our love.

“Make haste to come down, for this day I must abide in thy house.” Jesus bids us come down. Where, then, must we go? The Jews asked Him: “Master, where dwellest Thou?” And He answered: “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His Head.” If we are to be the dwelling-place of Jesus, we must come down even to this—we must be so poor that we have not where to lay our heads.

This grace of light has been given to me during my retreat. Our Lord desires that we should receive Him into our hearts, and no doubt they are empty of creatures. Alas! mine is not empty of self; that is why He bids me come down. And I shall come down even to the very ground, that Jesus may find within my heart a resting-place for His Divine Head, and may feel that there at least He is loved and understood.

You tell me that my letters do good to you. I am indeed glad, but I assure you that I am under no misapprehension: Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it. The greatest eloquence cannot call forth a single act of love without that grace which touches the heart.

Think of a beautiful peach with its delicate tint of rose, with its flavour so sweet that no human skill could invent such nectar. Tell me, Celine, is it for the peach's own sake that God created that colour so fair to the eye, that velvety covering so soft to the touch? Is it for itself that He made it so sweet? Nay, it is for us; the only thing that is all its own and is essential to its being, is the stone; it possesses nothing beyond.

Thus also it pleases Jesus to lavish His gifts on certain souls in order to draw yet others to Himself; in His Mercy He humbles them inwardly, and gently compels them to recognize their nothingness and His Almighty Power . . . Dear little sister, sweet echo of my soul, Therese is far from the heights of fervour at this moment; but I am in this state of spiritual dryness, unable to pray, or to practise virtue, I look for little opportunities, for the smallest trifles, to please my Jesus; a smile or a kind word, for instance, when I would wish to be silent, or to show that I am bored. If no such occasion offer, I try at least to say over and over again that I love Him. This is not hard, and it keeps alive the fire in my heart. Even should the fire of love seem dead, I would still throw my tiny straws on the ashes, and I am confident it would light up again.

Dearest sister, I hardly know what I write; I let my pen follow the dictates of my heart. You tell me that you feel your weakness, but that is a grace. It is our Lord who sows the seeds of distrust of self in your soul. Do not be afraid! If you do not fail to give Him pleasure in small things, He will be obliged to help you in great ones.

The Apostles laboured long without Him; they toiled a whole night and caught no fish. Their labours were not unacceptable to Him, but He wished to prove that He is the Giver of all things. So an act of humility was asked of the Apostles, and our loving Lord called to them: "Children, have you anything to eat?" St. Peter, avowing his helplessness, cried out: "Lord, we have laboured all the night, and have taken nothing." It is enough; the Heart of Jesus is touched . . . Had the Apostle caught some small fish, perhaps our Divine Master would not have worked a miracle; but he had caught nothing, and so, through the power and goodness of God, his nets were soon filled with great fishes—such is our Lord's way. He gives as God—with divine largesse—but he insists on humility of heart.

This is perhaps the last time that I need to have recourse to writing in order to talk to you, my dear little sister. God in His goodness has granted my dearest wish. Come, and we will suffer together . . . Then Jesus will take one of us, and the others will remain in exile yet a little longer. Now, listen well to what I am going to say : God will never, never separate us: and if I die before you, do not think that I shall be far away—never shall we have been more closely united. You must not be grieved at my childish prophecy. I am not ill. I have an iron constitution; but the Lord can break iron as if it were clay\* . . .

I am so glad that you do not feel any particular attraction at the thought of entering the Carmel. This is really a mark of our Lord's favour, and shows that He looks for a gift from your hands. He knows that it is so much sweeter to give than to receive. What happiness to suffer for Him who loves us even unto folly, and to pass for fools in the eyes of the world! We judge others by ourselves, and, as the world will not hearken to reason, it calls us unreasonable too . . .

We are neither idlers nor spendthrifts. Our Divine Master has taken our defence upon Himself. Remember the scene in the house of Lazarus: Martha was serving, while Mary had no thought of food, but only of how she could please her Beloved. And she broke her alabaster box, and poured out upon her Saviour's Head the precious spikenard, and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

The Apostles murmured against Magdalen. This still happens, for so do men murmur against us. Even some fervent Catholics who think our ways are exaggerated, and that—with Martha—we ought to wait upon Jesus, instead of pouring out on Him the odorous ointment of our lives. Yet what does it matter if these ointment-jars—our lives—be broken, since our Lord is consoled, and the world in spite of itself is forced to inhale the perfumes they give forth? It has much need of these perfumes to purify the unwholesome air it breathes.

For a while only, good-bye, dearest sister. Your barque is near to port. The breezes filling its sails are the zephyrs of Love—breezes that speed more swiftly than the lightning-flash. Good-bye! In a few days we shall be together within these Carmel walls.

\* She died three years later.

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Each time we suppress hatred, or a feeling of anger, it is so much good energy stored up in our favour; that piece of energy will be converted into the higher powers.

Swami Vivekananda

## On Being Human

E. Raphael Marozzi, M.A.

In the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna we find the statement that unless one has attained to love of God one has not yet become a human being. Though one has a human body he may not yet be at the human level of existence. We find a corresponding thought in his statement that as long as one's *prana* or life-energy moves only in the three lower *chakras* or psychic centres one lives an animal life, and only when the *prana* reaches the fourth centre, located in the heart area, does one begin to rise above animal characteristics and develop a desire for a nobler life and love of God. As long as the consciousness functions in the lower three centres—that is, one at the base of the spine, one in the area of the organ of generation, and one in the area of the navel—only the material world, from the gross to the subtle, is experienced, and even ideas relating to art, philosophy and religion are rooted in the material world. When the consciousness rises to the fourth psychic centre, corresponding to the area of the heart, the mind begins to move away from the material world, a hankering for the ideal develops, there is a de-emphasis on the body and attenuation of ego.

This is as much as to say that before we can become spiritual we must become human. And we are not yet human as long as we are motivated by animal propensities. In comparing the animal nature to the human, speaking in terms of *gunas*, it is seen that animals are predominated by the *guna* of *tamas*. *Tamas* is that *Guna* the characteristics of which are indolence, dullness, darkness and ignorance, and manifests itself as hate, destruction, killing and delusion. Therefore characteristics of violence, greed, lust, and selfishness are the manifestation of *tamas* and properly belong to the animal kingdom. The man who has *tamas* predominant is classed as *asurika* or demon-like, and according

to the words of Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita* is destined for a set-back in the cycle of evolution. It is the qualities of *tamas* that take the reincarnating soul downward because they are qualities belonging to the animal and not to higher man.

'Triple is this gate to hell, destructive of the self—lust, anger, and greed.' Hence Sri Ramakrishna's constant warning to his disciples against *kamini-kanchana*, lust and greed, and his setting these forth as the great essentials to be renounced in order to lead a spiritual life. Having given up the qualities which belong to the animal and having become properly human, then love for God and the spiritual life in general will come about as a natural development. To try to be spiritual before having properly attained the human level is an act of hypocrisy and only leads to a confusion of values.

The ethical commandments of Jesus Christ on non-violence, non-resistance of evil, non-greed, non-lust, control of speech, non-hating, non-coveting, of not serving Mammon, loving enemies, returning good for evil, and being perfect are stating in different terms that man should conquer his animal propensities, rid himself of *tamas*, and be worthy of his spiritual heritage as a fully developed human being. He does not say in so many words, "Be spiritual," but rather tells us to get rid of obstructions by following a certain ethical code. Love of God and spiritual values will follow as a natural consequence.

The Buddhist Scriptures enjoin the Eightfold Noble Path as ethical rules of conduct to achieve the same end, preparedness for spiritual living by overcoming past tendencies and habits. By right views, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration the Buddhist devotee is taught to overcome ignorance (*tamas*) and its consequences called variously the Wheel of Existence, the Twelve Sources, and the Twelve Links which cause misery and suffering and prevent the unfolding of spiritual consciousness.

By being human, then, is here meant the state of unfoldment in which the mind is prepared to receive spiritual light and which is no longer disturbed or motivated by any quality belonging to *tamas* or the sub-human category. This is spoken of in the *yama* or first step of the eight limbs of Yoga by Patanjali in his Yoga-Sutras. Before one can practice concentration and meditation leading to the state of Yoga it is necessary to acquire the moral virtues included under *yama*. These are: non-violence, non-stealing, truthfulness, continence, and non-coveting. These are to be practised so that there is no violation of them in thought, word, or action; whether committed, caused, or approved; whether slight, middling, or great; with whatever motive, be it avarice, anger, or ignorance. Violation in any of these degrees causes obstruction to spiritual life and drags the mind away from the path of Yoga. The attainment of these virtues is considered essential as a preparatory condition to spiritual life. Divine consciousness or love for God cannot enter the mind which is vitiated by gross animal passions, violence, greed, falsehood, and avarice with all their attendant emotions of selfishness, envy, jealousy, hate, attachment, aversion, anger, fear, desire, and so on, which lead man to commit such acts " before high heaven as make the angels weep," as we see in our daily papers.

Sri Ramakrishna has said: "When man rids himself entirely of his love for lust and greed then he clearly perceives that the body is one thing and the Self another." It is, in other words, the presence of the lower emotions in our minds that finds our true Self to the body and the material world, which results in egoism, attachment, aversion, and fear of death which are obstructions to spiritual knowledge.

Vedantic literature tells us of the fourfold qualifications of the aspirant to spiritual life (given by Sadananda in his *Vedantasara* and by Sankara in his *Viveka-chudamani*): (a) discrimination between the Real and the unreal; (b) renunciation of objects of

enjoyment, since they are transitory and unreal; (c) control of mind, control of senses, self-withdrawal, fortitude, concentration, and faith; (d) and desire for liberation. Having attained these qualities man is ready for the spiritual life. Until then he must work at becoming properly human.

Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita* enumerates those qualities in man which fit him for spiritual aspiration: fearlessness, purity, steadfastness, control of senses, study of the Scriptures, austerity, uprightness, non-injury, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, tranquillity, absence of calumny, compassion for all beings, non-covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness, boldness, forgiveness, fortitude, absence of hatred, and absence of pride. These qualities arise from the *sattva guna* which is stainless, luminous, free from evil, and makes one fit for the divine state.

The qualities of the *asurika* or less-than-human state are also enumerated: falsehood, impurity, hypocrisy, pride, arrogance, delusion, lustfulness, greed, anger, maliciousness, cruelty, and ignorance. These qualities arise from the *guna* of *tamas* which causes retrogression into lower forms of life. Those who insist on manifesting such animal qualities will be given the proper bodies to express them adequately. Sankaracharya, great philosopher-saint of India, states in his *Viveka-chudamani* that there are three things which are very rare and due to the grace of God, namely: a human birth, the longing for liberation, and the protecting care of a perfected sage. The man who having obtained these does not exert himself for liberation commits suicide as it were, for he kills himself by clinging to things unreal. He further states, "*What greater fool is there than the man who having obtained a rare human body neglects to achieve the real end of this life — that is, liberation?*"

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**Leaves from an Ashrama 50 :**  
**The Sadhu as Vernal Influence**  
Swami Vidyatmananda

**G**irish Chandra Ghosh at first would not believe that any man—any other human being—could be completely disinterested, could be concerned only with the good of others. There must be some catch in Ramakrishna's love. But in time, as we know, Girish became convinced of the Master's impersonal concern, and grew to be a disinterested well-wisher himself, and as such beloved by many.

That this is a right and proper scheme of development is supported by such an authority as Swami Vivekananda's 'The Vedanta in all its Phases'. Swamiji compares the sage, or *sadhu*, to springtime 'which brings the leaves and blossoms to various plants, but does not ask anything from the plant, for its (springtime's) very nature is to do good, and there it is.' Such, concludes Vivekananda, is the role of the sadhu. Ramakrishna was a sadhu, and such Girish became. And to become a sadhu is our objective as devotee.

Comparing the sadhu to springtime is apt. Springtime is a mysterious force, nameless, unknown, unremarked, whose presence brings forth abundance where all was dormant before. Is it any wonder that every civilization should designate the sweetest of its gods or goddesses as the deity of springtime and fruition? Swamiji mentioned the sadhu in the same breath with the season of verdant flowering. We think of the sadhu as being a wandering holy man in India. But if you look up the real meaning of the word in the Sanskrit dictionary you will find how exact

Swamiji was, for the word sadhu means: well-disposed, well-wishing, bounteous.

Thus in its truest sense, the sadhu is someone who does something for nothing—unique in a world where relations are at base self-seeking, relations which when tested reveal a taint of self-interest. But with the sadhu, not so. He projects an influence that is available to all and makes them bloom—plants, animals, men, women, children. His delight is in the good of the other.

Some time ago letters written by Swami Turiyananda were often reproduced in issues of the *Prabuddha Bharata*. Reading these letters, we see this sage as a vernal influence. Many end with the closing phrase: 'Your well-wisher'. Yes, that's what the sadhu is—one whose overriding impulse is to see that those he contacts should develop, flower, bring forth fruit. We are made to flourish by these well-wishers, guaranteeing that new springtimes may appear perennially to bless the earth.

As one of the greatest of such beings said long ago: 'Freely ye have received; freely give.'

Stand Up and Be Strong Stand up, be bold, be strong.  
Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny. All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves.  
Therefore, make your own future.

The sign of vigor, the sign of life, the sign of hope, the sign of health, the sign of everything that is good, is strength. As long as the body lives, there must be strength in the body, strength in the mind, in the hand.

Swami Vivekananda

## Programme for July - August 2015

Sunday discourses begin

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### No Talks

There will be no talks during the months  
of July and August.

Strength is the medicine for the world's disease. Strength is the medicine which the poor must have when tyrannized over by the rich. Strength is the medicine that the ignorant must have when oppressed by the learned; and it is the medicine that sinners must have when tyrannized over by other sinners; and nothing gives such strength as this idea of monism. Nothing makes us so moral as this idea of monism. Nothing makes us work so well at our best and highest as when all the responsibility is thrown upon ourselves.

If the whole responsibility is thrown upon our own shoulders, we shall be at our highest and best; and when we have nobody to grope toward, no devil to lay our blame upon, no Personal God to carry our burdens, when we are alone responsible, then we shall rise to our highest and best.

Swami Vivekananda

What more remains to be said? I am no other than Brahman. Brahman is this universe and all things that exist within it. The Scriptures declare that there is nothing else but Brahman. Those who are illumined by the knowledge 'I am Brahman' renounce their attachment to this apparent universe. It is certain indeed that these illumined ones live in constant union with Brahman, the pure blissful consciousness, within their own souls.

Renounce all earthly hopes and physical pleasures by ceasing to identify yourself with the gross body. Next, you must cease also to identify yourself with the subtle body. Realize that you are Brahman, whose form is bliss eternal, whose glories the Scriptures declare. Thus you may live in union with Brahman.

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There is no help for you outside of yourself; you are the creator of the universe. Like the silkworm you have built a cocoon around yourself. Who will save you? Burst your own cocoon and come out as the beautiful butterfly, as the free soul. Then alone you will see Truth.

Struggle, struggle, was my motto for the last ten years. Struggle, still say I. When it was all dark, I used to say, struggle; when light is breaking in, I still say, struggle.

Swami Vivekananda



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