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Songs of Kabir Translated by Rabindranath Tagore

I.

Between the poles of the conscious and the unconscious,

there has the mind made a swing;

Thereon hang all beings and all worlds, and that swing

never ceases its sway.

Millions of beings are there; the sun and the moon in their

courses are there;

Millions of ages pass, and the swing goes on.

All swing! The sky and the earth and the air and the water;

and the Lord Himself taking form;

And the sight of this has made Kabir a servant.

II.

O servant, where dost thou seek Me?

Lo! I am beside thee.

I am neither in temple nor in mosque;

I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash;

Neither am I in rites and ceremonies,

nor in Yoga and renunciation.

If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once see Me;

Thou shalt meet Me in a moment of time.

Kabir says, "O Sadhu! God is the breath of all breath."

Saint Bulla Shah

By Swami Jagadiswarananda

Sufism is the essence of Islam. It has the same philosophical foundation as the Vedanta. Sri Ramakrishna was initiated into Sufistic sadhanas by the great Sufi, Gobinda Rai, and was blessed with the same spiritual realisations as those of Vedanta. Sufism has produced a multitude of saints in many provinces, particularly in the Punjab and Sind. Bulla Shah is one of the greatest Sufi saints ever born. The name of Bulla Shah is widely known in the Punjab. There the illiterate Jat peasant with a turban on the head and a stick in hand is walking the roads or working in the fields singing melodiously the kafis (verses) of Bulla Shah. Even the Hindu monks of Uttara Khanda memorise and recite the

teachings of this Muslim saint as they are pregnant with the truths of Advaita Vedanta.

Bulla Shah was one of the disciples of the celebrated Sufi saint, Miyamir, who lived about three miles to the east of Lahore. Even to this day, this village is called Miyamirki Chhauni. (Chhauni means cantonment, and there is a government cantonment in the village.) As a house-holder Bulla had plenty of wealth, honour and other assets for worldly enjoyment. He was the Badshah (Nawab, Raja, King) of the town of Bulkh near Bukhara. But soon earthly pleasures lost all charm for him. He found them empty. They brought in their wake sorrow and pain. To him came the call of renunciation; he hungered for the contact and company of holy men. He heard from his ministers the sacred name of the saint Miyamir whose fame had then spread far and wide. He was anxious to meet the saint and have his blessings, so Bulla installed his young son on the throne and in the company of a faithful minister and about a hundred attendants left for Lahore. After a tedious journey for two long months he reached the cottage of Miyamir in a jungle in the village already mentioned. Through the fakir at the cottage door a request was sent to the saint praying for his darsan. The saint sent word that he could not grant an interview then. The Badshah was mortified at this but became more determined to meet the saint. He said to his retinue: 'Return home. I shall not enter into worldly life again. I am bent upon having eternal union with my heavenly Beloved. I shall surrender myself at the feet of this saint and follow the path of illumination according to his guidance.' So saying the Badshah distributed his wealth and all he had brought from his kingdom keeping only a blanket to warm his body in the ensuing severe winter. The Badshah of the palace became a beggar of the street; the prince turned a pauper. The minister and the attendants reluctantly wended their steps towards Bulkh. Now Bulla in the guise of a homeless and penniless fakir approached Miyamir for his darsan but the latter still refused saying: 'Badshah, time is not yet opportune for our meeting. Go to another fakir who lives twenty miles away from here on the banks of the Ravi. Practise yogic penance under his gracious guidance for twelve years and then come to me.' Bulla obeyed the words of the master Miyamir willingly and found out the cottage of the fakir on the river banks. The fakir seeing Bulla from a distance recognised him and said: 'You are Badshah of Bulkh. Is it not?' Bulla said most respectfully, 'Yes; but how could you know and recognise me?' The fakir replied: 'The other day Miyamir Sahib told me that you would come to me on such a date and practice yoga here.' Delighted at the true prediction of Miyamir, Bulla prayed to the fakir with folded hands thus: 'Yes, I have been sent by Miyamir. Kindly accept me as your disciple and initiate

me into yogic practices.' Bulla practised yoga for twelve long years under the direction of the fakir, living on fruits, roots and milk. His body became emaciated; his physical grace disappeared and his hair and nails grew long and were uncared for. When twelve years were completed, the fakir asked Bulla to go to Miyamir for final initiation. When Bulla came to the cottage of Miyamir and asked for the interview, the doors were flung open and Miyamir smilingly received his disciple and talked to him kindly and cordially. Though Bulla's dress was dirty and his body unclean, his face shone with serenity and sanctity. The guru was then very glad to have his worthy disciple by his side, as he could hand over his spiritual wealth to him for the good of humanity. Spirituality is not airy nothing; it is something tangible and can be given by the illumined guru to the competent disciple like a flower. After Bulla's initiation and ordination were over his guru said: 'You are now reborn. Hence you are renamed as Bulla Shah. Forget all your former name, position and family connections.' Bulla was blessed with the realisations of his illumined guru. He became a saint in possession of the highest spiritual wisdom. His countenance now beamed with the lustre of divine light. His very presence now radiated peace and purity. His personality was grave but gracious to all. When the flowers bloom, the bees gather round for greed of nectar instinctively. The blossomed flower of Bulla's realisations attracted devout men and women of different religions from far and near. His teachings, full of fervour and flavour of Atmajnana spread throughout the province of the Punjab and became very popular. Since then for about three hundred years Bulla Shah's teachings have captured the imagination of the Punjabis and inspired them in their quest for truth. Bulla Shah is regarded today as one of the greatest saints of the Punjab by both Hindus and Muslims alike.

One day the Maulavis, the fanatic Muslim divines, approached Bulla Shah and asked 'Who are you?' The Sufi saint replied spontaneously in conformity with his highest realisation of 'Aual Haq': 'I am Khoda the great God (Reality).' The religious scruples of the Maulavis who were ignorant of spiritual experiences received a rude shock by the reply of this wandering saint. They arrested him and took him to the Muslim Nawab for trial and punishment for this unpardonable offence. The Nawab asked Bulla Shah the same question, 'Who are you?' The Sufi saint said, 'I am a servant of God (Allah).' The Nawab finding no fault in the reply of the saint set him free. Bulla as before wandered from place to place enjoying the illusory fun of this world. But the anger of the Maulavis was not abated. On another occasion they put him the same question, 'Who are you?' and Bulla said in reply as before 'I am none other than Khoda.' He was again caught for

his offensive reply and taken to the Nawab. The Nawab asked him again 'Who are you?' The saint Bulla replied, 'I am a servant of God.' The Nawab was a bit surprised at this reply; for the allegation against him was just the opposite. So he said to the saint thus: 'How is it that on the roads you say that you are Khoda Himself but before me you say that you are a devotee of Allah. Is it not falsehood? But a saint like you should not tell lies.' Bulla Shah replied: 'Nawab, I do not tell lies. When I am as free as air on the streets, scriptural injunctions have no hold on me as they cannot bind Khoda. So on the roads I look upon myself as Khoda, as experiencing the highest ecstasy. But when I appear before you, like a criminal caught and condemned, I have no longer any freedom. I am no better than a servant. Hence before you I call myself a servant of Khoda.' This bold reply of Bulla Shah touched the heart of the Nawab who then with a respectful heart bowed to the saint and released him.

Bulla now began to proclaim himself as the Badshah. The Maulavis were again enraged and took Bulla to the Nawab with this complaint that this fakir used to call himself Khoda before but now he calls himself a Badshah (emperor). So he must be penalised. The Nawab interrogated Bulla Shah, 'If you are an emperor, where are your treasures?' Bulla said, 'The Badshah who has profuse expenditure must amass wealth. But I have no expense at all. The merciful Lord provides me with all my requirements even without my asking for them. Why should I then store wealth?' The Nawab again asked, 'If you are a Badshah where is your army?' Bulla Shah said, 'I have no enemy to fight with. Why should I then keep an army for nothing. Those who have enemies should maintain an army. My empire of the Self is absolutely free from evils and enemies. He who rules as the all-powerful Emperor, the knower of Atman (self) and realises the cosmic phenomena as illusion is the real Badshah. Hence my emperorship is everlasting. It is never lost. But the emperorship of this earth is temporary and may go to-morrow.' The Nawab understood that this saint was above the dual throng of mundane existence. Hence he could not be judged by earthly laws. Rules and regulations of human society could no longer bind him. Therefore he was set free with this public declaration: 'None should obstruct the aimless wandering of this man of god from today. He who dares do so will be prosecuted and punished.'

The kafis (verses) composed by Bulla Shah are in the Punjabi language. The most popular of his verses is "Ciharfi" or thirty-lettered garland of verses. There are thirty letters in the Punjabi alphabet. The thirty verses each begin with a letter in order. We give below

the English rendering of a selected number of verses from the Garland.

1. My dear, first know thyself. First realise the true nature of your Self. As you are ignorant of your own Self you are drowned in the ocean of sorrows. Nothing short of the knowledge of Self can make you happy. None can ever be happy by a million other means. Having learnt the mystery from all clever scholars of the earth, Bulla Shah addresses every man thus: `My dear, the four Vedas and the Koran all declare that you are the embodiment of absolute bliss and knowledge.'

2. Closing your eyes and nose (i.e. all sense-organs) be seated in solitude and meditate on Absolute Reality. Give up desires as they make the mind outward. Realise the emptiness and illusoriness of this world. Conquest of mind is possible only by desirelessness. The intellect is the knower of the external world. But Atman illumines the intellect. That Atman is the immortal part of your being. Bulla Shah says: `My friend, realise this mystery and pass time in peace.'

3. In your all-pervasive being there is not even the least perforation through which a blade of grass can enter. As one in sleep sees various dreams, so we see this cosmos on account of nescience though it has never been created. Bulla Shah says: `In the world within or without there is nothing other than your own being. Your self-imposed ignorance has kept you ignorant of this great secret.'

4. Meditate in your heart of hearts and experience that your being is the substratum of the cosmic illusion. It is through your being which is consciousness itself that others can know objects; otherwise no knowledge of objects is possible. As a boy is afraid of his own shadow, so you are bound by the phenomena which are nothing but the creations of your own desires. Bulla Shah says: `Who binds the spider? It weaves a net and gets entangled in it. We create our own bondage and cry for release!'

5. It is a wonder that life is a pleasure to you and death a terror. But in fact life and death belong to the gross body, the mortal part of your being. But the immortal part of your being does not undergo any change by life or death. Your being is the life of all creatures. As the sky pervades all objects but remains unattached, so you, being the life of the universe, never depart from your nature in the least. There is nothing second or equal to or greater than you. You have neither origin nor end. You are Bliss absolute. Bulla Shah says: `Mortality cannot touch your being. You are beyond time and space.'

Your being is ever immortal.'

6. Your desires are harassing you incessantly and have made you oblivious of your real being. You were the owner of your Atman empire but your desires have deprived you of your empire and made you a beggar. Your treasury is now empty. Your benign being is enchained by the slender thread of desires. Bulla Shah says: 'See the fun! The ocean has been compressed in a small earthenpot! The sun of awareness of your eternal being will reveal its dazzling lustre as soon as the cloud of desires subsides.'

7. You are ignorant of the affairs of your own home. Being connected with desires, you have been transformed into them. Shake off the desires like dirt and dust and be desireless. When desirelessness is established, the seer within is revealed in its effulgent glory. A grassy field cannot conceal a lion long. Bulla Shah says: 'Sometimes it happens that having had the missing necklace on the neck, we search for it madly in the nooks and corners of our house, though it is never lost. You have simply forgotten your real being and consequently have been dropped in a well of miseries out of ignorance.'

8. Your luminous being is the revealer of the visible phenomena. Your being resides in all eyes as the seer. You are the witness of the three-fold states of waking, dream and sleep. But you are beyond these states. Bulla Shah says: 'Your being is ever-luminous and does not undergo any change in any place or time.'

9. Do not harbour any doubt regarding your Self. There is nothing other than your Self in the universe. Know this for certain and be free. Accept a knower of reality as your guide and in no time you will be blessed with illumination. Walk steadily on the spiritual path in strict accordance with the teachings of the guru. Your eye of wisdom is covered with a cataract. The eye will be cleansed by the remedy of the guru's teachings. Bulla Shah says: 'Ascertain your own being as ever free, pure and awakened and meditate on it.'

10. Cherish not even the slightest doubt that you are the owner of the universe. As a lion forgetting its own prowess keeps company with goats and like them eats grass and bleats, so you have forgotten your real nature and are weeping like a helpless child. But as soon as the self-forgetful lion remembers its nature, it jumps out, roars and devours the goats. Bulla Shah says: 'If you want to end your sufferings remember your infinite being.'

11. Alas! how ignorance has created this beautiful mirage of name and form. Dear

friend, be the unattached witness of this cosmic sport and enjoy it. As the bubbles with variegated colours rise from water and are dissolved in it in a few moments, so the sky, earth, water, air and other elements are projected. They are momentary and will disappear soon. Bulla Shah says: `Clearly discriminate - to whom do the sorrows and happiness of life belong - to mind or to Atman?'

12. As the mountain is not moved by storm, so is your Self not moved by the stream of transmigration. Boys ignorantly imagine the moon to be moving along with the moving clouds. Your Self appears to be active being identified with the active sense organs, body, mind, vital force, etc. Your being is the unmoved and unchanged witness of all movements. Bulla Shah says: `By knowing your true Self, attain undiluted bliss. Know that this is the highest teaching illumined teachers will give to the worthy disciple.'

13. Liberation in life is attained by the grace of the Guru. All my actions are over. I am above joy and grief. All my ignorance has been dispelled. I have realised the supreme Self. Fear of death and the bond of the opposite pairs have left me. I have been saved and liberated by holy association. My being has transcended all conditions and limitations. I exist as joy in all creatures. Bulla Shah says: `By means of discrimination I have become what I was originally.'

14. Dearest one, I have sold my little self and in exchange have got back my great Self. I have dropped all worldly knowledge and learning. I have burned to ashes all ideas of duality in the blazing fire of the knowledge of non-duality or oneness. No duty awaits me any more. I am the whole, the Infinite, the Absolute. I have got eternal rest and eternal leave. Bulla Shah says: `I have put on the garland of everlasting peace and blessedness and am blessing myself.'

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Ramakrishna's Prayer

By Thomas Dorsett

(The author is a paediatrician and poet from the U.S.A.)

In the summer of 2002, I read a prayer written by Ramakrishna - a prayer so profound that it sent a shock through body and spirit as I read it. It has remained part of my consciousness ever since.

I read the prayer during a bicycle trip through Provence. The day before, my wife, Nirmala, and my friend, Cartan, and I had been huffing and puffing uphill until we reached the mediaeval town of Gordes, splendidly situated on top of a mountain of solid rock, overlooking a valley checkered with orchards, vineyards and clumps of trees. We were very tired. The following morning my wife opted to stay by the pool and read. My friend chose a rather long bicycle trip that entailed an arduous climb; having had enough of negotiating hills for a while, I opted for a shorter, flatter ride. We agreed to meet five hours later in front of the church in the town of Lumiere.

After a few hours I arrived at the centre of the town. With much time to kill, I decided to visit the church. The entire wall of the back of this rococo church was filled with hundreds of little votive paintings. My guidebook informed me that almost a century ago, a priest encouraged the townspeople to paint on wooden placards, each about eighteen inches long and ten inches wide, a depiction of their most fervent prayer, to be granted, it was hoped, by God. It was affecting to view these amateur paintings of people rising from sickbeds, crutches being thrown away, etc. Most of the placards were too high up on the wall to see clearly. Many of those I was able to see were incomprehensible to me. The message of one was clear, it depicted a man being pulled by a devil on one side and by an angel on the other. In the corner was a boy - the man's son, perhaps - praying. Here was a classic, if primitive, portayal of the struggle of Good and Evil for a man's soul. I stared at the boy, convinced that he was praying that God give his poor father the strength to escape his demon; as a boy, I prayed the same prayer myself. Was his prayer answered? Were any of the prayers answered? It seemed not to matter anymore; all the paintings were faded, their forgotten creators in the local cemetery, the once brightly coloured images of their passions ignored except for the occasional tourist.

Thoughts of mortality - theirs and my own - put me in a pensive mood. My inner gloom was only partly dispersed when I left the dark church and was again bathed in the brilliant sunlight of Provence. The church was located on the western side of a courtyard, with church buildings on the northern and eastern sides; the southern side was open to the main street of the village. Finding a shady spot on the steps of the building opposite the church, I sat down to read. The little book which I had brought along fitted neatly into my shirt pocket. It was one of those marvellous editions of the Thus Spake series, published by the Ramakrishna Math in Madras, India. The one I had was entitled *Thus Spake Ramakrishna*.

I read through the volume's many sections. Impressed by its wisdom and devotion, I lost all sense of time. As clouds passed overhead, my spirit was lulled by Ramakrishna's words into a state as pleasant as my surroundings. Then, lightning: I was woken up by a passage that struck the very centre of my being. Here was the very secret of life!

The passage came from the section entitled "Prayers" and reads as follows: "Mother, here is Thy virtue, and here is Thy vice. Take them both and grant me only pure love for Thee. Here is Thy purity, here is Thy impurity. Take them both, Mother, and grant me only pure love of Thee. Here is Thy *dharma*, righteousness, and here is Thy *adharma*, unrighteousness. Take them both and grant me only pure love of Thee."

Where can one find truth more profoundly stated? Here *bhakti*, devotion, and *jnana*, wisdom, are beautifully united; it is an invitation to a world obsessed with good and evil to go beyond good and evil and find peace and love.

Ramakrishna's prayer is the essence of Vedanta, the most profound tradition of the world, equalled, perhaps, but not surpassed, by the great Sufi masters. Everything belongs to God, *everything is God*. The good that I do comes from God - most religious traditions accept that - but the evil I do? What was behind the angel in the placard, the forces of Good, and what was behind the devil in the placard, are they both from God? Although the townspeople of Lumiere would be shocked at his answer, Ramakrishna is clear on this issue. "This is Thy vice. etc." Good and Evil are ultimately one. How can this be true? And if it is true, won't this lead to the annihilation of morality? We shall answer these questions in turn.

First, let us contrast the Vedantic view with that of orthodox Christianity. There is a

passage in Mark which describes an encounter that most scholars think actually took place. Someone, kneeling before Jesus, addresses Him as "Good Master." To this Jesus replies, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God" (Mark, 10,18). If this had been an interpolation of the early Church, which emphasized the unity of Jesus and God, Jesus - Good - would not have objected. But the historical Jesus, knowing that he was nothing as an individual, realized that all good things came from God. Most traditions, Vedanta included, would agree. But Vedanta goes further: what if an enemy addressed Jesus as "Bad Master?" We could not imagine Jesus replying, "Why callest thou me bad? There is none bad but one, that is, God." Although even Vedanta would hesitate to make the latter statement, for reasons we will explain later, both replies, from an absolute perspective, are true. Wouldn't this perspective lead to moral relativism and the breakdown of society.

Before discussing why this isn't so, let us consider the example of sages who actually went beyond good and evil. In a recent issue of Vedanta (March-April 2003) O.P. Sharma describes an incident during which Ramakrishna evinced disappointment with his chief disciple, Vivekananda. The latter was at first only interested in the bliss of his own liberation. Ramakrishna criticized him with the following words: "I had hoped that like a big banyan tree, you would one day provide much-needed shade to weary wayfarers and here you are just thinking of your own liberation!" (O.P.Sharma, The Relevance of the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna Today, Vedanta, March-April 2003, p. 80.) Having gone beyond good and evil obviously did not stop Ramakrishna from partiality for the greater Good! This example from the greatest sage of the nineteenth century was followed by the example of the greatest sage of the twentieth century: Ramana Maharshi frequently encouraged his followers to be involved in good works. So let us be clear on this: those beyond good and evil still choose the Good. This is the answer to our second question: if we are to accept the examples of great sages, the perspective that on the absolute level good and evil are one does not lead to the annihilation of morality. Now let's return to the first: how can this perspective be valid?

We will attempt to explain this conundrum by discussing two concepts, freedom and *lila*, play. First, freedom, without which we can neither choose good nor evil. If, in a flash of cosmic consciousness, our insight reveals that our bondage is illusory, we feel a great relief, as if we were Atlas putting down the burden of the world. But this relief - except in the case of a great sage - is temporary. Since we remain certain that we exist on the

relative plane, we again feel the pain of our chains. Does free will really exist? Much great - and mostly useless - philosophy has been written on the subject; I am in no position to add to it. Yet from an absolute, that is, from an Advaita Vedanta point of view, the answer is clear: God is the sole doer, human free will does not exist. Does this mean we shouldn't make plans for tomorrow? Of course not. Why?

On the relative plane, freedom is very apparently real. And although the more spiritual of us have moments that transcend relativity, we must never forget that we live most of our lives on the relative plane. Each generation produces only a handful of sages - perhaps only one - who leave duality permanently during life. Free will is as real as we are, and we take ourselves very seriously indeed. To the degree that we identify with our phenomenal selves, freedom is to be taken seriously, as are, therefore, good and evil to be taken seriously.

It is an apparent paradox that freedom and determination seem both to be true. Our insight transcends duality and gives us a sense of an unchangeable centre; however, since we believe that insight occurs to us as individuals, we look at the centre of the circle from the periphery where good and evil seem so real that we do not doubt their existence - we would have to doubt ours first! Therefore, we believe that both nonduality and duality form one and the same circle and exist at the same time. This is an illusion, but one so powerful that we accept it readily.

When all illusions are cast aside, as is the case of Ramakrishna, one realizes that only God is the doer. Another apparent paradox: wisdom, which at the highest level realizes that free will is illusory, does not lead to indifference, since at the highest level, bhakti and jnana are one and the same. *Bhakti* has no choice: it must issue forth in good works. As Swami Swahananda pointed out in the March-April 2003 issue of Vedanta, on page 66: "No religion will say that bad things are good, and that God makes you do them, but the saints give their testimony that from the person who takes the attitude that everything is done by God, gradually all the dross falls away." Religion must address the relative plane, since that is where we mostly live, and therefore cannot in general equate the bad with the good; yet the highest form of religion must also address the absolute plane, to which we can aspire and which some have realized; at this level, religion insists that all things are done by God. When all the dross falls away, one is left with the perfect union of *bhakti* and *jnana*.

Ramakrishna's prayer is a perfect balance of these two forms of *yoga*. The first parts of each of the three sections, which consist of two sentences each, unite opposites (virtue/vice; purity/impurity/ *dharma/adharma*). (One is reminded here of the mediaeval German mystic, Nicholas von Cusa, who wrote of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the unity of opposites; it is inspiring to know that mystics have been saying the same thing the world over for thousands of years.) This is *jnana*, wisdom. But each of these sentences is followed by one of pure *bhakti*: e.g. "Take them both and grant me only pure love of Thee." This love is reciprocal. Ramakrishna, having shed all ignorance and thus become one with God, is a manifestation of God's wisdom and God's love. This is why, although having gone beyond good and evil, he nevertheless exhorts Vivekananda to give up selfishness and to dedicate himself to the awakening of all.

Yet if we are all ultimately manifestations of God, why does He allow evil in the world? This is of course a profound mystery and can only be partially explained by words. The answer is to be found in deep meditation, beyond all words. But an indication of that answer can be given in prose. The answer is indicated by the concept of *lila*. The universe as consisting of apparent separate entities is a manifestation of God's play or *lila*. God forgets Himself; the one seems to have become two. Without God's forgetting Himself, there would be only the state of bliss, *satchitananda* - there would be no dynamism; the ups and downs, joys and sorrows of individual existence would not come into play. That God does forget Himself - sometimes very thoroughly indeed - is proof that He sees beauty in the great illusion of individual existence. Without sleep there is no awakening: just as our identification with ourselves brings enormous suffering, our eventual realization that God alone is real brings great joy. We return to our native state, bliss, and, perhaps when all return to this state, the great cycle begins again. With ecstasy the final realization occurs: everything was and is really God all the time: just as *bhakti* and *jnana* are one, God and the world - or, as a Buddhist would say, *nirvana* and *samsara*, are one and the same. It is a joy to know that God sometimes remembers Himself completely in this life. One thinks of Ramakrishna. Conversely, it is a horror to know that God sometimes forgets Himself completely in this life. One thinks of Hitler.

When God awakes, wisdom becomes manifest, e.g., Ramakrishna; conversely, when God is asleep, ignorance and evil appear, e.g. Hitler. In the rest of us, between these two extremes, God is alternately asleep and awake. In the great activity of *lila*, we can

glean the purpose of life. To the degree that God is asleep, one identifies with one's ego and is without compassion. In an infant this is natural; in an adult it is the source of most of the world's suffering. We can see a progression of the awakening Self: first the identification with one's ego, subsequently one adds the identification with one's family, with one's neighbours, with one's nation, etc., until one identifies at last with the whole universe, at which state God is fully awake. One can view this progression from the sensibility of an infant to that of a sage. Most of us get stuck on one level or the other or keep changing levels. Joy and harmony increase as we progress; it is disastrous, however, when an adult remains stuck on the infant level - identification with one's ego only - and attains power over others. As in the case of Hitler, one would then not stop even from genocide to accomplish one's selfish, twisted ends.

That God forgets Himself so completely as to somehow become radical evil is a great mystery. The answer is not readily accessible to us since we largely identify with ourselves and God is thus mostly far away from our understanding. But to great sages - and in flashes of insight during deep meditation - it is no longer a mystery. Yet even sages cannot put this mystery into words; they convey the answer, as Dakshinamurthi did, through eloquent silence. This silence is a perfect unity of wisdom and compassion. It is a state of great joy.

After reading Ramakrishna's prayer and meditating over it, I felt this joy. Feeling very good indeed, I left the church courtyard to meet my friend. As I walked up the main street of Lumi 7 re, my friend Cartan soon pedalled into view. We went to an inn located opposite the church and had lunch. While we ate, however far our conversations strayed, my spirit remained anchored in Ramakrishna's words. At one point Cartan asked me why I seemed so happy? I smiled. The food might not have been good; the service might not have been good; clouds gathered - no matter - Ramakrishna's Sun was shining; inside, the weather was perfect.

Nature's Evolutionary Impulse

By Sampooran Singh

The cosmic drama that is unfolding in the chemical laboratories, and through the astro-bio-physical researches in the field and observatory, incites renewed curiosity in the dynamics of human mind and in man, who is a rational practitioner of life and tentative interpreter of his external world, the "without", and his internal world, the "within". Cosmology leads us to times of the order of 10^{14} years, the "age of the universe".

Teilhard de Chardin divided evolution into four stages - geosphere (inorganic or physical evolution) biosphere (biological evolution), noosphere (psychosocial evolution) and christosphere (spiritual evolution). The spiritual transformation is the flight of the alone (conditioned conscious energy) to the Alone (unconditioned conscious energy). A spiritual state is an awareness of the relationship between the Infinite and the finite, between the Timeless and time.

The human mind, engaged in its own psychosocial evolution, makes a quantum jump and perceives the unconditioned vibrating (active) conscious energy - the highest frequency, or the highest quantum energy potential of vibrating conscious energy. This is called the Atman, or the individualised conscious energy. The unconditioned non-vibrating (passive) conscious energy is called Brahman, or universal conscious energy, or the one Self of all.

This article explores the nature of consciousness and life - the truth behind the fact - at different epochs of Nature's evolutionary impulse. It posits that each event or happening in the cosmic drama is a play of the Unmanifest towards the manifest. Nature's evolutionary impulse is invariably governed by a flow of spiritual energy from the Unmanifest to the manifest, and some typical examples are discussed, as well as the immutable laws of nature which are eternal. This understanding, and living in its light, bestows harmony, order, freedom, non-violence, peace and bliss; the consummation of human life. It leads to the survival and excellence of man.

Inorganic or Physical Evolution

a) *A Critique on Atomic Structure*: In 1913, Niels Bohr showed that there exists a discrete sequence of electron orbits. When an atom is excited, the electron jumps from

one orbit to another. At this very instant, the atom emits or absorbs a photon, the frequency of which corresponds to the difference between the energies characterising the electron's motion in each of the two orbits. When an atom makes a transition, or a 'jump', from one stationary state to another, the actual process cannot be visualised or even imagined. There are no intermediate stages. We cannot break down the process into its components. The entire process of transition from one state to another is a non-visualisable, unanalysable, unity. It is indivisible. Its parts cannot even be imagined. It is a 'quantum jump' as we call it.¹ As an analogy, we say that there is unmanifest mathematical space between any two consecutive orbits, and further, there is energy interaction - via photon exchange - between the unmanifest and the manifest.

A trapped ion blinks on and off and each blink is a quantum jump. It is a striking illustration that things occur discontinuously in nature. I.I. Rabi wrote, "The atom is in one state and moves to another, and you can't picture what it is in between, so you call it a quantum jump."²

b) ***Observation of Atomic Phenomena:*** In dealing with atomic phenomena we have to recognise that the act of observation is accompanied by an inevitable disturbance which alters the state of the observed system in an unpredictable manner. What is observed is different from what it was before the act of observation. This is inherent in the nature of things. It cannot be eliminated.

In its attempt to understand the mystery of the world of atoms, quantum physics is forced to the view that the act of observation projects, as it were, the atomic object from an "unmanifest" mathematical space into the "manifest" physical space of our experience. Between two successive acts of observation the atomic object follows its course in the unmanifest space, called Hilbert space (after the mathematician D. Hilbert).

An explicit involvement of consciousness is an essential factor to observe the atomic system. In the oft quoted words of E.P. Wigner, "The measurement is not completed until its result enters our consciousness... (this) last step is, at the present state of our knowledge, shrouded in mystery and no explanation has been given for it so far, in terms of quantum mechanics, or in terms of any other theory."⁴ Hideki Yukawa wrote, "It is obvious that unless something rises into the consciousness it cannot become an object of rational thought, of rational consideration. At the same time, everyone will surely agree

on the importance of an awareness that living in a world open towards both the exterior and the interior is a special characteristic of man's lot".⁵

c) *The World is Fundamentally Discontinuous*: Our activity introduces discontinuities in whatever we are observing. These discontinuities are fundamental to the new physics of the twentieth century.⁶ Bohr knew that the world was fundamentally a discontinuous and quantum jumping world. To Bohr, discontinuity was a fundamental truth.⁷ The ultimate declaration is that nature is discontinuous in its core, more like a staircase than a ramp. The discontinuity implies Unmanifest to manifest. Excited by light, an atom will jump to one or the other of the higher levels, absorbing a photon. Then a short time later, it spontaneously emits a photon and returns to the ground state.

Biological Evolution

a) A living organism is all the time building up more complex chemicals from the chemicals it feeds on, more complex forms of energy from the energy it absorbs, and more complex patterns of "information" - perceptions, memories, ideas - from the input of its receptors. A direction towards increasing order seems to be present in evolution. As an organism goes up the spiral of the evolutionary ladder, there is greater and greater complexity of matter, greater and greater order, and a resultant expression of a higher level of consciousness. The increasing order implies a higher form of unity in a more complex variety.

In the realm of life, the wholes are of a higher order both of articulation and of integration. They are developing wholes and organised totalities at any one moment, and become more highly differentiated and integrated on successively higher levels of organisation, so that their past history determines their present nature and functioning.

The process of differentiation and integration of cells, giving rise to different structures of different parts or organs, seems to be governed by cell-consciousness; so each moment of the past is in each moment of the present. The cell-consciousness also appears to be responsible for recovery, repairs and restitution of tissue in each part. The organism which is a special kind of whole is governed by individual consciousness, so the whole is in each of the parts.

b) Embryos repeat the evolution history of their ancestors in some abbreviated form in the course of their development. It suggests that our ancestors evolved from fish

through amphibian and reptilian phases. The recapitulation of its early history suggest a biological inheritance, or a morphogenetic field.

Matter, in itself, does not have the characteristic of self-duplication. When consciousness interpenetrates at a fixed hierarchical level in matter arranged in a given pattern, then matter assumes the role of a self-duplicating molecule. In the chromosomes, the genes are coded. The differentiation and re-integration of cells give rise to embryos, which grow to adult and then disintegrate to elementary bits, and are governed by consciousness. The morphogenetic fields of a species are identical and represent the total evolution of matter; these fields are governed by consciousness and deal with repetition of genetic matter in a fixed pattern.

c) In the waking and dreaming states there is the experience of the reality in its manifested form (time-consciousness, ego-consciousness and sex-consciousness). In the state of deep sleep the time-consciousness, ego-consciousness and sex-consciousness go to abeyance, so the reality is in its non-manifested form, which is the negation of its manifested form. Sri Ramana Maharishi says, "The non-manifested equally exists in your waking state".

Life begins with breathing-in (a set of atoms) and death begins with breathing-out (a set of modified atoms). Life is inhalation, death is exhalation. Breathing-in is at a higher quantum energy potential than breathing-out, so there is discontinuity. Discontinuity happens when there is the unmanifest. Breathing-in and breathing-out are not two opposite things, they are parts of one whole. Similarly love is breathing-out and hate is breathing-in. So the unmanifest transforms death to life, hate to love. The waking, dreaming and deep sleep states are nourished by the Life Field, the Unmanifest, the Brahman.

Through the waking state and deep sleep, there is the Unmanifest. One can move to a higher quantum energy potential by the grace of the Unmanifest, and we have to purify our instruments of perception to accept the grace. This grace is flowing everywhere in the cosmos, and beyond the cosmos. (To be continued)

The Holy Mother, the Saint-Maker

by Swami Madhavananda

The Holy Mother, like Sri Ramakrishna, was such a unique personality that whatever great tributes you pay to her, they will fall short of the reality. In fact we do not have any adequate standards by which we can judge such great personalities. In one of his talks Sri Ramakrishna spoke of a large block of diamond lying on the steps to a river. Not knowing that it was a large piece of diamond, people thought that it was a mere stone; they rubbed and cleansed their feet on it and went away. One day a jeweller came and he recognized it and declared it as such.

Our Holy Mother was like a diamond of that type and ordinary people who had the privilege of meeting her saw in her only what lay on the surface, but much more lay deep within. In order to judge her correctly we have to take the testimony of Sri Ramakrishna, who said she was the embodiment of the Goddess Saraswati.

The Holy Mother's life from early childhood up to the end was an example, was a model of what a woman's life should be. She came of a very poor family. For their very existence, the whole family had to work and the Holy Mother even as a child had to help her mother and father in trying to make a livelihood. But her heart was expanding even as a child; she showed that she felt for others. When there was a great famine, the father of Holy Mother, Sri Ramachandra Mukherjee, though a poor man, arranged for large pots of food to be prepared and served to everybody who came. The khichuri (a rice and dal preparation) would be very hot and people would not wait to let it cool down. The Holy Mother, even though a little child then, would rush with her hand-fan and try to cool that food. That great love persisted up to the end.

To her brothers she was an ideal sister. Unfortunately those brothers were not worthy of her supreme love. They were materially-minded, quite opposite to the Holy Mother who was absolutely spiritually-minded. In the later years of Holy Mother's life, they were always extracting the maximum possible amount from her slender purse. One aspect of the Holy Mother's life was that when she once gave protection, once she had taken a family into her custody, she never left them. There might be evil in the world, and there was a time when the Holy Mother also saw evil, but she prayed all the time that she

might not develop the wrong attitude of seeing evil in others. Therefore, even though her brothers behaved like that, she befriended them right up to the end. In this way the Holy Mother tried to show how we can make our lives sweet even by living in this world.

Sri Ramakrishna's advice was, 'Bear and forbear', because in this world evils are bound to come and if one reacts in an improper way, there will be chaos everywhere.

Unfortunately we do not grasp that lesson and therefore there is so much bloodshed, so much of strife all over the world. The world has progressed in science. India also is copying after the West, but unfortunately the West is essentially materially-minded. It believes in the external world; it believes in the external power. India is known for its spirituality and our great saints have come from time to time to show Indians and the whole of mankind which way one should proceed to attain peace and happiness.

In Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother we have not merely two saints; they were the makers of saints. In fact, in such matters, to understand their real personality, only his or her own perception of the other, should be considered as a true guide. She was a simple ordinary mother to those who came to her for advice and guidance and spiritual ministrations because in this way alone the Lord's descent on earth could be properly utilised. If God comes to the earth with his divine majesty, then we shall all be appalled and we shall not be able to approach Him. Therefore, the Lord hides His majesty in forms that we may appreciate. In this particular instance God's divinity was clothed in motherly affection. Sri Ramakrishna sometimes could be stern, but the Holy Mother was never stern to anybody. There had been occasions when probably stern measure were necessary, but the Mother in her, that great motherhood, always controlled her. She said, 'If my child smears itself with dirt, is it not the duty of the mother to clean it and take it on her lap?' This was the attitude of the Mother. Therefore people flocked to her in hundreds. All of them were blessed by her, not necessarily because of their intrinsic merit, but because of the abundance of the Holy Mother's grace and compassion. She knew her mission in the world that Sri Ramakrishna had passed on to her. Bit by bit he had trained her for the great role of the world teacher Sarada Devi was to become afterwards. When she said, 'I am a mere woman', Sri Ramakrishna told her that more than what he had done she would have to do, and actually we find that after Sri Ramakrishna's passing away, the Holy Mother lived for nearly thirty-four years and those were eventful years so far as her spiritual ministrations are concerned. She did not care for herself at all. While Sri Ramakrishna lived, she was all attention to him, to his

personal comforts. She spared no pains to keep Sri Ramakrishna in a healthy state. Those who have seen the music tower in Dakshineswar where the Holy Mother stayed can have an idea in what condition of discomfort she had to live in, in order to serve Sri Ramakrishna. It is a very small place and in that little room not only would she be there but several other lady devotees would be there also. She somehow managed. She was the very personification of modesty, as it were. Self-abnegation was the breath of her life. When she was young, and news of her husband's madness reached her ears at her village home, she had to pass anxious days, but she never lost faith. Her faith triumphed when she came to Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar and saw that he was not mad in the usual sense, but was intensely God-intoxicated. That faith she had throughout her life. Numerous disciples came to her, some of a very devotional type. They would consider her as their own mother. Mother responded equally. She would not hesitate to clean even the leavings of food which a Brahmin lady would never do. Once she cleaned the place where a Mohammedan dacoit had eaten and when challenged she said, `Amzad is as much my child as Sarat (Swami Saradananda)'. You can well imagine the great intensity of spiritual realisation of a person who can utter this statement. Swami Saradananda was the Holy Mother's faithful attendant and to compare him with that dacoit Amzad! The Holy Mother had risen to such a height which is unimaginable to an ordinary mortal. She always realised and was conscious of her own divinity. Only to make things easy for us she put on that cloth of motherhood. She went to Madras and lived many happy days there. Supernatural powers were there. She had Samadhis of high states on numerous occasions. As her teachings had been put on record and published as books, people came to know of her very easily and expected a lecture from her. She said, `I am no lecturer', and referring to a lady disciple of the master, Gauri Ma, remarked, `If she had come with me she would lecture'. When giving initiations, persons not knowing Bengali also came, but somehow or other an inner communion was established and the disciples understood what the Holy Mother said and the Holy Mother was also satisfied.

So it is extremely difficult to judge a personality like Holy Mother as it is extremely difficult to judge Sri Ramakrishna. Only what little they spoke of themselves should be our criteria, but in whatever respect we approach her we shall find that the Holy Mother was almost beyond compare. Among the saints we read of in history, I do not know of any who has proclaimed herself to be an incarnation of Divinity. Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother declared to select audiences that they were incarnations of divinity. At the

same time they hid all their divine brilliance, divine majesty and pomp so that people might appreciate them fully.

In the Udbodhan Office in Calcutta she lived rather a restricted life. Hundreds of people flocked to her. Our predecessors were very careful about her. Her body was a delicate automaton. If people of impure mind touched her, she felt excruciating pain. Sometimes for half an hour she would wash her feet with Ganges water. Yet her motherly heart would never turn away anybody.

Even when she was ill, she was doing japa and when somebody asked, 'Why are you doing this?', she plainly said, 'I have to take care of those who have taken shelter in me. Do you think my mission will be ended? I shall not be able to rest content unless everybody is free from the bond of Maya.' It was the mother heart of divinity pouring in human flesh that was manifested in the Holy Mother. Sri Ramakrishna worshipped her as the Divine Mother and manifested the divinity that was latent in her. His attitude towards her had always been respectful. You know one of the questions Sri Ramakrishna put to the Holy Mother after those agonizing months she spent in Jayrambati: 'Have you come to drag me down to the world, to the material world?' The Holy Mother straight-away answered, 'I have not come to stand in your way. I have come to help you.' That shows the relationship between them. When the Lord comes he comes with his Sakti every time. Most often the Sakti does not do anything actively. In the case of the Holy Mother, the Sakti also was doing good to the world in full measure. She was the mother of monks and mother of householders. All have much to learn from her life.

It is a great good fortune that we are learning to appreciate the Holy Mother.

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Discrimination

By Swami Dayatmananda

Self-analysis

We mentioned in our last article that self-awareness leads the way to self-analysis which in turn helps us move forward. Self-awareness itself gives us all the data we need in order to use it. A scientist at first gathers all the data and then starts analysing it in order to reach conclusions. So do spiritual aspirants. Self-analysis is the first step to self-improvement.

Self-analysis is an intellectual research into one's own mind. It is difficult and dangerous. It is difficult because of inner resistances and wrong attitudes. One of the strongest resistances is resignation to one's fate; it means one has practically given up any hope of improvement. Such an attitude breeds cynicism and pessimism. Yet a man would not admit he has given up. He would rather offer any number of rationalisations than face the truth. It also poses dangers because it is the mind itself working on itself. One such danger is wrong interpretation of one's actions due to wrong attitudes. For example a person who is lazy misreads another's activity as restlessness; and a restless man looks down upon a sage as lazy. A miser interprets another person's frugality as miserliness. Or perhaps one who is reprimanded might react with anger and counter accusations but will never admit the defect in himself; because, then, his inner safety is threatened. There is a saying in Telugu: "*A man is apt to find those very faults in others from which he himself is suffering.*" We come across such instances aplenty every day. Needless to say one needs to be alert and objective if one wants to analyse oneself. If we fail to do so we need to take the help of a psychologist. A Guru often acts as an expert psychologist pointing out the defects of an aspirant. Spiritual progress is possible only when one has faith in one's teacher and implicitly follows the directions given by him. That is the reason why so much emphasis is laid on faith in one's Guru (in accepting his directions) and obedience (in implementing his teachings). (In this connection the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna may recall the contrary advice given to Swamis Yogananda and Niranjanananda.)

Self-analysis is the very first step to success in any field. And success in any field involves mainly four elements: the Goal, the Path, the Instrument, and the Effort. Progress in spiritual life too involves these four elements. Self-analysis helps us in the right understanding and utilisation of these four elements. Let us discuss them briefly.

1. The Goal. We often declare glibly that our goal is Self-realisation. No doubt it is true,

but do we really want it now, in this life? What is the intensity of our desire?

Tremendous faith is needed if we wish to realise God in this very life. If we open our eyes we find our life moving in the opposite direction! Often we are blissfully unaware of this. One reason for this is not paying sufficient attention. More importantly we may not wish to pay attention lest we are forced to face the fact that we do not want God. One of the famous psychologists used to say that most of the patients that come to him do not wish to get well, but wish to feel well! So we should take a serious look at our proclaimed goal. More important than this is to find out where we are and what our next step should be. This is where the advice of Holy Mother comes to our help i.e. to stop finding fault with others and start finding our own faults.

The first stage in spiritual life is purification. Purification means gradual reduction of one's defects and acquiring qualities conducive to spiritual progress. So our immediate goal should be purification of the mind. Karma Yoga is a great help in this respect. Swami Yatiswarananda used to say that an aspirant should have a clear understanding of his goal and path. Self-analysis should help us in clarifying both our ultimate and proximate goals. Without being clear about our goals it is meaningless to talk of progress; for monitoring progress is possible only in connection with a defined goal.

2. The Path. We also need to be clear about our path. Though the goal is only one, the paths to it are many. Though all paths are equally valid and lead to the One goal it is important to know the right path suited to one's nature. Hence it is that a Guru is so essential. Generally the majority of people are emotional by nature. That is the reason why Sri Ramakrishna used to say that for this age the path of devotion combined with selfless action is more suitable. Yet it is important to have reason and will also to balance fanaticism and blind superstition. There are some in whom intellect or reason plays an important part. Such people need emotion in order to avoid aridity. So it is necessary to find a right path suitable to one's progress. Failure to do so is sure to impede progress. Here we may recollect the case of Vijaykrishna Goswami. Vijaykrishna was then a prominent member of the Brahma Samaj. The members of the Brahma Samaj adore the formless aspect of God. Sri Ramakrishna pointed out to him that worship of God with form was more suitable to his temperament. Following the advice of Sri Ramakrishna Vijaykrishna made rapid progress toward God-realisation. Self-analysis directs us toward the right path.

3. The Instrument. Body and mind are our instruments. Most of the spiritual disciplines

are meant to purify and strengthen our bodies and minds. Proper food and exercise bring about health and strength of the body. Even so the mind also should be given proper food and it should be exercised. To fill the mind with good and inspiring ideals and thoughts is achieved through holy company, study of scriptures, japa, and meditation etc. Reflection of what has been taken in, deep and clear thinking, and practical application of these ideas in our daily life is the constant exercise to be given to the mind.

Self-analysis gives us a good idea of ourselves, the working of our mind. It helps us see what is holding up our progress and what needs to be done in order to move forward.

4. The Effort. There is a saying that genius is ninety-nine percent perspiration and one percent inspiration. Sadhana is the word for spiritual practice. Most of us know about the essentials of spiritual practice like prayer, japa, meditation etc, but without first achieving a reasonably healthy personality it is impossible to make any progress in any field, much less in spiritual life. Below are a few specifics which need to be thought over carefully in order to bring about required changes in our personality. A few questions are included to aid self-analysis.

a. Attitude. What is my attitude in life? Am I a hopeless pessimist or an unthinking optimist? How can I become a hopeful realist?

Some people are too sensitive and some are highly emotional. Emotion is good; emotion spices up life. Yet too much emotion can wreck lives. People with too much emotion are constantly swinging between heaven and hell. To live with such a person must be a draining experience! Then there are people who are too much attached or coldly indifferent. Here too a good balance is needed. So it is wise to ask of ourselves: Am I too sensitive? Am I always on the offensive? Do I react to events in a highly-strung manner? If so how can I behave in a more balanced way?

b. Time. Time is a most precious commodity. As a Swami put it so humorously: it cannot be bought, borrowed or stolen! Time lost is lost forever. One who wants to make something of himself cannot be too careless about time. However one need not be paranoid and get stressed out. Right use of time is one of the inevitable hallmarks of all great people. So one should question oneself: Am I conscious of the preciousness of time? Am I using it or killing it? How can I make better use of my time? An honest answer

can help us greatly.

c. Activities. What we do in our day-to-day life has a lot of bearing on our goal. What we do should have at least some connection with our goal. This is achieved through judicious planning, and associating activities with God. Certain types of activities, by their very nature, hinder spiritual progress. More importantly our motives determine the results even more than what we do. We should be conscious of doing actions that would lead us gradually to God. Here is a help. Let us ask ourselves: Is this necessary? Is it good? Is it in accordance with truth? Right answers to these should clear a lot of junk from our brains.

e. Our General nature. Vedanta classifies human beings into three categories: Sattvic (well-balanced), Rajasic (restless) and Tamasic (lazy). Of course, this is not a cut and dried classification. One of these three qualities dominates our lives at different times, yet one particular quality may prevail most of the time. In a way all progress is from *tamas* to *rajas* to *sattva* and from *sattva* to the beyond. It is good to find what one's nature is in general. Then one can slowly attempt to overcome the lower nature and rise to a higher nature.

f. Truth and practicality. It is said: "Know the Truth and the Truth will set you free." Sri Ramakrishna used to say that one who holds to truth will realise God. Truthfulness is a most precious quality in spiritual life. And yet few are able to balance truth with practical life. For most of us what is practical is truth, and if there is a conflict between practicality and truth, then, truth must go out of the window! Needless to say we get what we deserve. Real practicality is that which leads us to Truth, to God. So the question we should ask is: Am I holding on to truth? Is it leading me to God? The answer should give us enough guidance.

g. The Six enemies. Lust, anger, greed, infatuation, vanity and jealousy - these six are considered the greatest enemies of every spiritual aspirant; and all of them are inside our minds. One of the most important functions of self-analysis is to be aware of these - how strong they are, to what extent they influence our behaviour etc. Once we are aware of them, then the next step would be to control and direct them Godward. Once they are directed towards God then these very enemies become our greatest friends and helpers. As Sri Krishna says: "*The mind which is conquered is one's greatest friend.*"

Self-analysis is an indispensable step to progress in any field of life, much more so in spiritual life. One should practise it diligently, regularly, with a clear and strong mind. Self-analysis itself will shine further light which would lead us to self-integration.

What self-integration is and how to achieve it will be in our next article.

(to be continued)

The Blessed Ekaterina Zealot of the Pyukhtitski Monastery

By John Phillips

Commemorated on 22 April (or the Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women), died 1968

God's mercy is poured out on the Russian people by the prayers of its blessed men and women, who are not known to the world. Here is one more servant of God, the Blessed Ekaterina, who shone like a guiding star over sinful modern Russia. Revering the blessed ones is pleasing to God, for "God is worshipped in His saints". This life of a holy contemporary is brought to us from the monastery chronicles.

Blessed are we, when we love and call blessed the people of God. May Russia glorify them! Here the land of Estonia also provides sanctity, and the magnificent valleys of Estonia are adorned with new heavenly helpers in the building of earthly existence.

*"For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe."
(I Cor. 1:21)*

1. Childhood

Ekaterina Vasilevna Malkov-Panin was born on 15 May 1889 in Finland, in the fortress of

Sveaborg, where her father, Vasilii Vasilevich Malkov-Panin, was serving as a military engineer.

Her father had a gentle nature. He had no say in the family, and the rearing of the children was entirely in the hands of the mother. Her mother, Ekaterina Konstantinovna, née Pechatkin, came from a family of gentlefolk. She was a woman with a strong, wilful character. There were six children in the family, four sons and two daughters: an elder brother George, twin boys - Konstantin and Mikhail, Katya (Ekaterina) and two younger siblings - her sister Natasha and brother Vasilii. All the children were very fond of one another.

Katya loved her father and he loved her very much. There was a special friendship between them. Of all the children only Katya accompanied her father during his journey to Vladivostok, abroad, and did not leave him during the Second World War. One can suppose that her father was a deeply religious man, otherwise there could not have been such a mutual understanding between him and his daughter.

There was no inner nearness between Katya and her mother. Her mother did not sympathise with her daughter's religious aspirations and Katya had to bear a lot for her attraction to the monastery, situated near their estate, where the family went to church. Obviously it was here that Katya's love for the monastery first arose, but her own people, especially her mother, kept her back from excessive aspiration towards God.

In early childhood Katya showed her kind-heartedness, goodness, pity and compassion towards people. The daughter tried to soften her mother's severe relationship towards those surrounding her, especially to the house servants. So, for instance, the house dressmaker did not dare to approach the mistress direct to ask for thread. She turned to the mediation of Katya, who then patiently bore her mother's reproaches.

Generally speaking the mother prepared her two daughters for life in society, the more so because both daughters were very beautiful. In this was expressed the mother's inner distinctness from the daughter, not understanding her desires and aspirations. In this way Katya could not invite and be with those whom she liked. And she liked mostly humble girls. Her mother however invited society girls, whose inner feelings were not like Katya's.

Katya's childhood was not completely happy. For many years her mother was ill, and so

