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### Divine Wisdom

Question: (a Vaishnava devotee)

"Sir, why should one think of God at all?"

Answer: (Sri Ramakrishna)

"If a man really has that knowledge, (i.e. that God exists within and without and everywhere) then he is indeed liberated though living in the body.

"Not all, by any means, believe in God. They simply talk. The worldly-minded have heard from someone that God exists and that everything happens by His will; but it is not their inner belief.

"Do you know what a worldly man's idea of God is like? It is like the children's swearing by God when they quarrel. They have heard the word while listening to their elderly aunts quarrelling.

"Is it possible for all to comprehend God? God has created the good and the bad, the devoted and the impious, the faithful and the sceptical. The wonders that we see, all exist in His creation. In one place there is more manifestation of His power, in another less. The sun's light is better reflected by water than by earth, and still better by a mirror. Again, there are different levels among the devotees of God: superior, mediocre and inferior. All this has been described in the Gita.

"The inferior devotee says, 'God exists, but He is very far off, up there in Heaven.' The mediocre devotee says, 'God exists in all beings as life and consciousness.' The superior devotee says, 'It is God himself who has become everything; whatever I see is only a form of God. It is He alone who has become maya, the universe, and all living beings. Nothing exists but God.'"

Question:

"Does anyone ever attain that state of mind?" (i.e. seeing that nothing exists but God)

Answer:

"One cannot attain it unless one has seen God. But there are signs that a man has had the vision of God. A man who has seen God sometimes behaves like a madman; he laughs, weeps, dances and sings. Sometimes he behaves like a child, a child five years old-guileless, generous, without vanity, unattached to anything, not under the control of any of the gunas, always blissful. Sometimes he behaves like a ghoul; he doesn't differentiate between things pure and things impure; he sees no difference between things clean and things unclean. And sometimes he is like an inert thing, staring vacantly; he cannot do any work, he cannot strive for anything."

**The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna (July 1883)**

## Tapas or Austerity

The Upanishads tell us that the Creator performed austerities before creating the world. Millions of devotees regard Sri Ramakrishna as an Incarnation, yet he performed super-human austerities to realise God. Holy Mother had to go through the ordeal of five fires. We will not come across a single saint or mystic who has realised God without austerities.

At one time Swami Brahmananda practised severe austerities at Brindavan. Seeing Maharaj thus absorbed in contemplation and neglecting food and sleep, Swami Subodhananda one day asked him: "You are the spiritual son of God Incarnate; he has already done everything for you. Through his grace you have attained samadhi. Where is the need for these austerities?" "What you say is true," Maharaj answered. "The Master did everything for us. But I have to make these experiences my own. You know Uddhava was a devoted disciple and friend of Sri Krishna; through his grace he realized God. And yet Sri Krishna sent him to the Himalayas to live in solitude and contemplation."

Varuna was a knower of Brahman. His son Bhrigu, an ardent seeker, requested him to teach about the knowledge of Brahman. The teacher gave a few hints and asked him to go and perform austerity: "Seek to know Brahman through austerity; for austerity is Brahman."

Any type of creative expression is the result of austerity. Thus we see that nothing great can be achieved without undergoing hardship.

We hear of people fasting for days, observing silence for years, standing on one foot for a long time, flagellating themselves severely etc.,. We even hear of Yogis lying on a bed of nails! We mistake these for austerities.

Once a disciple asked Swami Brahmananda, "Maharaj, what is austerity"?

Swami: "Austerities are of many kinds. Once I saw a man who had taken a vow not to sit or lie down for twelve years. When I met him only five or six months remained of this period. Continuous standing for so many years had made his legs swell as they do in elephantiasis. When he slept he held himself up by a rope. Some practise the austerity of standing all night in deep water in the winter and at the same time performing japam. Again there is the austerity of sitting in the blazing summer sun in the centre of four fires."

Q: "Maharaj, is that what austerity means"?

Swami: "Good gracious, no! Generally men practise such austerities with the hope that in their next lives they may be born rich and find greater worldly enjoyments. Do they gain their wishes? God only knows!

"Remember God constantly. Remember him when you eat, when you sit, when you lie down; remember him whatever you do. By such repeated practice you will find that, when you go to meditate, it will be easy to remember God and become absorbed in him. As your mind becomes absorbed in meditation, a fountain of joy will spring up within you. Give no time to idle cares or idle talk."

So what is austerity? Usually austerity is defined as an act of privation and hardship, but suffering caused by sickness, poverty or oppression etc., cannot properly be called austerity. Any act undertaken for a noble purpose, especially, for spiritual progress, and done voluntarily, and which involves some sort of privation and hardship can be called austerity.

As mentioned earlier austerity is unavoidable if one wants to achieve greatness in any field. Austerity should not be felt to be a hardship. Austerity burns up evil tendencies and purifies the body and mind. It springs from freedom and helps one to be master of oneself.

The Bhagavad Gita mentions three types of austerity, pertaining to the body, speech and mind.

"Worship of the gods, the twice-born, the preceptors, and the wise; purity, straight-forwardness, continence, and non-injury are called the austerity of the body."

"Speech which causes no vexation, and which is true, as also agreeable and beneficial, and regular study of the Vedas-these are said to form the austerity of speech."

"Serenity of the mind, kindness, silence, self-control, honesty of motive-this is called mental austerity."

The only purpose of austerity is to make the body and mind fit instruments capable of taking us to God. If we are undergoing hardships and privations but they are not making us pure and are not leading us to God then we must suspect that there is something wrong with our motive.

If our purpose is God-realisation, then we need not go to the top of a mountain or to deep forests infested with wild animals. Life affords us enough opportunity to practise more than our share of austerity.

In one of our monasteries there was a monk who used to give trouble to everybody. Once the head of this monastery went to attend an interfaith meeting in a Buddhist monastery. The Swami asked the abbot of the Buddhist monastery whether he too had

inmates difficult to put up with. The abbot smiled and said, 'Yes, God in His mercy provides us enough opportunities to practise austerity.'

To calmly put up with sickness, discomfort, inclement weather, traffic jams, is an austerity. To live with hope and optimism under adverse circumstances is an austerity. To live in harmony with others whether at the office or at home is a great austerity. Giving up unnecessary talk, harmful activities; fault-finding, entertaining negative thoughts, controlling food, are also austerities.

To love God, to practise regularly japa, meditation, and the study of holy books etc are big austerities. If we look around we can find many opportunities for the practice of austerity.

In later years Swami Brahmananda used to say: "It is easy to practise austerity by not allowing the mind to come into contact with sense-objects, but it is hard to get rid of the mental craving itself.

"The mind deludes us in many ways. We must control it and direct it along the right path. What is austerity? It is to direct the mind towards God in order to taste divine bliss. In this age it is not necessary to practise physical austerities, such as standing on your head. The path in this age is to create the desire to chant the Lord's name, to be compassionate towards all beings, and to serve holy men. Real austerity consists in the control of the passions.

"A little physical austerity also is good sometimes. For instance, on the day of the new moon, or on the eleventh day after the new or the full moon, eat only one meal.

"Real austerity is based upon these three principles: First, take refuge in the truth. Truth is the pillar to which you must always hold while performing any action. Second, conquer lust. Third, renounce all cravings. Observe these three principles. That is real austerity, and the greatest of these is to conquer lust."

**(Eternal Companion)**

**Swami Dayatmananda**

## How to Cope with the Negative

### Ananda

Every one of you, no matter what others may say or think-and people may sometimes say things which offend you and hurt your spirit-should always try to speak with the voice of love, or, let the voice of love always speak through you. It requires a tremendous amount of tolerance... It does not matter what other people do, or think, or contrive against you; love will conquer.

The only way to remedy such evils is to fortify ourselves with strong spiritual forces... Lift your minds and hearts, and pray as you have never prayed before. Ask the Divine Power to shield and protect. Those who stoop to evil cannot touch us if we keep our hearts free from all malicious contact. With God in our hearts, we lack for nothing, and nothing evil can ever touch us.

Whenever you are unjustly tried, think of the Lord then. That is the only thing to think about. If you dwell on the other things, you cannot help but have bodily diseases and sadness. The mind must be removed from all those conditions.

Do not feel distressed over whatever disappointments you have received through those whom you have trusted. In no life is it possible that one can achieve anything without meeting with upheaval and disappointment. Your one solace is that you have always tried to do your best for those who have come to you. It is better to be hurt than to hurt anyone. Hatred is never conquered by hatred; evil is never overcome by evil; nor is treachery overcome by treachery. There is only one cure for those ills, and that is unalloyed love and the spirit of Truth. Those who are armed with Truth, they need nothing.

First of all, I shall with all my might, make my thoughts free of all other elements that are not pure and unalloyed love. This task I know in my heart of hearts is most difficult, as there are people, places and occasions which may provoke unloving thoughts, but I shall cling with all my might to this principle, reminding myself forcibly that:

Love is greater than hate,

Love is greater than doubt,  
Love is greater than fear,  
Love is greater than anger,  
Love is greater than impatience,  
Love is greater than self-pity,  
Love is greater than all morbid feeling...

I shall therefore with solemn resolution try to shut out all other thoughts, images and impressions which provoke anything but love in my heart.

Wherever you go, you will find human nature has its defects. The thing is to overlook and overcome with greater love. You will be happier for it, and others will be happier for it.

There never was any condition in the world that could not be changed. There never was an evil condition that could not be overcome. I say this and also believe in it very firmly. Non-resistance of evil implies a positive force to overcome it. "Resist not evil," but overcome it by good and love... I fight with the armour of love. Tolerance is a beautiful thing, but it does not mean compromise. Untruth and truth do not blend together. When people try to do evil to you, if they can arouse evil in you, then they are successful. But if they cannot arouse evil in you, then the evil they would do turns back upon themselves.

Oh! Blessed be the trial, blessed be the sorrow, blessed be the suffering, blessed be all things that bring us closer to God! That becomes our realization. Instead of feeling harsh, dissonant, resentful towards the world, we begin to feel, "Why, this world has helped me to realize more the glory of God. Even a man who has hurt me, he has done me so much good." A mellowness comes, and there is no price too much to pay for that. Did Christ deserve crucifixion? Whenever you have any doubt in your mind that you are not receiving according to what you deserve, ask yourself unbiasedly, did He deserve crucifixion?

People who are frail in their mentality give up very easily. At the least bit of ordeal or difficulty, they become faint-hearted. But people who have resolution, the spirit of consecration, they never give up. They would rather die than give up, and you find how much capacity you have when you take that stand. At first you say, "Oh my, I cannot stand that," but you find you can stand it, and more. You increase your capacity that way. Here is a very great lesson. Whenever someone gives you a little bit of discipline-

not consciously, but perhaps uses a harsh word or something-know you can easily go over that place, and you are better for it. Endurance is the only way to unfold spiritual qualities... Endurance means learning the capacity to unfold one's inner strength. You take a stand. You may receive blows; you may receive many ordeals, and you find they have not broken you. Thus they give you confidence in your abiding strength.

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### **Be the Witness (continued)**

**Swami Swahananda**

When you go to a theatre you see people acting. You have gone there voluntarily. Sometimes you are elated, and sometimes you weep along with the actors and actresses, according to their roles. But in your heart of hearts you know that it is acting, so it becomes an enjoyment. Even when somebody is getting killed in the drama, or somebody is wailing and weeping, you may also shed a few tears, but still, because you are the spectator, and you know it is make-believe, it is not the actual situation, your suffering is not acute. The suffering experience probably gives a little catharsis. It is an enjoyment if you can look upon yourself as the spectator. Otherwise, millions of people would not spend so much money to go to the theatre.

This is the advantage of being an onlooker in certain situations. But as I warned earlier, if you avoid the pain, you avoid the pleasure also. That is the yogic position. If you want serenity and calmness, then you can't say, "I will take the pleasant aspect and avoid the unpleasant aspect," which an ordinary man does. That's why he prays to the Lord, "Oh Lord, give me the pleasant and let me avoid the unpleasant." If God intervenes, well and good. But if God does not intervene-if you are left to yourself, what is the way out? The yogis say that if you want to avoid the pain, to a certain extent you will have to avoid



the pleasure also-the excitement in pleasure. When the mind goes up, it will surely come down. That is in the nature of things. You can't all the time remain up, and never come down, because you are experiencing an emotion. Any emotion will have its ups and downs. So the yogic idea is to keep the mind in poise and balance. That will give you enjoyment in a quieter sense, not in the exhilarating sense.

Another reason why the yogis practice this serenity and calmness is that when the mind is calm and serene, then only will spiritual truths flash in the mind. Spiritual experiences, spiritual truths will flash in the mind when the mind is calm. The early yogis had an idea-it is a Vedantic idea of course-that the truth is there all the time. The spirit of the Atman is there always, always shining, but, we don't realize it all the time. Why? Because the mind is always in a turmoil, or always having waves. So the yogic method is to make the mind calm, serene. When the mind is serene, you see the light, as it were. It is like seeing the reflection of the sun or the moon in a pond. If the water is wavy, you don't see it. When the water is calm, you can see it, or see your own reflection. So the raja yogic method is there to make the mind calm. When the mind is calm, the truth of the ultimate reality of one's nature will automatically come. That is one reason, when you enjoy meditation, when meditation is deep enough, once in a while you feel a welling up of joy. Why? You cannot always explain why it happens. You can say that the nerves have been soothed, the body has been soothed, and so forth. These may be contributory causes. But the Vedantins say it is because the obstacles to the manifestation of the nature of the Atman have been removed. The real nature, the basic nature of one's spiritual self, essential self, is ananda, bliss. Ananda is one's real nature. Swami Vivekananda argues in one place that it is your real nature so you will have to assert it. Our real nature is being disturbed because of other experiences. According to raja yoga, if you stop the mental waves, the blissful nature of the Atman will automatically come out. That is why you feel a type of joy, a sense of well-being, when the mind is a little calm.

Another idea is that when the mind is being tossed between contradictory desires or ideas, you are in a state of restlessness. If you can make a decision, restfulness comes, even if it is the wrong decision. Often you have observed that it is terribly uncomfortable when you are being tossed between two ideas-which course to follow? But the moment you have made a decision, you are better off. In behavioural psychology it has been pointed out that if a man is showing you his fist, threatening to hit you, your whole body becomes tense, all the muscles are tense. But the moment the blow has fallen, you will be bruised, but still, all the muscles again relax. The problem is over.

Similarly, suspense makes us much more uncomfortable than having to make a decision. From a yogic standpoint, this goal of serenity and calmness is posited, and this itself is one type of enjoyment—a serene enjoyment, not an exuberant type of enjoyment. Now if a person says, "But I want an exuberant type of enjoyment," an exhilarating type, exciting type, go ahead and have that, knowing that later depression will come. If you are prepared for it, you will not blame yourself so much, or blame all the forces of the world. You will have gone into it knowingly, aware that it has this effect. If you want very much to eat a rich dish, go ahead and eat, but know that later your stomach may be upset. Be prepared for it, that is the idea. Once you know that this is the result that may follow, when it happens, you will not be so upset. That is how the average man adjusts in life. He constructs his own philosophy in some way, based on his experience. So the emotions are there, but a man of poise, a man of understanding, a man of knowledge is not disturbed, because he knows his real self is untouched, uninvolved. There is a story about Socrates. Even great souls have adversaries. Socrates was surrounded by his students, Plato and others, when a man came in and went on scolding Socrates, and calling him bad names. "You are a thief, you are a debauchee," and so forth. His disciples became angry and wanted to give the man a thrashing, but Socrates stopped them and said, "Wait. Whatever things he is telling, all are true." "How could it be true?" they asked. "You are the greatest sage of Greece, and to call you a thief or a debauchee is bad." Socrates replied, "No, it is true, but there is a difference. All these thoughts once in a while come to my mind, because of the impact of the world. All these thoughts once in a while pass through my mind. But the difference between me and other people is that I don't react to them." And he gave this example. Say you have a mound of sand on the seashore, and also a rock. When the waves come in and dash against the mound of sand, the mound breaks down. But when the waves dash against the rock, it is unmoved. That is the difference. All these thoughts once in a while would arise in his mind, but he did not react. This is the idea—for a spectator, varieties of things may pass before his eyes, his mind's eye, like a drama, but he doesn't identify himself with them. Or, a man gives up what is called in other language a sense of possession; the things he sees are not for himself; he enjoys them as a visitor, as an onlooker. The moment you want to possess a thing, you are in trouble. That is the position.

This idea of spectatorship, onlookership, can be practised. A man really can disassociate himself even from the demands of the body and the mind. There is a story about Swami Vivekananda. I heard this story from the professor of music of Madras University, who

heard it from a person who actually witnessed it. Swamiji was speaking about this type of complete control, yogic control over the mind, complete disidentification with the body, and he cited, as an example to show that it is practicable, Krishna's driving of the chariot of Arjuna. He had to control several horses. Swamiji said, "I shall show you how it could be done." And then, the story goes, Swami Vivekananda removed his shirt, and with bare body he stood and was enacting the scene, as if he himself were controlling half a dozen horses. So much strength is necessary to control them! All the muscles of his body bulged, yet from the neck upwards, his face was completely calm and serene. The idea is that the entire body could be in great convulsion because of the great activity going on, but the mind could be kept completely calm. The face of course, is sometimes the indicator of the mind. Disidentification is possible. Lessening the sense of possession is possible.

Now, if an average man tries to live without the sense of possession he will not have any urge to work. He needs it. This is accepted. But if the sense of possession is too strong in him, it brings pain. The idea is to try to lessen the impact. In the devotees' case, the method is to surrender to the Lord. The Lord is like our father, like our mother, He knows what is really good for us. We want certain things very badly. We make all efforts to get them because God has given us the capacity to do so. But if, in spite of all our efforts, we do not get them, the devotee takes it as God's will. The Lord knows what is best. Religious people throughout the world say that is what God does. He does for the best. We also say that, although we often don't believe it. But if we can believe that the Lord knows what is best for us, then at least the pain of suffering is less. For example, if a child becomes sick and is put on a special diet, he may complain that good things to eat are being prepared in the house, but for him there is only the dull diet. But mummy knows better. This is the same idea-the Lord knows better. I know that I want certain things very badly. I have made all efforts to get them. Still if I don't get them, for some reason or another, I shall have to adjust myself. So the devotional way of facing this idea is just to depend on the Lord-the Lord knows better. Also, of course, in the devotional path, the idea of non-possession is often stressed.

Through centuries of preaching, some ideas can be inculcated in common people's minds. Once it happened in India-I was there at that time-that the Zamindari system in Bengal was being abolished by law. In the Zamindari system some people had a large area of land, and there were tenants who would cultivate it. The Zamindars were the middlemen for the government; they would collect all the taxes and give them to the government. That was the arrangement introduced by the British and it was being

abolished. That meant that a few hundred thousand people were being affected; their livelihood, their way of life, their style of life would change. In the Assembly discussions were going on, and a bill was to be passed. At that time, in the 1950s, Marshall Tito of Yugoslavia was visiting India, and he was going around Calcutta. He said, "All these changes are going on, but I don't see any rioting in the streets of Calcutta." The chief minister, Bidhan Roy, was there. He explained that it was because of centuries of schooling. People knew that too much wealth was not good. Theoretically they knew that accumulation of wealth in one place meant deprivation somewhere else. Because of these centuries of schooling, the Zamindars felt guilty, but they were trying to get some compensation, so that the property was not taken away without any compensation, as the Communists would have done. Tito was very much impressed.

It means that if day after day you hear a thing, it soaks into your mind to a certain extent. That's why it is said that the nature of the Atman has to be heard repeatedly. Day after day after day, Atman has to be heard about, repeatedly, reflected on, or meditated upon. Then only it soaks in the mind and becomes a part of one's own nature. The idea is that by repeated practice, gradually we get established in it.

This is the major point-in most of the non-dualistic Vedantic literature, there is a discrimination made between our real self, and everything else which is objectified: Tat and twam: the seer and the seen: Drigdrishya it is called. I am different from the things which I objectify. Anything that happens to the things objectified is not happening to me. Disidentification is the method of knowing one's real nature. I must find out my real nature, to see what is essential in me and what is non-essential in me. The outside world, property, land-we know that all these things are non-essential. In times of great crisis, everybody knows that these things are non-essential. But to know that even the body and the mind are non-essential, that the body and the mind are not a primary part of my existence, is not easy. It takes time. We have to be theoretically convinced of this position as far as possible, and then we must practise lessening the identification and keeping up this attitude. These will be the major practices in this particular discipline: First, theoretically to get this idea clearer and clearer, as much as possible soaked into the mind, that I am the spirit, I am the undying, uninvolved Atman, which is persistent. The second practice is based on this idea. Whatever is non-Atman I shall try to disidentify with-at least some part of it. We are to keep the sort of attitude that whenever identification comes, we try to disidentify. It is not that overnight we will be successful. Whenever a painful experience comes, about which you cannot do anything, either take the devotee's method-weep to the Lord a little and finish it, or the yogi's

method-forget about it, or the j-ani's method-disidentify. The devotee's method is surrendering to the Lord, feeling that the Lord does what is best for us. The yogi's method is to take the mind off the pain, to develop the capacity to master the mind, so that at will we can withdraw the mind to something else. In day to day life we do it. Whenever something doesn't seem pleasant, we try to bury ourselves in work, in gardening, in reading, in seeing television, in visiting friends. We try to forget the pain that is coming to the mind. The yogic idea is to develop so much strength of mind that at will you can take the mind off from a thing-especially a painful thing. This is one method. But that is not the j-ani's method. The j-ani's method is to change the attitude itself. Change the idea about the pain itself. Understand one's real nature, and based on that understanding, disidentify or disown any suffering that comes. This, then, is the idea of the "witness self".

## **Letter to a Devotee**

**Swami Turiyananda**

Dear X,

... It is good and extremely important to have longing for God, but it is not good to be impatient and despondent because one does not have calmness of mind. One should consider oneself blessed just to remain thirsting for the Lord. Is it not his immense grace that he has brought you away from worldly life and given you the inclination for sadhana (spiritual disciplines)? Now, whether your mind becomes calm or not depends on him.

... Offer your happiness and misery, peace and restlessness to God. Be content in whatever way he keeps you. Pray to him that you can continue your sadhana, then peace will come automatically.

Is God something like spinach or fish in the market that you can buy at a price? Is there any end to sadhana? Or can anyone attain God through it? Depending on him, stay at his door-that will be enough. His grace flows of itself. None can attain him by practising

breath control or any other spiritual disciplines. The one who has attained God has done so through God's grace. Know it to be a great blessing if God allows you to remain waiting at his door. Spiritual practices mean that one should call on God sincerely, uniting the mind and speech. Never allow any theft in the chamber of your heart (that means no hypocrisy). That is enough.

With my best wishes,  
Turiyananda

**Reprinted from 'Spiritual Treasures'  
by Swami Turiyananda**

### **St. Teresa, Bride of the Sun (continued)**

#### **Swami Atmarupananda**

Through her humility and unpretentious affection Teresa succeeded in allaying the worst fears of the Incarnation nuns-that the new prioress might enforce her austere Reform on them. This accomplished, Teresa set herself to feeding the convent, for hunger was at the root of many of the evils there. Then she began to pay off their debts and straighten their accounts. Once they were free from the shadow of starvation, their restlessness was subdued, and Teresa began to tighten the discipline. But with what tact! Eighty of the nuns were poor; they had come to the convent without an inheritance, and held a position of inferiority to the nuns from well-to-do families. To them Teresa gave a small monetary allowance each week; this was enough to give them back a sense of self-respect and independence. Soon those who had been most rebellious had become the most pleased with Teresa, and discipline was restored naturally. Could there be any greater proof of her balanced wisdom?

In the summer of 1572 Teresa took one more giant step towards reforming the Incarnation: she called Fray John of the Cross to be their spiritual director. This saint was unparalleled for his psychological insight and ability to guide others. Patiently but

relentlessly he formed these frivolous nuns into spiritual aspirants.

His influence on Teresa was no less important. Recognising this, she used to refer to him as 'the Father of my soul'. Their temperaments were in many respects quite opposite to each other: their spiritual lives also followed different patterns: nevertheless, their influence on each other was profound, and their devotion to each other great.

To attain perfect union with the invisible, unthinkable God, one must not be attached to the joys of the senses, nor even to the joys of ecstasy, of visions, of any spiritual experiences. Thus freed of all attachment to the relative, one plunges into the Godhead. Fray John felt that Teresa was too attached to the joys of her spiritual experiences, so he determined to cut ruthlessly this bond of spiritual enjoyment. In all humility Teresa tried to co-operate, but what could she do? She never asked for ecstasies or visions; and even if she tried to resist them, God overpowered her and gave them anyway.

Finally, one day the last thin thread binding her was cut. Christ appeared to her in a vision in the very depths of her being:

"He gave me his right hand and said to me: 'Look at this nail; it is the sign that from today you are my bride. Until now you had not merited that; in future you will be jealous for my honour not only because I am your Creator and your King, but as my bride. My honour is yours; your honour is mine.'"

After Christ had thus explained what was happening, her being was swallowed up in the Being of God:

"-it is like rain falling from the heavens into a river or a spring; there is nothing but water there and it is impossible to divide or separate the water belonging to the river from that which fell from the heavens. Or it is as if a tiny streamlet enters the sea, from which it will find no way of separating itself, or as if in a room there were two large windows through which the light streamed in: it enters in different places but it all becomes one."

Such was Teresa's spiritual fruition. So powerful was its effect 'that I remained out of my senses -I spent that day in a state of inebriation.' Henceforth she was eternally united in spiritual wedlock with the Sun who illumines the world. No more was there to be any asking, for it had been given her; no more seeking, for she had found; no more knocking, for the door had been opened and she had entered. She was united to a Bridegroom from whom she could never be separated.

Previously she had been overwhelmed with such love for God that she had eagerly sought death in order to be with Him forever; now she said that it mattered not in the

least whether she died this instant or in a thousand years. Life was transcended, death was conquered, and she lived in the realm in which life and death melt into each other and have no relevance, the realm from which the world and spirit are viewed together and without contradiction. Ecstasies became very rare and her tears of devotion were dried, for unity with God had become her natural state.

There she stands above us like the glorious newly risen sun, drawing the mind and heart to gaze in silent adoration -And yet, here she moves among us, a simple woman, unaffected, practical, with both feet set firmly on this earth of ours. A twinkle plays in her eye-a twinkle betraying a keen sense of humour as well as down-to-earth business sense -or is it the clear, unobstructed light of the Spirit within, which is seen in the eyes of the illumined? Her natural beauty has become ethereal through her never-ending illnesses and years of austerity -or is it that through her intense purity she has become a heavenly being even while walking the earth? In her, humanity and divinity have become so interwoven that such distinctions lose their significance. Down to earth, practical, unaffected, never pretending to be anything but herself; but what a grand self she is! Outwardly she is almost masculine in her strength of mind and determination; inwardly she is possessed of the heart of a mother which accepts all, which attracts all.

One man who knew her said that she was the 'world's magnet', irresistibly attracting all who came close to her.

'When the soul has reached this state of loving union,' says Fray John of the Cross, 'it is not fitting that she should busy herself with external actions even for God's service, for this may fetter her in this life of love in Him'; for Fray John, to love was to contemplate. But for Teresa, to love was to serve; after her union with the Heavenly Sun she asked, 'And what can I do for my Bridegroom?'

Though officially prioress of the Incarnation until October 1574, by August 1573 Teresa had restored sufficient discipline at the Incarnation that she could take leave in order to continue her role as Mother Foundress.

In the spring of 1574 she was in Segovia, seeing to the transfer of her nuns from the village of Pastrana where in 1569 she had founded a convent under the most inauspicious auspices of the Princess of Eboli. This terror of a woman was as imperious as she was beautiful, and it had been with great misgivings that Teresa had consented to found a convent with her help. In 1573 the Prince had died, and the Princess left her palace and ten children to enter, or rather impose herself on, 'her' convent in Pastrana. When the prioress learned of her arrival in the middle of the night she exclaimed, 'The Princess in the convent! This house is lost!'



The Princess not only brought her maidservants, who entered the novitiate in order to continue her service, but she considered the other nuns and the prioress as born for her service. She had her cell made to open on to the street; enclosure wasn't to her liking. Rules were ruled out, bells didn't exist; all that existed was her own sweet will. Finally one day the prioress had to tell her politely but firmly, 'It is too great an honour for this poor house to host Your Grace; the royal court alone is worthy of such honour.' The Princess caught the hint only too well. In order to amuse herself after returning to the court, she began to persecute the Pastrana nuns; among various other means adopted, she stopped their revenue, which meant starvation in that remote village.

So in the spring of 1574 Teresa had the nuns secreted by night to the new foundation at Segovia. But the Princess of Eboli's revengeful nature was all the more inflamed. She had procured a copy of the manuscript of Teresa's autobiography which had been written at the command of the latter's spiritual directors. Because of its highly personal and intimate nature, it had been closely guarded from public notice. This the Princess denounced to the dreaded Inquisition. At the height of its power, this historical perversion was 'purifying' Catholicism of all heretics, false mystics and other 'dangerous elements', it being the sole judge of who fell into these categories, and the sole arbiter of their fate: public confession, imprisonment, 'the stake'.

This potentially disastrous situation Teresa faced with perfect calmness and resignation. Wasn't she in possession of God Himself? And 'God knows with what sincerity I have written what is true.' On her way from Segovia to Avila, she visited the cave in which St. Dominic had dwelt. There, after remaining long in prayer, she had the vision of St. Dominic, who promised to help her in every way with her work. Now there could be no question of fear, for the Inquisition was led by Dominicans. As it happened, the Grand Inquisitor liked the book so much that he said he would keep it for reading until he got tired of it. He returned it only after several years with the words:

'I am very glad to make your acquaintance for I have been greatly wanting to do so: look upon me as your chaplain, I will help you as much as ever is necessary -I have read [your book] all through and I maintain that its teaching is very safe, very true and very profitable -I beg you to pray to God for me always.'

Though out of sequence it may be mentioned here that in 1579 the Princess of Eboli was arrested and imprisoned for complicity in an assassination. More than once Teresa urged Gracian (of whom, more in a moment) to visit and cheer this woman who had tried her utmost to work her ruin.

In 1575 Teresa founded a convent at Beas, and it was here in the same year that she

first met Fray Jeronimo Gracian de la Madre de Dios, or simply Gracian as he was known. The thirty-year-old Discalced Carmelite friar already held an important post in the Order when Teresa met him. One cannot improve on the personality-sketch given by Marcelle Auclair:

'Very learned, gifted with persuasive eloquence, with childlike gaiety and austere as a desert father, he 'charmed' by his perfect manners, gentle and kindly ways, while his even temper made relations with him easy and pleasant -He had always had a most tender devotion towards the Blessed Virgin and christened a statue of Mary which he frequently visited as a young man in one of the Madrid churches, mi enamorada, my sweetheart. It was this gift of pious gallantry that predestined him to be Teresa of Jesus "dear son' -He was tender-hearted and had great delicacy and, although possessed of all the qualities which make for success in the world, was so little made for the world that nothing ever cured him of his ingenuousness.'

The sixty-year-old Teresa seemed like a young woman again after this meeting. In him she found sympathy and understanding; in him, one of similar tastes and ideas. Having lived for so many years under such constraint, with no genuine understanding and sympathy from any quarter, no words could now express her joy at having found the one whom she called 'my Paul'. And her expressions of love for him were so strong that only one of her absolute purity could have used them without being misunderstood: 'You amused me so much when you wrote Your dear son! And I immediately said to myself that you were perfectly right!'

Teresa had been in need of someone to lead the Reform for the Discalced friars, which she as a woman couldn't directly do. But why was she so charmed by Gracian? Wasn't Fray John of the Cross a much greater saint than he? Indeed. But Gracian understood and appreciated her spiritual experiences, whereas Fray John was made of such different stuff that he couldn't-he thought them a form of spiritual gluttony. And Gracian was perfect for her work, whereas Fray John couldn't reconcile his contemplative spirit with the labour needed for carrying out the Reform. Furthermore, Teresa could control Gracian but not the independent Fray John who was a saint in his own right. Finally, Gracian made her laugh, she felt relaxed in his company; whereas she said of Fray John: 'There's no way of talking of God with Fray John of the Cross because he immediately falls into ecstasy and you with him.'

One day she saw in a vision Gracian glorified in heaven, and she heard a voice saying, 'This man is worthy to be among you.' Her love for Gracian, which thus had heavenly sanction, was in reality an impersonal love: 'It's a curious thing, I'm no more concerned

about loving him so much than if he were not a person at all.' In fact, he wasn't a person to her, but a God-given instrument with which to accomplish the divine work to which her life was totally dedicated.

In May 1575 Teresa proceeded to Seville to found a convent. Here in August she met after many years her brothers Lorenzo and Pedro, who had just returned from Spanish America. One day when her brothers came to see her she lifted her veil, as the nuns were allowed to do in the case of very close relatives. When they had last seen her she was a young and beautiful woman torn between the call of God and the attraction of the world. Now as they looked on her radiant face it seemed that time had only enhanced and transfigured her beauty, so that it drew one no longer to itself but to its Source. Lorenzo's eight year-old daughter Teresita was amazed. Her father's piety was a bit frightening in its humorlessness, but in her Aunt Teresa, the reformer of an already austere monastic Order, Teresita saw a gaiety, an open and warm-hearted love which attracted one to God. The little girl refused to leave, and could only be taken home by promising her that in a few days she could return to Aunt Teresa. Thus, Teresita, returned shortly to stay, dressed in a tiny habit, adding an extra touch of innocence and cheer to the convent. While Lorenzo became his sister's disciple.

The foundation in Seville turned out to be difficult from the very beginning. The Archbishop was an obstacle and the townspeople were frivolous and untrustworthy. Problems had to be faced by Teresa at every turn-once she was even denounced to the Inquisition there-and it wasn't until May 1576, a year after her arrival, that the inaugural ceremony of the new house took place. But by this time, what an impression Teresa had made on the local people! The streets were all decorated by them and a huge procession wended its way to the convent, led by the Archbishop himself. Reaching the convent, Teresa knelt before the Archbishop, asking his blessings, which he gave. As she rose to her feet the dignified Archbishop of Seville knelt on his knees, in front of the huge crowd, and asked Teresa for her blessings. Indeed, Teresa was now known as la santa Madre, 'the holy Mother'. An Avilan gentleman-years before, the leader of the party of spiritual advisors who thought Teresa's spiritual experiences came from the devil-was nowadays heard to say, 'If they were to tell me that St. John the Baptist was at the gates of Avila and Mother Teresa in some other part of the town, I would throw away the opportunity of seeing St. John the Baptist to cast myself at Mother Teresa's feet and ask her blessings.'

But dark clouds had gathered on the horizon. Such success on the part of Teresa's Reform had created the inevitable jealousy among the Mitigated Carmelites, who were

afraid that they would be disgraced by the sanctity of the Reform, or what was worse, that they would also be reformed. Towards the end of 1575, while Teresa had been struggling with the Sevillan foundation, the Mitigated Carmelite friars had launched a persecution against the Discalced which was to continue until the spring of 1579 when the Discalced were finally separated from the Jurisdiction of the Mitigated and given independent status.

This three-and-a-half-year period was terrible for the Discalced, and to make matters worse, Teresa was ordered to confine herself to a convent in Castile, which amounted to imprisonment. Immediately after the inauguration of the Sevillan Carmel in May of 1576 she left for Toledo, and until the end of the persecution she divided her time between the Carmel there and St. Joseph's in Avila. Throughout these years of confinement she kept in touch with her children through correspondence-guiding, inspiring, admonishing. As always, her main defence was God: she asked her nuns to pray for strength and light, and to remain true to the ideal as the best way of counteracting unrighteousness. She had to witness helplessly the kidnapping and imprisonment of Fray John of the Cross. She had to suffer the most horrible rumours spread deliberately by the Mitigated friars in order to spoil her saintly reputation. Much of her correspondence was spent in alternately bolstering the failing courage of Gracian and trying to moderate his excessive enthusiasm. At the beginning of the persecution when Gracian and Antonio de Jesus told her that they had seen a terrifying octopus-like monster outside their window which they took for an ill omen, she broke into laughter, to see her two commanders afraid of ghosts. Later when Gracian complained of his difficulties (his very life was actually in danger) she gently scolded him: 'If you are as sad as that when your life is not such a bad one, what would you have done had you been Fray John?' --referring to the imprisonment and torture the latter had endured silently.

Besides being a veteran of many past battles, Teresa now lived in constant union with God and could thus meet all difficulties unperturbed. She saw herself as it were divided: in the depths of her soul she enjoyed the constant bliss and peace of perfect union with God, while her mind and body were incessantly busy in their role as God's servant. Moreover, she was utterly detached; her amazing labour on behalf of the Reform had been only in the service of God: there was no trace of self-interest in it. Though the fruits of her superhuman labours of the past few years were about to be destroyed by the Mitigated, she never lost her balance, never stooped to weakness.

About her confinement to Toledo and Avila she wrote: 'Not only did I experience no sense of trouble, but a joy so unusual that obviously it didn't come from myself alone

-'One man who knew her well said that difficulties were to her' like the spark which falls into the sea only to be extinguished, like the wave which beats the rock only to be broken on it, like the blows which strike the diamond without dulling or injuring it.'

It was during the midst of the persecution by the Mitigated friars that Teresa wrote her spiritual masterpiece, Interior Castle. One day in Toledo as she was speaking of prayer with Gracian, she couldn't find the proper words to express herself: 'Oh, how well the matter was explained in the Autobiography which is with the Inquisition!' Seizing the opportunity, Gracian asked her to write another book on prayer 'and expound the teaching in a general way, without saying to whom the things that you describe have happened.'

Teresa was now sixty-two and ill; she heard constant noises in her aching head-'many torrential rivers falling down into cataracts, many little birds and sounds of whistling'. She was busy with the problems of her Reform until one or two o'clock every morning, though she always rose with the five-o'clock bell. Yet she smiled as she complained: 'How do they expect me to write? Let the theologians do it. They have studied, whereas I am only an ignorant woman. What is there that I could say? I shall use the wrong words and there is a danger of my doing harm. There are so many books on prayer already! For the love of God, let me turn my spinning-wheel, go to choir and follow the Rule like the other sisters: I am not made for writing; for that I have neither health nor head...'

But out of obedience she agreed to try. The result of the attempt is one of the greatest works of its kind in the history of Christian mystical literature. This woman of very limited education, who knew no Latin and who had never studied theology and whose experience of life was limited to say the least, produced a book which revolutionized Christian mystical thought. All subsequent Catholic thought on mysticism and prayer shows the impact of her genius. No one before her had ever analysed the states of prayer-from beginning efforts to spiritual marriage-with such psychological precision and depth. And none after her has improved on her basic analysis of, at the least, the mystical states-from the Prayer of Quiet to the Spiritual Marriage. Many have tried to subdivide or otherwise improve on the stages of mystical union she recognized, but such efforts have never been as satisfactory as her basic structure.

In spite of her illness and the worries and problems constantly arising from the persecution by the Mitigated friars, in spite of the large demands made on her time by the convent Rule and her various duties, Teresa finished this remarkable book in less than three months in neat handwriting with no erasures. According to one of her daughters at Toledo, 'At the time when our holy Mother was writing the book of the

Mansions at Toledo, I often saw her as she wrote, which was generally after Communion. She was very radiant and wrote with great rapidity, and as a rule she was so absorbed in her work that even if we made a noise she would never stop, or so much as say that we were disturbing her.' This same nun once found Teresa writing in a state of ecstasy. On Christmas night, 1577, a month after completing Interior Castle, Teresa was going down the staircase to the chapel when a sudden burst of wind blew out her candle. In the darkness she fell and broke her arm. From this time on she had to have help even to get dressed, so Ana de San Bartolomž, the little lay-sister whom we met as a novice at Avila, became her constant attendant. The good nun would sometimes kneel outside Teresa's cell for hours waiting for a chance to serve.

Philip II, King of Spain, was an admirer of Teresa. So when the persecution of the Reform had begun in 1575, Teresa had written to him asking him to use his influence to separate the Reform from the Mitigated Carmelites. During the course of the persecution she wrote more letters, but it wasn't until April 1579 that the Discalced Reform was freed through his help from the tyranny of the Mitigated. Finally the clouds were dispersed, and the Discalced friars who were in prison and those in hiding could move freely. The Mother Foundress was able to resume her work.

All trials were to Teresa a form of austerity which she turned to spiritual advantage. Her suffering during the persecution had been no exception, and she gave expression to the purification she experienced after they had ended: 'When it comes to exercising government, I am no longer the same person that I was before: now it is all done through love. I don't know whether this is because nobody now gives me cause to be angry or whether perhaps I've come to understand that that kind of action is more efficacious.' Now as she re-entered the field of action in the last phase of her life, it was with a character perfected both by a vast treasure of spiritual experience and by a long record of battles suffered and won for the glory of God.

On 25 June 1579 Teresa set out once again as Carmel's Mother Foundress. The difficulties and discomforts of travel in that age were horrendous, but did the sixty-four-year-old invalid nun feel sorry for herself? 'Look at her, poor little old woman! Setting off for Medina del Campo, Valladolid, Malagon, Alba de Tormes, Salamanca! I tell you that makes me laugh, for I feel I have the courage to do much more than that!' As she travelled from convent to convent she received a triumphant welcome by the nuns who had not seen her since the persecution had begun several years before.

Indeed, all of her travels now became occasions for rejoicing, among local religious gentry and peasantry alike. For instance, in February 1580 Teresa started out from

Malagon for Villanueva de la Jara to found a new convent. The journey of eighty miles turned into a triumphal procession, as villagers all along the way pressed to see la santa Madre, 'the holy Mother.' Constables had to be posted to protect her from the crowds when she stopped for the night at Robledo, and though she started again, at three in the morning to avoid another crowd, she was swamped by people waiting in the darkness and cold for her blessings. The friars of la Roda came and met her on her way, giving her two small but beautiful statues, one of the Virgin Mary, smiling, and the other of the Child Jesus. The last part of the journey was through a road gaily decorated with festoons and greenery, past beautiful altars set up for the occasion. All the people for miles around joined the procession. Ana de San BartolomŽ and Ana de San Agustin saw the statue of the Child Jesus come to life and play joyfully around Teresa, though Teresa showed no surprise at this. Ana de San Agustin was about to exclaim aloud in excitement when Teresa turned to her and said: 'Silly little child, be quiet!' Thus, together with the Child of God, Teresa entered Villanueva amidst singing, shouting and the chiming of bells. Such was the respect she now commanded in Castile.

In 1580 an influenza epidemic swept through Europe, and in Spain killed several of Teresa's friends. In Toledo the sixty-five-year-old nun herself came down with it. An invalid from the time of her 'death' and subsequent paralysis at the age of twenty-four, Teresa had at the same time been endowed all these years with a remarkable physical resilience, youthfulness and inner strength, but she never really recovered from this bout of flu. It left her an old woman. At Valladolid she had a relapse; her heart seemed to be giving way, and her tongue was partially paralyzed, endangering her power of speech. Her usual pains in the head and noises in the ear increased. For the first time this dame-errant who had fought and conquered so many times before, seemed to be giving up the struggle and passively resigning herself to death, a pitiful sight to those who had at one time been inspired with strength and courage just to see her.

Her superior, however, showed no compassion, and wrote to her, ordering her to go to the towns of Palencia and Burgos to make new foundations. It was an impossible order, but as always she sought God's will. One day after communion He said to her, 'What are you afraid of? When have I failed you? I am the same as I have always been. Do not fail to make these two foundations.' Teresa exclaimed: 'O God Almighty! How different are Your words from those of men! They give me such courage and determination that the whole world would not stop me.' Once more her amazing virility carried her into the battlefield, despite her old and broken body.

Teresa reached Palencia in a state of collapse, but recovered enough to see to the

foundation. Then to Soria for another foundation. Returning to Avila she was elected prioress of her beloved St. Joseph's. The nuns there were starving-as Spain's poverty increased, so did that of religious houses. So once again Teresa had to find food for a poor convent.

On 2 January 1582 Teresa set out for Burgos amidst the winter cold and incessant rain and snow. The roads were rivers of mud and water; no man in his right mind would have negotiated them, but Teresa had long ago given up her right mind. Though common sense and moderation in all things were typical Teresan virtues, she threw all prudence to the winds when it came time to obey the will of God, for she knew that nothing was more sure of accomplishment than that. At one point in the journey they came to a large river in flood. The current was fast and the pontoons barely wide enough to hold a carriage-the slightest deviation and nuns, carriages and horses would be swept away. But Teresa was not the one to turn back. The nuns asked for her blessings which she gave and said, 'Well, daughters!' What better thing can you want than to die as martyrs for the love of Our Lord?' She had her carriage taken first. The carriage went a way and then swerved, hanging over the current. Teresa jumped out into knee-deep water, hurting herself in the process, and exclaimed: 'Lord, amid so many ills, this comes on top of all the rest!'

God was heard to answer her, 'Teresa, that is how I treat My friends.'

'Yes my God, and that is why You have so few of them!' she retorted.

All the carriages did make it across, however, and they made their way on to Burgos. There Teresa had another syncope; her vomiting-which had been a regular part of her life since her severe syncope at the age of twenty-four-increased; her throat was inflamed; and she was unable to move even to lift her head. While she was in this condition, the Archbishop of Burgos went back on his earlier promise and sent word to Teresa that Burgos needed no more nuns and that she could return to Avila! Nothing could have brought life back into Teresa of Jesus quicker than these words. She rose to her feet and carried on the fight for three months, ending in her seventeenth and last foundation for nuns.

One night in the new convent Teresa's attendant Ana de San Bartolom<sup>Ź</sup> was awakened by the sound of heavenly music: she realized that the angels were gladdening their beloved sister Teresa. In the morning Ana couldn't keep quiet: 'Mother! What an excellent night you've had!' Teresa, never at a loss, replied: 'Well, daughter, if you heard it, your night could not have been a bad one!'

Now Teresa saw Death before her. Her letters to her daughters showed this: 'Never



forget certain of the things I tell you...', as if giving them her last instructions.' After my death... I should like...'

Before leaving Burgos, she asked: 'Lord, are You satisfied?'

'Go,' He replied, 'you must now suffer greater things still.'

She left Burgos on 26 July 1582 with her niece Teresita and Ana de San BartolomĚ. Her destination was Avila. On the way she stopped at Valladolid. Her final instructions to the nuns there were characteristic: 'Do not perform your religious exercises mechanically, but let each one of them be a heroic act.' She who gave the advice had lived a life in which every deed, every word, every thought had been heroic, had been charged with power and spirit. Even sleep had been put to sleep now, and her nights were passed in ecstasy. One early morning Ana de San BartolomĚ entered her room at Valladolid to awaken her, and found her still lying 'unconscious' in bed, her face radiating light like the sun.

She reached Medina del Campo on September 16 on her way back to Avila. Exhausted from the journey, she was greeted by the rather harsh prioress who, without even offering refreshments or rest, told her that Antonio de Jesus had come to meet her in the parlour. This her first friar whom she had met in this very town so many years before, had turned into a sulky old man, easily offended and jealous at the deferential treatment Teresa accorded Gracian. When it came to grudges and insults-real or otherwise-he had a memory like an elephant. Even now he remembered with wounded pride the time he had set out to found the first Discalced monastery in Duruelo: in his zeal he had provided himself with five clocks but had forgotten the straw pallets, seeing which Teresa had gone into one of her fits of laughter.

So he was not in a mood to feel compassion for the sick old saint.' Tomorrow you must set out for Alba de Tormes: the Duchess demands that you come to bless her daughter-in-law, who is about to give birth.'

Teresa was overwhelmed.' Never', said Ana de San Bartolom, 'have I seen her suffer from an order given by a superior so much as this one.' Now Teresa knew she would never reach Avila.

That night she went to bed without supper-the prioress had not invited her.

Little did the prioress realize how far above the reach of such insults Teresa now dwelt. Nor did those who wished to capture Teresa with their love realize how senseless such attempts were. Her renunciation of self was absolute, so there was no one to be offended, no one to be caught. The servant who spent herself in God's cause was a mere instrument, while Teresa saw her essential being ever in union with God, ever immersed

in the peace that passeth understanding. She had a pure and selfless and motherly love for others, wishing them more and better than she wished for herself; this, however, didn't conflict with but was a reflection of her love for God: 'The Lord wants deeds, he wants works! If you see a sick person whom you can comfort, do not hesitate to sacrifice your devotion, and attend to her; you should feel her pains as if they were your own; fast, if necessary, to procure food for her. Such is true union with God.' Yet she also said: 'I should rejoice if I saw others in greater glory than myself in heaven, but I could not bear for anyone to love God more than myself.'

To her there was no longer any distinction between suffering and loving, between action and adoration. Her very breath, her very heart moved in adoration of her Beloved. Teresita said that her Aunt showed the smiling and calm simplicity of a candid little girl. In rivers, in the sky, in trees, in tiny flowers, Teresa exulted and exclaimed, 'Blessed be He who created thee!' Those who thought they could injure her with their insults, those who thought they could capture her with their love, understood little of her true spiritual greatness.

On the way to Alba the next morning, the journey was so rough that Teresa almost died. Once she asked for something to eat. The good Ana de San BartolomĚ wept when not even two eggs could be found for her sick Mother. 'Don't weep, it is God's will it should be like that,' Teresa comforted her. As they were approaching Alba, a courier came on horseback to tell them that the child whose mother Teresa was going to bless had already been born. 'God be praised! Now they will no longer need the saint!' Teresa exclaimed.

When she reached the Alba convent on the evening of September 20, she was greeted with singing by the nuns who were overjoyed to have her amongst them again. The prioress-one of the nuns who had left the Incarnation to join the Reform-had a very gentle and loving temperament. When Teresa claimed to be nothing but one of her subjects, the prioress took advantage of this and asked her to take rest, after having prepared a room as nicely as possible.

But the next morning Teresa was at Mass, and for a few days she resumed her normal activities. By the end of September, however, she was vomiting blood, and at times her tongue seemed to be paralyzed. She had to be confined to bed. Realizing that the end had come, her only concern now was to bless those who gathered round her. One young girl, not yet fifteen, was afraid that she wouldn't be allowed to take vows as a nun after coming of age. To her Teresa said, 'Don't fret, child, you will be professed here!' To one of the nuns Teresa said, 'I will come to fetch you when your turn comes.'

On October 2 she told Ana de San BartolomŽ that death was near.

When Antonio de Jesus came to hear her confession, the true love and devotion he had always borne for her surfaced, and kneeling beside her bed he implored her like a child, 'Mother, ask our Lord not to take you away. Don't leave us so quickly!'

'Father, be quiet! Can it be you speaking like that? I am no longer necessary in this world.'

She told her daughters: 'My daughters and ladies, for the love of God, I ask you to observe the Rule and Constitutions well; if you keep them strictly, no further miracle will be necessary for your canonization. Don't imitate the bad example which this bad nun has given you, and forgive me.'

She was so weak that she couldn't even turn in bed by herself. But when the Blessed Sacrament was brought for her last communion, her face lit up with radiant joy; she sprang up and knelt on her knees to receive communion. 'My Bridegroom and my Saviour! The longed-for hour has come. It is time for our meeting, my Beloved, my Saviour. It is time for me to set out. Let us go, it is time.'

Antonio de Jesus asked her whether she wished to be buried in Avila. Smiling, the saint answered, 'Jesus! Is that a question one should ask, Father? Have I anything whatsoever of my own? Won't they give me the charity of a little earth here?'

That night she passed in ecstatic joy, repeating over and over again a line from the Psalms: 'A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit... A humble and contrite heart Thou wilt not despise!'

At dawn on the next day, 4 October 1582, the feast day of St. Francis, the sixty-seven-year-old saint lay on her side, her face radiant, with all the wrinkles gone! Her face was indeed so peaceful and bright that it looked to others like the full moon: as the moon basks in the light of her lover, the sun, so it seemed that Teresa, the Bride of the Heavenly Sun, was rejoicing in, being transformed into and consumed in the radiance of her Beloved. Only once was her ecstasy broken: in the evening Antonio de Jesus ordered Ana de San BartolomŽ to go eat something-she had not eaten nor slept for several days, so anxious had she been to stay near her holy Mother. Teresa opened her eyes and seemed to be searching for someone. Teresita understood and called Ana back. Seeing the good little lay-sister again, Teresa's face resumed its peaceful radiance. She took Ana by the hands and, with an ecstatic smile which lasted into death, laid her head to rest on Ana's arms, never to lift it again. At 9 p.m. Teresa, the Bride of the Sun, sighed gently three times as she made her departure to join her Bridegroom in the realm beyond all darkness, leaving behind her mortal frame, still calm, still smiling, still

exquisitely and supernaturally beautiful, 'like a radiant sun.'

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**Leaves of an Ashrama: 11 Courage as the Natural Product of Faith**

**Swami Vidyatmananda**

It is customary to assume that Emily Dickinson<sup>1</sup> was referring to some unspeakable sorrow, and the need to go on as though nothing had happened, when she wrote:

To fight aloud is very brave.

But gallanter, I know,

Who charge within the bosom

The cavalry of woe.

Yet she is far from being the only one in this situation. There is an astonishing amount of unspoken heroism in everyday life. One hears many complaints, one sees depressions and breakdowns, but one marvels at the bravery expressed by most people. "Bon courage," cry the French as a parting wish, or sometimes, "Bonne continuation."

There can be no doubt about the value of carrying on bravely. An attitude of fortitude

infuses one with the strength to face the daily dismays with a bold heart, and gives a lift to others. Swami Vivekananda was right when he counselled that if one cannot appear before the world with a pleasant countenance, it is better to stay at home that day. However, there is something particularly pathetic in this everyday courage. At base, life is sad. In the final analysis, as usually experienced, life is a tragedy. The endurance of the stoic, or the forced cheerfulness of the positive thinker, are not very convincing. One is bound to marvel at all this bravado.

But the student of Vedanta is in another situation entirely. He has the best of reasons for courage, not as an exercise of will or some act of derring-do, but because he understands that ultimately what he may see as tragic is not tragic at all; nothing genuinely bad can ever happen. He knows that he inhabits a world of dreams, and that the discipline he practises consists in repudiating his dreams. He refuses to take the shadowplay seriously. The larger the understanding, the smaller appear the daily miseries. As one of the astronauts observed: "How can my concerns ever loom large again when, gazing across to the earth from the moon, I see whole continents reduced to the size of postage stamps?"

The Atman is immutable. There is no coming or going, no heartbreak, no shipwreck; no disaster at all. All is one, and calm. For the Vedantist to be depressed, for him to have to bid himself continually to be courageous, is to be unfaithful to his most basic conviction. "The greatest sin is to think yourself weak." It is also the unforgivable sin, because it denies the Atman.

## **A Dialogue on Politics**

### **David Chandler**

The Swami of the Ramakrishna Mission in the capital of India is a man with endless demands on his time and strength. Swami Ranganathananda talks every Sunday in the

Mission grounds on the Bhagavad-Gita to a huge number of people-Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Hindus of every persuasion, women, university instructors, government clerks, students, and many, who like himself, have come to New Delhi from Karachi since the partition of India.

The talks printed here represent the sum of our private conversations and incorporate material taken from lectures which Swami gave at the Mission and over the All-India Radio and at the University of Delhi.

"Tell me, Swami," I said, "does religion have anything to do with politics outside of giving it a sense of moral uplift? Is the search for faith entirely personal? Is religion all mysticism and meditating alone and letting the rest of the world go hang."

"Primarily religion is a value which is deeply personal," Swami Ranganathananda said. "It takes hold of an individual when he has finished with values which are sensual and relative and when he seeks for a value which is transcendental and absolute.

Spirituality-Godliness-is an end-value in itself. Indian thought refers to it as the highest excellence. We call this side of religion nihshreyasa, the consummation of freedom through the realization of truth. It is the supreme end to be sought after by man.

"All the other ends and values are those which man achieves in the social context in response to his deeply felt craving for gross or refined joys and satisfaction. We call these ends abhyudaya. Now we cannot achieve this latter except in the context of a society or group; just as to achieve ultimate spirituality a man walks alone to the Alone. But though religion in its essential nature is trans-social and individual, it has a secondary yet significant role in the important sphere of social relations."

"Yet we know from history," I said, "that when religion has played its part in the sphere of social relations, it has frequently stood in the way of human progress and welfare, sliding with the most backward elements of the society of its time, in fact lending them support and, frequently, justification. What do you say to that?"

"History does indeed contain many such instances," Swami said. "To deal with the subject of the role of religion in politics is therefore a delicate task, especially in present-day India where there has been an abuse and misuse of religion in recent years to the detriment of a correct assessment of the role of religion, on the one hand, and of the happiness and welfare of millions on the other.

"Yet it is worthwhile to face the task, for the stakes involved are high. There is a real need today to state the precise scope of religion both in relation to the individual and as a social force, and the contribution it can make to the health and stability of the social order. Both politics and religion stand to gain from an approach to each other under the

guidance of a philosophy such as the Vedanta, which dares to view life in its totality and wholeness, and which, remember, has for its declared objective the happiness and welfare of humanity as a whole.

"The aim of religion is to raise humanity to a higher ethical plane. In the past our problems were few and comparatively simple. We had to deal with men organized into small clans and tribes. But the problems of today have become colossal because we have to deal, not with small sectional groups, but with large national societies and the whole of humanity itself. Whether we shall sink in or swim across the storming sea of the modern world will depend on our ability to organize the world into a single family on the basis of the spiritual oneness and equality of humanity."

"Yes, I have heard something like that before, Swami. But religions disagree among themselves on just how to swim across the storming sea, as you put it. Each one seems to have its own answer."

"Every religion worth the name contains," Swami said, "certain universal elements along with others that are particular and parochial. The message of these universal elements in all religions to humanity is exactly identical. Nevertheless, it is true that religions as practised by their followers have been more regional, local, and parochial in outlook and action, to the detriment of the universal.

"But in the present-day world anything that is parochial will not satisfy the situation. Hence the problem of negotiation and adjustment is tremendous. No narrow and selfish view will answer the demands of the modern age. We have to look at things in the larger context, from the wider point of view. Only if the universal elements in all religions can be released from their parochial and regional setting, can religion be made a progressive force in the world today."

"That, Swami, would seem rather to call for something like science," I said, "science which is supra-national."

Swami said: "The present world has witnessed mighty advances in science and technology. But in spite of these revolutions in the domain of scientific thought and technique, modern man has not been able to discard religion altogether. Religion has not been allowed by the rational man of today to enter his life by the front door. Yet it enters his life surreptitiously by the back door. That shows that religion is still a vital force. But the religion that enters thus is, in the absence of the purifying aid of rational thought, mostly passionate, communal, and reactionary. Religion which regards all humanity as one and indivisible is the product of dispassionate thinking and hence progressive in outlook and action.

"The true purpose and function of religion is written large in the history of human civilization. Its purpose is to make man truly civilized, cultured and refined. Real civilization will come only when men and women have become truly cultured-when they have learned to refine their thoughts and chasten their feelings and sentiments. The function of religion is to actualize the spiritual oneness of humanity in ever-widening spheres, from one man to another, from two to a third, a fourth, from a small group, to another, to yet another-in ever-widening spheres, and to develop human fellowship by reducing and obliterating the distance between man and man."

"I have heard, Swami," I said, "that religion may have had that function in the old days, but not now. Religion is a spent force. It cannot answer the demands of the modern scientific world, hence it is not required now. What we now need, some of my friends say, is social improvement, and to attain this we should disregard religion. To what extent is this criticism of religion a valid one, Swami?"

"It is indeed true," Swami said, "that we have made rapid advances in scientific discoveries, mechanical inventions, and material progress. But in spite of all our boasted achievements and progress in these lines, have we not moved backward as men? How backward we are is evident from our dealings with our neighbours and fellows. Have we moved forward in social feeling and sympathy? The answer is an emphatic no. There still lies the savage in every one of us. Civilization is largely nothing but external trappings on the old savage.

"Religion is thus not outmoded. Far from it. If after years of civilization and democracy and progress men could wage two savage wars in the course of thirty years to destroy each other, can we call man civilized? Or say that he has outgrown the sustenance of religion? No, our passions are not tamed. The animal within us reigns supreme. Men have to live in harmony, not only with themselves, but also with their environment. Integrity within and integrity without. This is the real measure of a civilization. This is the vital function of religion. And civilization has to invite religion to its aid today."

"Are you saying, Swami," I asked, "that material progress has no place in the world today?"

"I did not say that," Swami answered. "Materialism has its due place in the evolution and progress of human society. But when it dominates over the minds and hearts of men, it betokens danger. Divorced from ethical and spiritual foundations, it has become a source of danger everywhere today. It is the animal in man that prevails over the God in him. Violence and hatred are the dominant forces of the present-day world. The purpose and task of religion is to tame and subdue these forces of hatred and violence in man



and thus make for a higher expression of his psychic energies and impulses. Impulses by themselves are neither good nor bad. They become one or the other in the way we use them. We can take hold of our raw impulses and energies and convert them into creative forces by means of an inner technology. By means of this inner technology, taught by the science of religion, we are to control and tame the libido and raise it to the highest level of inspiration. Only a man who has controlled all his passions and impulses is truly religious. He becomes pure and holy. He has attained real education at its highest and best. Such a man not only raises himself to a higher ethical and spiritual plane-but he raises others as well."

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## Book Reviews

The Word of the Guru

by Nataraja Guru

Published by D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., New Delhi

This work comprises the life and teachings of Guru Narayana. It is the biography of an individual teacher, but it is also a treatise on guruhood itself.

Nataraja Guru (1895-1973) was born in Bangalore. After graduating from the University of Madras, he became a close disciple of Guru Narayana. As the disciple and successor of his guru, he is a representative of the same line of gurus reaffirming the Advaita philosophy extending back to the most ancient times.

Nataraja Guru studied under Henri Bergson at the Sorbonne in Paris, where he took a doctorate in Educational Psychology. In 1923 he founded the Narayana Gurukula Foundation, a Guru-disciple foundation for the preservation of the type of life and overall approach suggested in this book and in line with the Advaita Vedanta ashramas in India.

Advaita Vedanta is not an easy subject and needs the pointed attention of a qualified intelligence such as that of Nataraja Guru to unravel and expound it. The author does not play up to the taste of those who relish books about the mysterious East, miracles

and yoga feats. He devotes his efforts to expounding the wisdom tradition of India in a form comprehensible to those of us who are not professors of philosophy.

It is interesting that Romain Rolland, who wrote the well known life of Ramakrishna, referred in it to Guru Narayana, stating that "his teaching, permeated with the philosophy of Sankara, shows evidence of a striking difference of temperament compared with the mysticism of Bengal, of which the effusions of love (bhakti) inspire in him a certain mistrust. He was, one might say, a Jnanin of action, a grand religious intellectual, who had a keen living sense of the people and of social necessities."

## Ganapati Upanishad

by Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati

Published by D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., New Delhi

This work by Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati is a Sanskrit text with transliteration, translation into English and commentary. It is No. 13 in the series "Rediscovering Indian Literary Classics."

The Ganapati Upanishad is to be found in the concluding part of the Atharvaveda, which deals with the worship of Isvara and reveals the nature of the ultimate Reality into which everything resolves. In his commentary the Swami begins with a general discussion of the Upanishads, their association with specific Vedas and their main purpose. He examines the nature of the Cosmic Power and the universe, the propitiation of God, the purpose of living, concepts of ananta, ananda and others as explained in the Ganapati Upanishad. He explains the derivative roots of many words so that the concepts may be better understood by the reader.

This book will be useful to anyone enquiring into Vedantic thought and Indian religious and philosophical traditions as well as of interest to the general reader.

**John Phillips**