

Magazine Articles July / August 2008

1. **Divine Wisdom**
2. **Adroha or Absence of Malice - Swami Dayatmananda**
3. **Gerald Heard and Vedanta - John Roger Barrie**
4. **Colloquies on Spiritual Topics - Swami Prabhavananda**
5. **Thayumanava - Swami Ritajananda**
6. **Conversations with Swami Turiyananda (contd) - Swami Raghavananda**
7. **Discourse on a Profound Verse of the Gita - Swami Siddheswarananda**
8. **Pathways of Realization (contd.) - Clement James Knott**
9. **Leaves of an Ashrama 26 : Dispassion as Dis-Passion - Swami Vidyatmananda**
10. **Book Review**

Divine Wisdom

Question : "Sir, must we renounce the world"

Sri Ramakrishna: "No. Why should you? A man can realize God even in the world. But at the beginning he must spend a few days in solitude. He must practise spiritual discipline in a solitary place. He should take a room near his house, so that he may come home only for his meals. Keshab, Pratap, and others said to me, 'Sir, we follow the ideal of King Janaka.' 'Mere words don't make a King, Janaka', I replied. 'How many austerities King Janaka first had to perform in solitude - standing on his head, and so on! Do something first; then you may become a King Janaka.' You see a man writing English fluently; but could he do that at the very start? Perhaps he was the son of poor parents; he was cook in a family, and earned his meals by his service. Perhaps he had to struggle hard to go on with his studies. It is after all these efforts that he can now write such fluent English.

"I said to Keshab Sen further, 'How can the worldly man be cured of his serious disease unless he goes into solitude?' A worldly man is suffering from delirious fever, as it were. Suppose there are pickled tamarind and jars of water in the room of such a patient. Now, how can you expect him to get rid of the disease? Just see, the very mention of pickled tamarind is making my mouth water! (All laugh.) You can very well imagine what will happen if the tamarind is actually put in front of me. To a man, a woman is the pickled tamarind, and his desire for enjoyment, the jars of water. There is neither end nor limit to this desire for worldly enjoyment. And the things are in the patient's very room. Can you expect the patient to get

rid of the delirious fever in this fashion? He must be removed for a few days to another place where there are neither pickled tamarind nor water jars. Then he will be cured. After that if he returns to his old room he will have nothing to fear. 'Woman and gold' cannot do any harm to the man who lives in the world after attaining God. Only then can he lead a detached life in the world as King Janaka did. But he must be careful at the beginning. He must practise spiritual discipline in strict solitude. The peepal-tree, when young, is fenced around to protect it from cattle. But there is no need for the fence when the trunk grows thick and strong. Then no harm will be done to the tree even if an elephant is tied to it, 'Woman and gold' will not be able to harm you in the least, if you go home and lead a householder's life after increasing your spiritual strength and developing love for the Lotus Feet of God through the practice of spiritual discipline in solitude."

(The Gospel Sri of Ramakrishna, October 19, 1884)

Adroha or Absence of Malice

Swami Dayatmananda

Adroha is complete absence of malice, hatred, ill will, or injury in thought, word and deed. It is a quality without which one cannot progress in spiritual life.

Ramanujacharya explains it as non-interference in others' affairs when otherwise one may cause them harm or suffering. According to Madhusudana, adroha is not the taking up of arms and weapons etc., with the idea of killing.

Non-injury, of course, does not convey the real meaning of the word adroha. The essence of adroha is complete absence of anger, malice, hatred, or jealousy; it is a spiritual concept. Total absence of self and selfishness is the test of adroha. It is in this sense that adroha is equated with truth at its highest level, and is regarded as the highest principle in life. Long ago the Jain prophet, Lord Mahavir, declared: "The being whom you want to kill is none other than you; the being whom you wish to govern and enslave is none other than you. Killing a living being is equivalent to killing one's own self."

It is well nigh impossible to live without injuring any creature. Physical violence in some form or other is a fact of life, and the sin that accrues from it does not come from the fact of violence itself, but from motives of desire, hate, and selfishness. As it is said 'Life can be sustained only by life.'

Bhagavan Buddha said: "He who deserves punishment must be punished. Those who go to war in a righteous cause after exhausting all means of preserving peace are not blameworthy."

In our own times Dr. Radhakrishnan writes: "We live in an imperfect world where all men are not saints, and force has to be used to keep the world going. If we say that the criminal's personality should not be violated, if we treat the gangster's life as sacred, we are acquiescing in evil. We cannot judge the use of violence as evil or as good by looking at it in isolation."

Any pain or injury inflicted during the course of living need not be an injurious act unless motivated by selfishness or hatred.

Again both good and evil, violence and non-violence are not ends in themselves, but only the

means leading mankind to its goal of realising its divine nature. Conditions and circumstances in life influence and dictate whether violent means are necessary or not. Right conduct is always to be measured by the motive, since ethics and morality are all in the mind.

Though adroha, or non-injury, is the highest ideal, it can truly be practised only by a rare few in any society at any given period of time. Such an ideal can only be for the few who have taken to the spiritual path seriously and are bent on Self-realisation. Only he who can look upon all creatures as one's own Self can truly be said to practise the virtue of adroha or non-injury.

Adroha means remaining true to one's faith or trust. In the light of this meaning there are five areas in which we should be careful not to break our trust: one's duty, country, religion, Guru and Self.

Dharma: One of the meanings of Dharma is sincere discharge of one's duties according to one's station in life. This not only purifies the heart but also pleases the Lord. One can advance in any field of life only through proper discharge of one's duties. This rule applies whether one works in an office or an institution. One who fails to discharge one's duties is called kartavya drohi.

Duties to one's country: A country shelters, nurtures, and protects its citizens. Hence it is the bounden duty of every citizen to love, respect and serve his country to the best of himself ability. If one fails to do so, he will be doing great injury to himself or herself and also to the whole nation. One who fails to love and serve his country is called desa drohi.

Religion: One of the most important teachings of Sri Ramakrishna is that all religions are valid paths leading a sincere aspirant to God. Though this is true one should love and follow one's chosen religion, at the same time taking care to show respect to all other religions and prophets. One who fails to do so is called Dharma drohi.

Guru: Hinduism accords the highest respect to the Guru; He is equated to God himself. Hence one should look upon one's Guru with the highest respect. It does not mean merely saluting him or showing outward signs of reverence. Real respect to the Guru lies in strictly following the instructions he has given to his student. Any deviation from it is disrespect to the Guru and is bound to make one fall from the spiritual ideal. One who fails to do so is called Guru drohi.

Self: Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the goal of human life is to realise God or the Self. One who does not strive to realise the Self lives in vain and is called a Self-slayer. The Isavasya Upanishad puts it so succinctly: "Verily, those worlds of the demons are enveloped in blinding darkness; and thereto they all repair after death, who are slayers of Atman." One who fails to follow and advance in the spiritual path is called Atma drohi.

The only way to avoid harming or injuring others is to look upon all as one's own Self.

Needless to say this state can be achieved only through following a spiritual path and by realising God. Before one reaches this state one should take care not to injure any creature by thought, word or deed. And one should be faithful to one's duties, country, religion, Guru and Self. This is a sure way to acquire the spiritual quality called adroha.

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John Roger Barrie is the literary executor of Gerald Heard. Biographical information on Gerald Heard is primarily drawn from "Who is Gerald Heard?" by Jay Michael Barrie.

Vedanta's particular blend of empiricism with metaphysic, the width of its cosmology, the vastness of the picture which it gives of human destiny, and the immediate practicalness of its advices and practices - this amalgam seem most suitable to anyone who wants a method which is psychological and a world view that can match modern knowledge of the cosmos."¹ Sri Ramakrishna embodied a fathomless spirituality that spread to all lands. Of foremost importance to one of his young, fiery sadhus was the land of America. That monk, Swami Vivekananda, imbued with foresight and sanctioned by divine grace, established a number of centres throughout the United States, thus anchoring a bedrock of spirituality that flourishes to this day. Guided by generation after generation of Ramakrishna Order sadhus, many a soul has sought refuge in these islands of spiritual power.

Once such soul was the British polymath Gerald Heard. Henry Fitzgerald Gerald Heard was born in London in 1889. A precocious child, Gerald, as he was forever known, nonetheless suffered through a childhood marked by periods of emotional abuse and bouts of physical pain. The former was inflicted by his stern, unyielding father, while the latter was caused by the boy being dropped as a infant and being run over by a carriage at age 12.

Intelligent, sensitive, and indoctrinated into the Anglican Church by family tradition, he entered Cambridge University to pursue ordination as a minister. But his skeptical bent caused him to doubt the doctrines of the very church he aspired to serve. A crisis of faith ensued, and Gerald left Cambridge in 1913. By 1916 he suffered a nervous breakdown. Recovery came gradually, and the person that emerged favored secular humanism over religion. Still retaining a social idealism, he became involved in liberal causes such as progressive education and social reform.

During this time Gerald took to secretarial work, first for Lord Robson then for Sir Horace Plunkett, founder of the Irish Agricultural Cooperative movement. His insatiable intellectual appetite reportedly drove him to read 2,000 books a year, a remarkable feat. He published his first book *Narcissus* in 1924, in which the careful reader may find the seeds of his subsequent theories on the evolution of consciousness. His second and more significant book *The Ascent of Humanity* was published in 1929. In that same year he met the brothers Julian and Aldous Huxley. Shortly thereafter he became the first science broadcaster for the BBC, which brought him accolades from the likes of H. G. Wells.

In the late 1920s a significant event occurred. While undertaking his academic researches he came across the teachings of Buddhism, "the Eightfold Path," as he recalled in a 1953 lecture, which produced a profound effect. Even though he eventually embraced Vedanta, this encounter motivated him to undertake methods that would enable him to experience firsthand the pure consciousness about which he had theorized. He visited Dartington Hall, an experimental college, and began practicing yoga. He embraced celibacy in about 1934 and taught yogic breathing exercises to Aldous Huxley in that same year to help Huxley with his vision problems. The would-be Christian minister-turned-scientific-materialist had been bitten by Lord Buddha and was now the victim of an unquenchable thirst, a deep spiritual craving. Gerald had come around full circle.

By the time Gerald and Aldous Huxley left England and arrived in New York City in April 1937, Gerald's renewed love affair with God was in full swing. But it came about through experiential spirituality, not formal religion. Gerald was now referencing Hinduism and Buddhism in his philosophically oriented 1930s books, and he was advocating spiritual techniques in 1937's *The Third Morality*. Despite its provocative title, 1939's pivotal *Pain, Sex and Time* mentioned yogic practices and advocated meditation and continence in order that one's consciousness may "experience sustained intensity of being."

Although Gerald poured his mighty intellect into his newfound avocation, still something was missing. That was the guidance of a living teacher. Once settled in Los Angeles, by mid-1939 he met Swami Prabhavananda, then head minister of the Vedanta Society of Southern California (VSSC). Subsequently, and in short order, Gerald persuaded Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood to meet the Swami, and through his influence John Van Druten and many others came into the Vedanta fold. Isherwood in particular maintained close contact

and involvement with the VSSC over the years, and he acknowledged Gerald's role in his August 1944 inscription to Gerald's copy of *The Song of God* - "Whether you like it or not, you are really responsible for my share in this!" As Ellery Queen aptly noted in the March 1947 issue of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* concerning Gerald's impact in spreading Vedanta during the 1940s, "Gerald Heard is the spiritual godfather of this western movement." Gerald made his first appearance in the VSSC's journal, *Voice of India* (later renamed *Vedanta and the West*) in the September 1939 issue by virtue of an anonymous contribution, "The Vedanta as the Scientific Approach to Religion." In the very next issue, October 1939, along with Swami Prabhavananda, he was named co-editor, and therein he published his first contribution as Gerald Heard, "Is There Progress?"

Gerald received meditation instructions from Swami Prabhavananda fairly early on, but he did not become an initiated disciple of the Swami's until early in 1941. It is not foreign to students of Vedanta to read accounts of disciples at times questioning their teachers. In April 1941 Gerald expressed such questions in a letter to Swami Prabhavananda. The Swami addressed Gerald's concerns in the May-June 1941 issue of *Vedanta and the West* without mentioning Gerald by name. Gerald resigned from his editorial post at the time, but the two men never severed ties and Gerald lectured frequently at the Hollywood Center during the mid-1940s.

A long-cherished dream of Gerald's had been to establish a place where the study of comparative religion, together with research into and practice of the techniques of meditation and prayer as taught by the major religions of the world, might be carried out. In 1941 Gerald put the larger part of his personal financial resources from his inheritance - \$100,000 to be specific - into building and endowing Trabuco College. It consisted of a large complex of Mediterranean-style buildings situated in the middle of nearly 300 acres, about 75 miles south of Los Angeles, near the then-remote and small community of Trabuco Canyon. Trabuco College, operated by a non-profit board of directors, was guided by Gerald's visionary direction.

For the next five years from one to two dozen revolving students - men and women living under the rule of celibacy - meditated three times daily, studied, worked in the garden, performed arduous chores, prepared and ate vegetarian meals, and listened to lectures on religious life. Gerald penned several books during his time in residence. Aldous Huxley and others gave talks on occasion, but to correct a popular misconception, he did not write his famous *Perennial Philosophy* there.

There is some debate about the reasons why Gerald discontinued Trabuco College. Dr. William Forthman, who met Gerald in 1939 and resided at Trabuco College during the 1940s, has written, "He concluded it was not producing the educational and spiritual outcomes he had hoped for." Trabuco College was the first co-educational spiritual community in America to incorporate ecumenical, non-sectarian religious principles and practices. Thirty years ahead of its time, the Trabuco College experiment was discontinued in 1947, and Gerald moved out in October of that year.

The facility was made available for several projects during the next two years. None of these ventures, however, measured up to what Gerald felt was the essential reason that Trabuco was originally established. Consequently, and at his specific request, the facilities and property were turned over to the VSSC, and they were subsequently renamed the Ramakrishna Monastery in September 1949. For nearly six decades the Ramakrishna Monastery has remained a beacon of spiritual solace to resident monks and lay aspirants alike.

Gerald continued delivering lectures at the VSSC from the late 1940s through 1953, both in Hollywood and Santa Barbara, drawing large crowds because of the spiritual topics he discussed and his scintillating oratorical style. Many of these lectures were published as articles in *Vedanta and the West*. In 1951 he resumed editorial duties for that same journal as an advisor, a post he held until 1962. Altogether he wrote nearly 40 articles for *Vedanta and the West*, many of which were reprinted in Christopher Isherwood's two compilations, *Vedanta for the Western World*, and *Vedanta for Modern Man*. His last article appeared in the July-August 1963 issue, titled "Death," which, ironically and perhaps fittingly, just as his very first article had been, was an anonymous contribution. Gerald also wrote an introduction to *Towards the Goal Supreme* by Swami Virajananda, then-president of the Ramakrishna Math

and Mission.

Swami Prabhavananda and Gerald maintained their relationship for 32 years, until Gerald's passing in 1971. Altogether Gerald wrote 38 books and numerous articles, delivered hundreds of lectures, and investigated various topics throughout his lifetime. Naturally, not all of Gerald's topics were of interest to the Swami. While the two men shared some differences in their approaches to spirituality, their relationship could best be characterized as one of mutual respect (Swami typically would address Gerald as "Mr. Heard"), affection, and spiritual love.

During the lengthy five-year illness that preceded his death, Gerald's longtime, devoted secretary Jay Michael Barrie read to Gerald nightly from The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. Throughout this time Swami Prabhavananda solicitously inquired of Gerald's well being and conveyed his blessings to Gerald. At the moment of his passing Barrie stated that Gerald, already severely incapacitated from the effects of 26 minor and five major strokes during the previous five years, suddenly opened his eyes - wide open and crystal clear - as if gazing into some mysterious, unfathomable Being. In that vivid state of awareness, at the age of 81, Gerald Heard breathed his last breath.

A scholar's scholar and a bohemian's bohemian, Gerald's quest was one of spiritual realization. It was neither an armchair interest nor a passing fad. He maintained a regular and rigorous discipline of meditation for decades - six hours daily for many years - as the core of his mature beliefs centered on the intentional evolution of consciousness. His applied spirituality was intended to affect changes in conduct, character, and consciousness, and to make the human organism a fit vessel for the realization of God. He did not come to the mango orchard to count the trees; he wanted to taste the mangos, as Sri Ramakrishna observed. However, it might be more correctly stated that, with Gerald's unquenchable intellectual curiosity, after he entered the mango orchard and picked a few ripe mangoes, he sat himself down in an elevated area of the orchard so that, while he was eating, he could also count the mango trees.

Gerald Heard was a catalyst for spreading the message of Vedanta during the middle part of the 20th century. His passion for experiential spirituality acted like a contagion on those around him. His abiding association with Swami Prabhavananda and his substantial contributions to the Ramakrishna-Vedanta movement and to the Vedanta Society of Southern California produced profound and lasting legacies that are very much in evidence to this day.

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Colloquies on Spiritual Topics **By Swami Prabhavananda**

Question: Should not a spiritual teacher manifestly demonstrate that he has, for the love of God, given up everything - should he not live with only the barest necessities?

Answer: You would then identify the life of renunciation with a life of poverty and discomfort, and you would say that if a spiritual teacher lives in comfort and in a plentiful household he is evidently not living the consecrated life. Your view has no doubt a surface plausibility, but it is too simple. A man of true renunciation concerns himself neither with poverty nor with riches. One person may live in dire poverty, and another may live in luxury, and yet both be steeped in spiritual ignorance and confirmed in worldliness. What is

renunciation? Renunciation is the giving up of everything. The rich must give up his riches, and the poor must give up his poverty. If the poor man hugs his few trivial possessions and clings greedily to his meagre earnings, he is as much attached, and is as much a worldly man as the rich man with his limousines and his princely income. Only the poor man is the worse off - because of his envy! To be a man of renunciation one must completely give up everything, without thought of keeping for himself even the barest necessities of life. He must possess nothing but God. How can one really achieve such a state? Only by fully realizing that the ideal is to renounce, utterly, me and mine. Attachment - whether to a rag and a hut or to silk robes and palaces - does not come from a quality in the objects, but from a possessive taint in the mind. Everything belongs either to nature or to God. The moment you label anything as yours, you begin to suffer from attachment. The ideal monk, therefore, subdues all craving for possessions, renounces the ego-sense, and becomes content to live either in the midst of poverty or in the midst of plenty.

"He who is everywhere unattached." says the Gita, "not pleased at receiving good, not vexed at evil - his wisdom is fixed."

The vow of a monk is not a vow of poverty - the expression would be generally understood: it is a vow to cease craving for things.

"That man who lives devoid of longing"- if we may return to the Gita - "abandoning all craving, without the sense of I and mine he attains to peace."

Remember: the ideal of renunciation is nothing that can be vulgarly demonstrated. It is the inner life, hidden from the eyes of all; for renunciation is in the mind and not in the object. A spiritual man is never eager to convince people of his spirituality. It is only the fakirs and the hypocrites who try to show their renunciation and their austerity by practicing mortifications of the flesh, and this they do either to gratify some selfish desire or to gain for themselves recognition.

"The austerity which is practiced with the object of gaining welcome, honor, and worship, and with ostentation, is said to be rajasika, unstable and transitory.

"That austerity which is practiced out of a foolish notion, with self-torture or for the purpose of ruining another, is declared to be tamasika." (Gita)

A man who seeks the spiritual ideal always seeks to please God and never seeks to please man.

Question: What is austerity then? Should we not practice austerity?

Answer: In Sanskrit it is called tapas, which literally means that which generates heat or energy. In other words, it is the practice of conserving energy and directing it towards a single goal - illumination in one's own soul. It is not by observing an externally austere life, in the sense of living in discomfort and poverty, or by torturing the flesh, that one can achieve this goal. Merely outward austerity is a degenerate form of ritualism, and is condemned by illumined souls. As to external observances, both Krishna and Buddha teach moderation.

"Success in Yoga is not for him who eats too much or too little; nor, O Arjuna, for him who sleeps too much or too little.

"To him who in eating and recreation, in his effort for work, and in sleep and wakefulness, Yoga becomes the destroyer of misery." (Gita)

If by observing certain forms of living, or by undergoing some physical discomfort, one could gain self-control, religious life would be very easy. Degeneration in organized monasticism began only after the introduction of that kind of ritualism. Instances are not wanting of monks who to all appearance lived an austere life, yet who having learned no self-control, even in the loneliness of their cells were guilty of abominations. The ideal, the spirit, is forgotten: the form is all.

"Worship of the higher powers, service to the teacher and to the wise, cleanliness, external and internal, straightforwardness, continence, and care not to injure any being - these things are known as the austerity of the body.

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

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

In short: passionless peace can be had only by control of the passions and by devotion, in

meditation, to God.

One point in this connection needs to be emphasized: we should never forget that the ideal of life is neither austerity nor renunciation, nor even meditation, but to know God, to be illumined within one's own soul. The means must never be confused with the end.

Question: Should not the life of a spiritual man be confined to communion with God and instruction of seekers, so that the most casual worldling can have no doubt that whether his faith is fact or fancy his existence cannot possibly have other than a spiritual meaning? Should not his only comfort be unmistakably in one thing: exclusive communion with God?

Answer: Yes, truly, the life of such a man must be a continuous communion with God. He must live, move, and have his being in Him. Without devotion, in meditation, to God, no illumination is possible. With closed eyes must he meditate. and with open eyes also he must commune with God. In work. in leisure, even while asleep, he must learn to live in God. But. again, his communion with God must be such that not even his friend would know that he is communing with God; to say nothing of a casual worldling.

Jesus said to his disciples:

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret."

No, a spiritual soul never makes any demonstration either of his renunciation or of his communion with God. He even sometimes raises external barriers to shield himself from the eyes of the curious. He does not desire to attract the attention of the frivolous.

(Reprinted from Vedanta and the West, May -June 1941)

Thayumanava **By Swami Ritajananda**

The temple on the rock of Trichinopoly is an ancient one. Many saints have visited the place and sung the praise of the presiding deity Shiva. Tradition tells that here the Lord, out of His infinite grace took the form of the mother of an ailing woman to nurse her and consequently got the name of 'Mathrubhuteswara' - Thayumanava in Tamil - or He, who became the mother.

One evening the melodious bells of the temple began to call the pious devotees for the evening service. Young and old people started climbing the steps on the rock even a bit early to be in time for the worship. While the ruddy sun was just disappearing on the distant horizon, the priest lifted the stand of a hundred lamps and gently waved it before the Lord. The loud notes of the pipes, mixed with the sounds of the bells and the shouts of the pious devotees, 'Hara! Hara! Mahadeva!' brought about a highly religious atmosphere. Among the crowd was a young man in the early twenties. He had charming features and was majestic in his movements. Though he joined the group of worshippers, it was clear that he was not fully satisfied with this but was in need of something of greater spiritual appeal.

The service was over and the devotees slowly left the temple. But this young man lingered on in the corridors and at last came out of the temple precincts to the open space. There he

noticed a sadhu absorbed in meditation. There was a spiritual glow in his radiant face showing the bliss he was enjoying in the contemplation. Except for the begging bowl, the staff and a book, there was no other article by his side. People had seen the sadhu many a time, but he was never seen exchanging a word with any one. So they, began to call him the "Mouna Swami," the silent monk. The young man felt curious to know more about the saint. Further, his vast studies of the scriptures had kindled a desire for higher life and he was eagerly seeking a proper guide. He sat nearby and watched. Hours rolled on, but the saint moved not a bit. At last when the whole of nature was immersed in deep sleep and it was past midnight, the saint slowly opened his eyes. He was surprised to see the young man near him at that late hour. He asked the purpose of his, visit. The young man, who never expected the silent monk would address him, felt confused and could not think of any better question than to ask, "Sir, may I know the name of the book, which is with you?" The saint calmly gave the name of the book as Shiva-Jnana-Siddhi "Sir, I shall be very thankful if you will explain the terms Shiva, Jnana and Siddhi," the young man asked again. The saint explained the terms and seeing the earnestness of the listener began to elucidate the nature of God, the means of knowledge and the goal, as presented in the book. The conversation slowly took the form of a discussion and the saint met all the questions of the young man and cleared all his doubts. When the talks were concluded the young man felt that the sadhu before him was no ordinary person, but a great scholar of the scriptures, with intuitive knowledge to boot. It was indeed a blessed day, he thought, to have come across such a holy person with all the qualifications of a Guru. His prayers did not go in vain and the Lord had sent his Master. So, he prostrated before the saint and requested him to accept him as his disciple. The saint, who had noted his real thirst for spiritual life consented and gave him the preliminary initiation.

But who was the young man?

In the early part of the eighteenth century, Trichinopoly and the surrounding country were under the rule of a prince Vijayaraya Chokkalinga Nayakar. He had a steward by the name of Ketilyapillai who managed the affairs very ably and won the admiration of the prince. Extremely generous by nature, he even gave away his only son to his elder brother, who had no children. As years rolled on and when he felt the approach of old age, he felt the need of a son. So he began to pray to the Lord of Trichinopoly rock to bless him with a child. His request was granted and his wife gave birth to a son, who was named as Thayumanava. At school the intelligent boy took keen interest in his studies. He mastered all that was necessary to chalk out a career in life and also the two important languages of the times: Sanskrit and Tamil. When the boy reached the age of fourteen, suddenly his father passed away. The prince had come to know about the boy's attainments, and immediately appointed him in his father's place, without considering even his tender age. But Thayumanava took up the work with confidence, and showed great skill in handling the responsible task. The leisure hours he spent in studying the scriptures, for which he evinced a great interest. He went through all the Upanishads, the Puranas and the Agama Shastras and soon came to the conclusion that the great purpose of life was God-realization. Little by little this desire became an absorbing passion. He felt restless and desired a Guru or Master, who would show him the way. One day when he went to the temple with this longing, the incident mentioned in the beginning took place.

Thayumanava was very happy to meet the venerable saint, whom he accepted as his Master. When the morning dawned the saint prepared to leave the place. Thayumanava wanted to follow him. But the sage forbade him saying, "My child, give up this idea! Go home and enter the householder's life. You need not feel sorry about this. When the time is ready, I shall myself go to you and initiate you into Sanyasa." But the disciple was not satisfied. The desire to give up the world immediately and practise austerities under the guidance of the Master goaded him to press his request once more. Seeing this, the saint turned towards him and in a gentle and dignified manner said, "Be quiet" and left the place.

These two words, though they may appear to have no special meaning to the readers, became an important message to Thayumanava. He found that the words contained a wealth of spiritual instruction, recalling to his mind the essence of all the scriptures. All the books uniformly pointed out that the spiritual aspirant has to develop complete control over his senses, which will lead to calmness of the mind. Without mastery over desires none can dive

into the realm of the spirit. Considering all these he began to think, "How gracious was my Master! By the utterance of the two words he has made me look into myself and see how I am unfit for the ascetic life just now? Are my passions under control? Have I developed such a high state of renunciation to take up the roll of a wandering monk? He had no other alternative but to go back and prepare himself for the final step.

As days rolled on, he saw clearly how his mind was the playground of the passions, and felt that it was no easy task to quieten the mind. The words of his Master came to his rescue, and the noble instructions he received on that night at the temple brought him courage and consolation. He could not think of his Master as an ordinary being but the Lord Himself, who had taken human form to enlighten him. He had come as the Chinmayananda Guru.

Thayumanava composed a number of psalms in adoration of his Master referring to him as the Mouna Shiva, Lord of All, Light of Heaven etc. But in spite of these internal struggles, he carried on his duties as before. A few months later the Prince died and greater responsibility fell on his young shoulders. He had to work hard and see that the royal household was not affected by the passing away of the king. The queen often saw this young man moving about in the palace and developed a passion for him. When she began to express her desires, Thayumanava felt shocked at her weakness and began to admonish her. But what effect can spiritual instruction have on an infatuated person? All his talks were wasted and there was imminent danger to his position and life if he continued to stay there under those conditions. So, one night he left Trichinopoly without the knowledge of anyone.

The morning dawned and the members of the royal household soon found out that the steward was missing. They searched all around and could get no trace of him. News soon reached his elder brother at Vedaranyam. Messengers were sent to various places and after some months they found him in a lonely spot near Ramnad. The brother rushed to the spot and beheld his brother given to severe austerities. His emaciated body and the matted locks brought tears to his eyes. He sat near and began to entreat him to give up that mode of life and go with him to Vedaranyam, where he could carry on the spiritual life, with lesser discomfort. "If you do not like the work at Trichinopoly, you can stay with me. You can be the master of your time and we shall look after you," he said. Thayumanava looked at his brother. The tear-stained face and the affectionate words made him consent to go to Vedaranyam.

But that was not all. The relatives soon arranged for his marriage and Thayumanava agreed to that also. Did not his Master ask him to lead the life of a householder? He would obey him and patiently wait. A few years later his wife gave birth to a male child and left the world.

Thayumanava performed her obsequies and thought how the Lord was arranging all his affairs and freeing him from all obligation. The child was entrusted to the care of the relatives and Thayumanava had finished the life of a householder.

One evening suddenly the 'Mouna Swami' appeared before him and told him that he could now renounce the world. Immediately Thayumanava arranged for the Sannyasa and that very night, getting the final instructions from his Master, he left the place. The spot near Ramnad was very suitable for his spiritual life and so he went there. Now there was no more obstruction on his way and he began to practise the yogic exercises as taught by his Master. The remaining part of his life was spent there, except perhaps for short visits to important places of pilgrimage, like Chidambaram. He is said to have lived up to a fairly old age, although no authentic dates of his birth and passing away are available. It is clear that most of his life was spent in spiritual contemplation which he has brought out in the numerous compositions he has left behind.

At present the poetical works of saint Thayumanava occupy a very unique place in the Tamil devotional literature. While the earlier Nayanmars (Saivite saints) and the Alvars (Vaishnavite saints), sang in praise of Shiva or Vishnu, Thayumanava took a new method of approach. He adored the Supreme Reality, the all-pervading One beyond the reach of mind and speech. His Master initiated him into the worship of Shiva. But Thayumanava soon went beyond all names and forms. In his hymn of prayer to 'Para Shiva' he begins:

"What it is full of joy, shineth everywhere, so that men henceforth may never speak of Him as 'here' or 'there.'

In whose grace ensphered, abiding all the worlds unnumbered roll.
He hath willed it so, who giveth life to every living soul.
What alone hath passed unhindered into mind and speech of man
Theme of endless disputation 'mong the sects since time began.
Clamoured o'er, grasped as treasure, 'ours' 'ours' ignorant they cry.
The All Powerful, All Knowing Joyous, through eternity
What is That, Unchanging Ever - knowing neither night nor day.
That indeed my mind desireth, that can give joy always.
Think on Him, who great and silent as heaven pendeth o'er.
Him, the Soul of all, we gaze on; let us worship and adore."

But still, Thayumanava sometimes addresses the Lord as Shiva and Shakti, since he felt they are all the various forms of the one Akhanda Sachchidananda, Who pervades all the things of the world, too difficult to describe. This he beautifully brings out in the following lines.

"Some faiths call Thee, ' O Mother, Mother mine!
Some cry aloud, 'O Father, Father hail,'
Some others still, devoid of faith in aught
Beyond the grave do rant and rave in vain.
Holding to this and that, some still hail Thee
The Ineffable Light, The Boundless Space,
The Primal word, The Goal and yet besides
The Peerless Monad and the Triune Time.
Thou art all these and yet beyond them all,
Eternal wisdom, Bliss in grace Thou sport.
What wonder O! who can Thy glory scan
O Soul of souls on earth and other worlds,
O The All-pervading Essence True?"

(to be continued) (Reprinted from Vedanta Kesari, Sept. 1949)

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Conversations with Swami Turiyananda (contd) **By Swami Raghavananda**

July 30, 1915. Swami Turiyananda:

"Repression of passions is bad. Unless the mind is directed toward a high ideal they will find expression through other channels. Place your mind in God, then all evil will fall away by itself. That is what is meant by selfcontrol; it arises from devotion to the Lord. Feel that you are a child of God! Why should his child be lustful? Or take the attitude: 'I am pure! I am awakened! I am free!'

"To stand on your own feet means to stand in union with God, to find your strength in Him - not in the little self who is a university graduate!

"Ishwarakotis or ever-free souls are those who do not merge in nirvana but live as eternal companions of God.

"Generally, people try to exhibit their good side. They want to make a good impression instead of trying to be good themselves. The first thing we learned from Sri Ramakrishna was to pay no attention to the opinion of others. He used to say: 'Spit on public opinion! Look toward God and try to please Him!' Swamiji was like that."

While he was cutting up vegetables, Swami Turiyananda remarked: "Work is worship. Every action must be done perfectly like a sacrificial rite. It is only when actions are performed in this spirit that character is formed. But is it so easy to build the character?"

"When I was a young boy, I noticed how my older brothers changed in character after they married. They lost their nobility. Women make men worldly; that is why I hated them. When I came to Sri Ramakrishna, he helped me overcome that feeling."

"Vishnu (a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna) used to meditate very deeply, but as soon as the Master touched him, he would wake up and gaze at him. Nityagopal (a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna) used to live in ecstasy all the time. The Master used to tell him: 'Don't be so intense! You have to keep your mind down enough to live with other people.' Nityagopal attained a very high state. His body would become luminous. It seemed that he had no tamas (lethargy) in him. In his company I learned forbearance. We used to pass the whole night meditating and chanting the Lord's name - sometimes in Beadon Square Gardens, in the College Square, in some other park of Calcutta, or at Kalighat. The Master used to say that Nityagopal had attained the state of paramahansa (the highest state of consciousness). I tell you frankly that at any time I can raise myself to that state and forget the world."

"People are always seeking advantages for themselves. For hundreds of births they look for their own comfort. What is liberation? It is to be free from this self seeking."

"Is it so easy to live a pure life in God? One has to live very carefully. Keep your eyes wide open! Learn forbearance! If somebody harms you, do not retaliate or hold any resentment. You are saved if only you can keep your mind engaged in lofty thoughts."

August 1915. We read some portions from the life of Sri Chaitanya (great Bengali saint of the 16th century). Swami Turiyananda commented on his intense longing for Sri Krishna and his attainment of union with Him: "That kind of madness for God is possible only in a divine incarnation not in an ordinary man. What pangs of separation from Him, what yearning Sri Chaitanya suffered! As if he would die without the vision of God! Sri Chaitanya is the full incarnation of divine love. Ah, Sri Chaitanya! Lord! Lord! "

August 20, 1915.

Swami Turiyananda: "Mind, intellect, and ego are in flux. One must learn to transcend them. Go beyond, and live as the witness! In the relative plane, he who has knowledge also has ignorance, he who is good also is evil. One must transcend both ignorance and knowledge."

"Meditation begins when the meditator, the process of meditation, and the object of meditation have become one. When japam has become automatic, that is to say, when a part of the mind continually repeats His name, then you are progressing in japam. The important thing is to forget the ego."

"The mind that becomes elated is also subject to depression. Don't identify yourself with either! Go beyond! In the game of hide and seek the children are 'safe' when they touch the granny. Touch the granny - that is to say, somehow touch the feet of the Lord. Then you are no longer subject to the opposites of life."

"One by one a man adds adjuncts to himself. He becomes the father of a son. The son grows up, marries, and the man has a daughter-in-law, and so forth. He forgets what he really is. There is a saying that with seven imitations the original is lost. When you free yourselves from all adjuncts and meditate on your true nature, then you realize that you have always been Brahman. This world, this maya is created by the waves of your own mind."

"At one time I had the vivid and direct experience that every footstep of mine was taken through the power of the Lord and that I had no ego left. I lived in that state for some time."

"Don't expect anything from anyone! Learn to be the giver! Otherwise you will become self-centered. That is the teaching in the family of Ramakrishna. I have seen so-called holy men who thought that they had become detached from the world and would have nothing to do with others. They were dry."

"O my mind, dwell within yourself! Do not roam without! Assimilate this spirit! Give your mind to God alone! That is why you have become monks. Weep before Him and pray: 'Lord,

may I love you wholeheartedly!' Sri Ramakrishna used to teach us: 'Work with your hands, but let your mind remain at His feet.'"

Swami Shivananda: "Organized group living, usually fosters tendencies toward sectarianism, institutionalism, and rivalry in leadership. Then all spirituality is lost. But where a strong spiritual current flows, such tendencies of degeneration cannot develop any more than scum can grow on a flowing river. You see, we keep ourselves aloof from everything. Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) also keeps himself detached."

Swami Turiyananda: "Do you know why I was so successful in America? Swamiji spoke highly of me to some of the people there, and so naturally they had faith in me. When someone believes in you, you must live in such a way as to increase his faith. Otherwise, disastrous results may follow.

"You have to transcend both good and evil. However pure the mind becomes, you are not safe until you have transcended the mind itself. The sword must touch the touchstone before it turns into gold. Know that your true nature is beyond both good and evil.

"The personal God is not the end. He is still an aspect. One has to go beyond all aspects. True devotion comes after union with God. In the plane of relativity, he who is pure in heart is also impure.

"The Lord is not partial. His grace falls equally upon saint and sinner just as rain falls equally on all the land. But only the ground which is cultivated reaps a good harvest. If you ask why some feel His grace and others do not, the only answer is ignorance. And there is no answer to the why of ignorance.

"If somebody claims that he is God's favourite, he bases this attitude on his perception of the Lord's grace. But that is not the universal experience.

"There is also the theory that the Lord keeps some in bondage and gives liberation to others. Who can understand the mystery? Only he who sees one Brahman everywhere, he also sees his grace in everything, even in great disaster.

"Another theory maintains that all blessings come from God, and all evil and suffering are the results of man's karma. This attitude is helpful in ultimately freeing oneself from ego.

"Don't hide anything from us! Know that just by being clever you cannot find the truth of God. The crow thinks he is very clever, but he eats worms. We see everything so clearly that sometimes we shrink from our own insight.

"Don't you see how rotten this world is! How rare is selflessness! Selfishness and self-advertisement are rampant everywhere! How little of the mind is given to God and how much of it to the world and its objects! Unless you have dispassion toward the world, you cannot attain knowledge or devotion. But remember, it is also true that the world is real because God is real.

"If somebody hurts you and you retaliate, you hurt yourself more. You become as evil as he. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'He who curses another and holds resentments cannot attain liberation.'

(to be continued) (Reprinted from Vedanta and the West, Jan - Feb 1957)

By Swami Siddheswarananda

"Sages see with the same serenity a Brahman endowed with wisdom and humility, a cow, an elephant and even a dog and a person who lives on dog's flesh."

How can we grasp the equality of vision expressed in this verse of the Bhagavad Gita? Meister Eckhart calls it "the presence of God ..." "When we speak of equality, it does not mean that we give the same value to all works, all places and all men. That will be a serious mistake. Really and actually, it is more meritorious to pray than to spin, and the church is a nobler place than the street. But you should have the same spirit and the same confidence in all your works and you should maintain the same solemnity with your God. Of course, if you persevere in a similar equality, none can prevent you from enjoying the presence of your God."

"On the contrary, he who does not truly possess God in this manner in his inner conscience, is forced to constantly seek Him outside in this or that, and looks for Him according to diverse modalities, in men or in such and such a place or through the mediation of a work. And it thus easily happens then that the man meets with some obstacle, because he does not possess God and it is not God alone that he seeks, loves and aims at. Further, what hinders him is not only bad company but also good company, not only the street, but also the church, not only bad words and evil works but also good words and good works. The reason is that the hindrance was in himself, God had not become all in all for him. If God was everything for him, he would have found Him well and easily in every place and with all the world. Since he possesses God, nothing can deprive him of it or divert him from it." (Tracts and Sermons)

In the verse quoted from the Gita, the important idea to bear in mind is equality of vision, samadarshana. How can we reconcile our different scales of values with this equality of vision? How can they coexist? In the same discourse, Meister Eckhart has thus affirmed its possibility. "Observe well the manner in which you aspire towards your God. The dispositions you find in the church or in the cell (of your hermitage), you should keep and transport while in the midst of a crowd, in the agitation and hostility of the world." There is no opposition or conflict between this equal vision of things and the different values which we assign to them. Confusion of values arises only in the absence of that vision. From the Hindu point of view, according to the commentary of Sankara on this very verse, the scale of values corresponds to the notions of sattwa, rajas and tamas. The Brahman represents sattwa the cow, rajas; and the elephant tamas. But, Sankara continues: "In all of them, the sage sees the One, the Unchangeable, not tainted either by sattwa and the other energies or by the tendencies born of the energies whether they be sattwika, rajasika or tamasika."

Values indicate distinctions while the equal vision indicates non-distinction; values imply different degrees in the manifestation while the equal vision communicates a comprehension of the Reality beyond time, since, the vision or the comprehension of Brahman - the Presence of God - in all should necessarily efface all traces of distinction. How, then, can we reconcile that which seems mutually to exclude as well as to maintain that distinction, that is to say, the coexistence of distinction and non-distinction?

That vision is Existence, Pure and Absolute Existence. It cannot present itself to our senses in any way, and it is only about that which presents itself to our senses that we can apply a scale of values. Now, in each perception, the vision of which we speak, Samadarshana, is found present just as the clay in a vessel of clay. It is only by an artifice of speech that we distinguish between the equality of vision and the different values. Each value is the manifestation of a supreme Principle and when a person who has this equality of vision comes in contact with a sattwika rajasika or tamasika force, he reacts according to the perspective of that vision which is above all values. Sages live constantly integrated in that comprehension beyond time they see the same Principle in all manifestation.

It is this Principle which Meister Eckhart called "the Presence of God." He who does not possess this will meet with obstacles. It is interesting to note that that man is then hampered not only by bad company but also by good company, not only by the street, but also by the church, not only by bad works, but also by good works. Our system of thought does not rest on that supreme comprehension; we identify ourselves with the sattwika aspect and we place it in opposition to rajasika and tamasika aspects. Eckhart says, "God has not yet become all

for him." "If God had become all for him, he would find Him well and easily in all places and with all the world." Note that we should give in this context the same meaning to the word "God" as we give to the word "Atman-Bráhmaṇ," the Supreme Principle which is the source of all, of good as well as evil, the Tao which reconciles the Yin and the Yang. The "God" mentioned here by Eckhart is the same as "the strong castle of the soul" of which he speaks later.

If we keep a partiality for the sattwika aspect of the manifestation, opposing it to the rajasika and tamasika aspects, the equality of vision will always be denied to us. The Zen teaches thus: "To oppose that which you love with that which you do not love is the disease of the soul." The knowledge of that which is beyond time gives the sage that equality of vision. To reach that stage, we should go beyond all notions of duality and avoid concealing the manifestation in certain modes only. Manifestation implies different modes, different scales of values. Non-duality resides in comprehension. (This is not of an intellectual order, it is not limited by a thought or personnel; it is beyond time, and corresponds to Jnana.) Since the sage recognizes the unchangeable in it, he sees each mode of the manifestation which presents itself before him according to the perspective of that comprehension. To desire to reduce it to

one mode alone would be doing violence to nature; then the differences such as that between "the church and the street" will persist.

The sage alone can have equality of vision; his demeanour in the world will then be the plenitude of love. He dwells in the manifestation on the plane of sattwa. He cannot do any immoral or anti social action. In contact with the forces of rajas and tamas, he unconsciously exercises a sattwika force and transforms them in its radiance for the good of the world. A dynamic power of sattwa emanates from the sage, and his presence on the plane of manifestation becomes a benediction for the entire world. But his vision is not accessible except to those who have reached the 'plane' of non-duality.

(Reprinted from The Vedanta Kesari, January 1958)

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Pathways of Realization (contd.)

By Clement James Knott

The Feeling Body.

What is the feeling body? How do we know that there is such a thing if it is formless, invisible and unmeasurable? As with other aspects of consciousness, the truth cannot be found by argument. It has to be discovered in the experience of the self (Jivatman).

If the individual has been seriously deprived in his early years of opportunities for emotional expression and contacts, then his personality will have become unbalanced due to his lack of experience in friendship, loving, and devotion. He will have a feeling of alienation and isolation. Part of his beingness will have become moribund before it has had a chance to come to fruition.

The feeling body is a link between the spiritual and mental bodies by means of the senses. It is essential for the co-ordination and integration of the four vital bodies of the aspirant. In order to address any of the four principal paths of Yoga, it is necessary to accept that each has its own field of reality or of assumed reality and it needs to be addressed within that field. The feeling body is also essential for the functioning of the faculty of the imagination and for any creative activity. A decline in creative feeling is usually connected with a decline

in perception and vision.

We each have our own set of feelings as a result of our life experience, but much of it is in the subconscious. How can we set about uncovering our ready stock of feelings? It is usually a mixture of bodily sensations, perceptions, motions and emotions, actions and reactions. Every word, thought or action that we do has the potential to convey a feeling, if only momentarily, and each of these feelings can be observed separately. The aspirant needs to practise the ability to observe and recognize his own feelings without reacting or responding, for the purpose of self-observation. We do not need to recall images or other associations of by-gones unless they are influencing our present conduct unacceptably.

Without the feeling body the integration of the other aspects of consciousness would be impossible. The subconscious part of the feeling body is a reactive mechanism influencing the mind. An inner feeling is a reaction to a perception of the senses or the imagination. The feeling itself can then be perceived. The initial perception and the feeling of it are almost instantaneous. However, the feeling itself may not have been perceived or recognized. Instead of being expressed, it may have been ignored or consigned to the subconscious or committed to the memory. For the purpose of self-observation one needs to avoid reacting compulsively to feeling or images in the memory or in the subconscious by training the mind to react with volition to perceptions in the present time. This is one-pointedness in practice. We all have a space in our personality for the feeling body. It can be trained and enhanced, like any of our other faculties. Can we regenerate it if it is not doing its job? Every perception and action that we do is accompanied by a sensation or feeling. People tend to regard their feeling as the right one. This is not necessarily correct. Our feelings may be appropriate or mistaken; true or false. A feeling seems to be true (real) if it seems to be spontaneous, then it passes into the memory or the subconscious. So it is sometimes easier to recall the predominant feelings afterwards rather than observing them in present time. If it passes only momentarily, it needs one-pointed self-observation to recognize it.

If the feeling mind has been much prevented from responding, then the resulting emotional vacuum is liable to be occupied by inappropriate modes of the mind or attitudes, such as general feelings of guilt or fear.

If one is doing repetitive or uninteresting work, then it is necessary to avoid the habit of disconnecting one's feelings. Whatever one is perceiving and wherever one is directing attention, the feeling body is part of our awareness. It should be kept "ticking over" continuously. It is a vital element in our consciousness.

The Reactivity of the Mind

The mind can not only tell the body what to do, the aware self can tell the mind what to do also. The thinking mind can tell the feeling mind to change its habits and perform better. For instance:

"Stop being compulsively reactive in thought, word and deed." and, "Perceive clearly before responding." or, "Stop feeling tense when there is no good reason." or even, "Stop being distracted. Stay here in present time."

If one wishes to react, then one needs first to perceive present conditions just as they are. The reactive part of the mind is a remnant from a prehistoric time when mankind was closer to our primitive progenitors and was more self-reliant on a survival level. For many people, the reactive mind has become a hindrance to the better development of their mental faculties. It has become an encumbrance that needs to be brought in line with our present ideals and life expectations. As the body has evolved and adapted itself to changing environments, so the mind must continue to evolve also and it has the innate ability to do so, if it is first relieved of its superfluous modes.

The subconscious part of the feeling mind is a reactive mechanism which was intended to operate automatically so as to aid the survival of the individual in response to occurrences that may threaten his existence. To fulfil this function it needed to be alert and open to stimulation and capable of response. These same qualities of the mind, sadly for us all, have been seized on by some modern "control freaks," who have misused that knowledge as a tool for domination to further their own nefarious objectives.

In order to change the mode of functioning of one's own mind so as to make its performance more self-determined, we each need to familiarize ourselves with its modes of functioning as they are now. One starting point for this self-observation is to familiarize ourselves with the feeling body, observing closely the movements of feeling, as they change from day to day and from moment to moment.

Self-observation and Listing

We need to prevent the mind from making compulsive reactions to our perceptions. For some people, the question of thinking about their feelings is taboo: "If I think about my feelings they will not be spontaneous. That would not be me, would it?" It is a matter of being more self-determined and not letting feelings control you. It is a choice of whether you wish to have the emotions that others want you to have or do you wish to experience your own true feelings in accordance with your own mind and personality.

It is a matter of exerting your own will. The individual will lives for each moment. Your own will is wherever you are directing your conscious attention at this present moment.

The thinking and the feeling bodies can function either in conjunction or separately. We need to discern each of the two aspects so that we can observe them separately when we wish to do so, in order to maintain a balance between them. Too much emotion can be as debilitating as too little of it, just as too much mentation can be as harmful as too little.

One can easily discover more about one's own feelings and responses, by the practice of self-observation. This can be achieved by keeping a written list as a sort of "autobiography of actual feelings." This can be set down by recording changes of feelings as soon as is practicable after they occur. The list does not need to include images or incidents, but simply present time information such as the perception, the feeling and duration of it (even momentary) whether it was triggered by something else or is unconnected, and any explanatory comments. Following this practice through several weeks will give a better understanding of the contents of the feeling mind and how it functions. The form of the list can of course be adapted to suit oneself, providing the information is as accurate as can be, whether the content seems to be good, bad or indifferent. This is not a substitute for any practice of religion or Yoga but it should enhance one's awareness for continuing any established practices.

The Need for Rehabilitation of the Feeling Mind

Why has the education of the feeling body been neglected for so long in the modern system of education that has been handed out to most of us? It is a product of changing social and educational attitudes over a long period of time.

In the 18th Century, when English society was becoming more stratified, the ruling classes adopted attitudes which suited their position in society. When it came to expressing their feelings about issues or other individuals (usually their social inferiors) it became fashionable in some circles to feign utter indifference to the matter. This attitude not only saved them from examining and expressing their feelings, it also saved them from thinking deeply about controversial matters. These prominent members of society chose to suppress their feelings and their reactions when it suited them. These negative attitudes tended to filter down into the rapidly booming middle classes, who sought to emulate their betters. The "Stiff upper lip," came to be expected as a national characteristic.

Towards the end of the 18th century there was a counter trend which sought to restore personal feeling as a basis for individual action. The term coined for this at the time was "sentimental," which involved observing one's personal feelings and the feelings of others and acting accordingly. This trend was encouraged by some writers of novels (usually an entertaining mixture of fiction and biography) and spread through fashionable literary circles. One of the best known authors of this genre was Laurence Sterne, who stopped short of exposing the origins of his own feelings and his moral standpoint, though he was an ordained minister of the Church of England. As a movement, the pursuit of the "sentimental" was bound to peter out as it depended on the feelings and responses of individuals without any central objective, and sentiments varied widely amongst individuals. When it fizzled out it was superseded by more authoritarian views of codes of social conduct. This contributed to a

situation of conflicting codes of personal and social conduct which also permeated the education system.

After the political revolutions in Europe in the 1830s and 40s, social movements spread and there was a conservative reaction in a number of countries. In England there was a growing campaign for education of the burgeoning working classes. There were many tracts published by radicals advocating future forms of education. One of these was entitled *The Education of Feelings*, but it did not catch on and it had little effect. A number of local schools were established with private funds and progressive methods and the success of these ventures added strength to the movement for reform.

However, free education was initially opposed by the powers that be and there followed a sustained campaign by various radical groups for legislation. When compulsory education for children was eventually introduced, the basic syllabus imposed was limited and unimaginative with little scope for the development of personality or creativity. The emphasis was on rote learning. The feeling mind was not taken into account and this had a cumulative effect, as some pupils eventually became teachers themselves and became more introverted into the thinking mind. This negative process is much in evidence to this day.

We are all of us subjected to the pressures of the communications media, the entertainment industry and the cyber-culture which all include a bogus emotional content which is intended to produce corresponding reactions in the public mind. The communications media exist by taking on themselves the job of thinking and feeling for a large section of the public. We do not have to go along with this negative trend if we wish to pursue our own ideals. We do not need to live by the bogus emotions of the mass media, nor to go along with their habit of blurring the boundaries between fact, opinion and fiction. Some gullible people have come to believe that TV drama is more real than real life. What happens when "virtual" reality exceeds reality? We urgently need to rehabilitate our capacity to live by our own true feelings and emotions, as part of the process of integrating our own personalities and beingness, free of any factionalism.

In recent years several major governments have initiated covert programmes intended to make their own peoples more receptive to their propaganda, and more receptive to control by officialdom, by means of manipulating the emotional body on a mega scale. As a result of policies of "information management" and officially inspired "spin," the news media have become less and less objective and selectively more partial with the aim of producing the mass emotional effect that will further the policies of those in power. These techniques of mass manipulation in the hands of mavericks can undermine society as we know it. This process gathers increasing momentum and, once let loose, it is difficult to restrain it. One result of this situation in those countries where the government has suborned the democratic process to pursue its own ends, that there are now many intelligent people who refuse to react to the machinations of officialdom. They refuse to believe what the government and the communications media want them to believe. They have withdrawn their emotions from any dealings with officialdom. The public side of their emotional life is in abeyance. This is a survival mechanism (massive but shorn of power) against the system under which they are obliged to live. It is a situation that the governments concerned can do little to improve, unless they are able to reform themselves fundamentally. Any government that has allowed such a situation to come about in the first place is probably incapable of true basic reform. They have sacrificed their own credibility in pursuit of their irrational materialist doctrines.

Realization of the Feeling Body

"Love" has become a multi-purpose word. It is useful to describe many kinds of feeling, emotion and experience, often sincerely but sometimes for the sake of effect. Everyone has an impression of what love feels like and when one uses the word, it is assumed that other people know what one actually means. We usually gather what is meant by our knowledge of the circumstances. For instance: "I love my country" is a very different feeling from "I love that actress; she is divine". Each of these may seem real to the person, but we need to allow for the modern tendency for "hype" and exaggeration. If there is no element of selflessness, but instead there is only more egotism, they may simply mean, "I like the feeling that gives

me." Strong emotions tend to magnify things out of proportion to their importance, so that we lose our sense of priorities.

The word "love" has become over-used because in English there are no subtle synonyms for it in general use. This has left the way open for romantic expressions to convey the feeling instead. Other formal words such as union, devotion, affinity, adoration or dedication can express aspects of special affection but "loving" implies a lover as the active originator and a beloved as the more passive recipient. This is a human concept of personal love and is perhaps too limited for expressing the effulgent glory of true love emanating from the divine.

The "Western" concept of love has changed through the ages. For instance: a story from the Bible was used in a successful Country and Western song (thanks to Hank Snow) with a chorus line, "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for a friend." This is a powerful image and it conveys a strong feeling but it has been changed from the original emotion intended which had a spiritual content that is lacking in the modern commercial version.

There are various feelings described as "love" that are experienced and manifested through the spiritualized aspect of the feeling body. Some other feelings may be stronger, such as fear, hatred or panic, but fearless loving has the capability of over-riding even these.

Why is it that the experience of loving is sometimes overwhelming? It can feel so real and compelling, with a reality all of its own, as if it can never end, putting our own self-will into abeyance and our actions beyond our control. We are brought to this point by our impressions of our life experience; a mixture of instincts, emotions, beliefs and desires. Why is it that personal love can over-ride the rest of the feeling body in this way? It is because we have not accepted responsibility for our own feelings and emotions. We have allowed them to over-ride our judgement so as to cause us to act out of character.

The need for love is fundamental and is descended from a primary desire for union with the (formless) source of all creation, or with the Ishta (the chosen form of the Divine). It is a reminder of a desire for ultimate union which supersedes all other desires of a divisive, dualistic nature. It is a desire for restoration to integration and completeness, for renewal and regeneration. It is also a remembrance of previous desires satisfied, a reminder of past affinities and ideals which we have kept in the subconscious awaiting an awakening.

Realization of the feeling body is a conscious union in spirit with the object of affection and adoration; a surrendering of self to a greater Self.

Realization of the feeling body through love may be temporary or for a lifetime. It calls for a conscious effort of self-sacrifice of the ego-mind. But of all it requires the recognition of one's own feeling body as a crucial component part of one's consciousness. It contains impressions of feelings left over from our previous experiences. It needs to be subjected to self-observation to restore self-determinism and to achieve integration and harmony with the three other vital bodies of our living beingness, through Yoga.

"God is Love"

God is love. Yes, but which God? The immanent one or the transcendent who is beyond the world of the senses? The Creator who is outside of the Cosmos or the Creator who pervades his continuing creation? Each aware self is free to choose his or her own way of loving the divine Supreme, whether it is by means of dualism, modified dualism, monotheism, pantheism, monism or non-dualism or any other category of belief.

In India there are many words for love, many names for God and many languages. At the beginning of the 20th Century it was recorded that there were 745 languages in British India, many of them verbal rather than written. In some of these languages there are words representing various different types and aspects of love. Others used the same word to represent the love of God and the love between two persons. The Sanskrit word prema means love in the divine sense, but how do we distinguish man's love for the divine and the love of God for his creatures? They are different, but one needs the other. The love of the father for his child is quite different from the love of the child for the father. To the child, love is necessary for his continued survival. He expects it and takes it for granted, assuming it as his right and demanding it in many innocent ways, vociferous or otherwise.

There are numerous sects in India that have incorporated love and passion into the cultural framework of their belief systems and ritual practices. The energies of sexual passion and of spiritual passion are brought together, often with symbolic sacrifices, culminating in a dual ecstasy which may be brief or of longer duration. It necessitates a continued devotion to the ritual. The Hindu goddess of sexual passion is Rati, who is also identified with Radha, signifying the dual idealism of the spouse who is devoted to the beloved, and the individual soul who is in adoration of the chosen form of God. Her counterpart is Kama, the God of desire.

When two God-like bodies come together through the spirit, they are realizing their dual roles of being the lover and being the loved one, and consciously renouncing their attachment to the ego-mind and to the limitations of the ego-body in order to enter that perfect state of one-beingness where realized love is subsumed into the bliss of the divine.

Lord Vishnu, the protector, appears in many and various aspects. As Manmatha he is the God of love (also associated with the Goddess Rati). Manmatha resides in the body in the Muladhara chakra awaiting arousal when Kundalini, coiled in the sacrum, at the base of the spine, arises from her repose and flows along the sushumna channel in the spinal column, energizing the chakras. This is not a combination of entities, but a unity of complementary principles; essence and energy; the active and the passive; the creator and the sustainer; the male and the female, and becoming a perfect desireless unity. This is a realization of the subtle body through the senses and the aware mind.

There is another aspect of human love: The love of the inner Self. Jesus tells us, "Love your neighbour as yourself" and "The Kingdom of God is within you". All of us have a divine centre which is the effulgent core of our beingness. This may be partly active and partly latent, depending to a certain extent on one's own life experience. This centre of divine energy is part of the subtle body, which is also linked with the senses. It is sensitive to flows and thoughts of a divine nature and it can be aroused and awakened by the grace of a guru who has attained the power of imparting spiritual energy to an aspirant who has reached an appropriate stage through sadhanas (spiritual practices). Sadhanas need to have a sound philosophical and practical spiritual framework for attaining the realization and integration of the four vital Yogas concurrently.

The loving of a transcendent God who is outside of his cosmos is from the loving of the immanent spirit in living form. The love of the immanent spirit is a love of the whole self and of all that is perceivable to the normal senses including devotion to the Ishta, the chosen form of the divine.

The transcendent aspect of God can be accepted as the male principle; the supreme essence in the cosmos. The female aspect of God can be accepted as the power of the cosmic energies that flow through all life, endowing it with the reality of divine qualities. The mystery of divine love can be described as the flowing of pure consciousness through realized beings to all living creatures. (to be continued)

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Leaves of an Ashrama 26 : Dispassion as Dis-Passion By Swami Vidyatmananda

You are no longer young. You could not attract others, yet you find that youth and beauty still attract you. For years you have been a conscientious spiritual seeker, shunning sesuous expression; but still you find the erotic element strong in you. "The objects of senses," as the

Gita says, "fall away from a man practicing abstinence, but not the taste for them." That this longing should still be present is too disconcerting. How can it be?

You know that you do not want sensuous expression. Experience has shown that it ends always in sadness, in squalor, in bondage. "And yet," says the mind, "maybe this time.... Perhaps I may be granted bliss devoid of consequences, just this once."

"Beauty is a terrible and awful thing!" said Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*. "I cannot bear the thought that a man of noble heart and lofty mind sets out with the ideal of the Madonna and ends with the ideal of Sodom. What's still more awful is that the man with the ideal of Sodom in his soul does not renounce the ideal of the Madonna and in the bottom of his heart he may still be on fire, sincerely on fire for the beautiful ideal, just as in the days of his youthful innocence. Yes, man's heart is wide, too wide indeed... what the intellect regards as shameful often appears splendidly beautiful to the heart."

Vedanta has responded to the riddle by saying that all beauty is a reflection of God's beauty and all allurements are an echo of his call. Brahman as Shakti entices man, but She also liberates him.

But how to answer the siren song of beauty without getting shipwrecked? "See God in beauty," responds the bhakta. The Tantrist gives an even more explicit prescription. But neither the one formula nor the other seems to work. Beauty may be God, but to us it is also the world. Dostoevsky's enigma cannot be solved.

Lustful thoughts continue to preoccupy the old. The body may be decrepit, but the mind can remain as it was in adolescence. I would not have believed this if I had not seen it first hand. Once I asked the guru when desire would disappear. "At the same time as the body - on the cremation pyre," was his reply. "Of course the experience of samadhi will relieve one of lust also," he added. "Even the taste falls away when the Supreme is seen."

Death or samadhi: the only means of killing off the erotic element. Take your pick! And until then? Make up one's mind to live with that relentless itch. Make up one's mind for one's own sake to shun all that would stir up sensual thoughts, which once entertained produce their own magic, making Sodom appear in the guise of the Madonna. "He who stirs up his own lusts is a fool," said Lord Krishna.

On the basis of undeniable experience that eroticism expressed never, never satisfies, the sadhaka must just say no, permanently no, to consideration. The erotic element will not go; it must be endured. The sadhaka must simply accept the idea that he must live with that fact and not be moved. Living with longing and not responding to it is what is called vairagya, dispassion. Although veterans of the religious life rarely speak so openly, it is mainly this that they mean when they recommend, as they universally do, the practice of renouncement.

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Book Review

Sublime Love: Essay and Anthology

A Religious and Philosophical Illumination of Spiritual Love

by Stuart Rose

Published by Indica Books, D40/18 Godowlia, Varanasi - 221 001 (U.P.) India

Stuart Rose, the author of this interesting book, has a Ph.D. in Religious Studies, and has lived, travelled and worked in many countries and organisations. He now lives simply, away from the world. In this book he has set himself the formidable task of analysing spiritual love without recourse to mysticism or poetic metaphor. In this endeavour I think he has succeeded in covering the whole field of thought in this area, quoting from numerous authorities ranging from Plato to Sigmund Freud.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part consists of a discussion ranging over all the various aspects of spiritual love. In the course of this discussion the writer deals interestingly

with various kinds of love, including love between sexes, a subject which is often avoided or briefly dismissed by writers on religious matters. He does however indicate that renunciation of sexual love occurs when the person is drawn exclusively towards divine love. In conclusion he even goes so far as to say that spiritual love itself exists only as long as one considers oneself to be separate from God: after all, who is left to love if all is one in God?

The second part of the book contains an anthology of extracts from the writings of thirty-six great thinkers about spiritual love, ranging from Thomas Aquinas to Sri Aurobindo. Among these extracts is one from the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, taken from *Vedanta: Voice of Freedom*.

Stuart Rose's presentation of all these viewpoints taken from so many religious and spiritual thinkers is quite objective and unpartisan. I have not been able to detect any kind of bias towards one particular religion or school of thought. He in fact invites the reader to form his own judgement.

John Phillip s