

Vedanta

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Indian Yoga and Western Psychology

Swami Yatiswarananda

Sankhya, Vedanta and Vivekananda - 1

Buddha Chaitanya



Divine Wisdom

Illustrated Tales and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna - 9



That oppressing stench of worldliness

Once a fishwife was a guest in the house of a gardener who raised flowers. She came there with her empty basket, after selling fish in the market, and was asked to sleep in a room where flowers were kept. But, because of the fragrance of the flowers, she could not get to sleep for a long time! She was restless and began to fidget. Her hostess saw her condition and said, "Hello! Why are you tossing from side to side so restlessly?" The fishwife said: "I don't know, friend. Perhaps the smell of the flowers has been disturbing my sleep. Can you give me my fish-basket? Perhaps that will put me to sleep." The basket was brought to her. She sprinkled water on it and set it near her nose. Then she fell sound asleep and snored all night.

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Love for God - 1

Every spiritual aspirant seeks true spiritual fulfilment and everlasting joy and wants to achieve it with the least struggle and effort. Prophets, *avatars* (incarnations), saints and devotees of most of the religions of this world have unequivocally declared that loving God with one's whole mind, heart and soul is perhaps the easiest way to true spiritual fulfilment. The most important question is: How to develop love for God? It seems rather easy because we often hear that if we pray to God sincerely, try to lead an ethical life and worship Him, we can have love of God. This is what most of the organised religions advise. But does that effort really enable one to genuinely develop true love for God? However easy or natural this path may seem, there are several difficulties and struggles involved in this endeavour.

Firstly, it is difficult for us to understand what true love for God means. Most of us have a very rudimentary understanding of what true love is. By love, we normally try to understand it as we experience it in our relation toward worldly things and people. We say we love our parents, children, friends and so on. The husband says he loves his wife and the wife, her husband. But even in these human relationships, which we believe are based on love, very often we find that it is mixed up with love for wealth, power, position, career, and such other things. It is often a selfish kind of love where there is more of 'taking' than 'giving'. True unselfish love for love's sake is exceedingly rare in this world. We are easily able to experience and understand all these types of love. But to understand what true love of God really means is rather difficult. The reason is that everything we love in this world is gross and can be perceived through our senses. God, however, is beyond the sense world. We do not have that supersensuous experience of God which will enable us to love Him the way we love people and things of this world. In

the beginning it is often a strong sense of imagination rather than a perceived reality when we think of love of God. Some sort of experience is necessary without which we cannot genuinely love Him.

Though the difficulty is obvious, we get some hope when we read the lives and teachings of people who have had that experience and they show us the way to achieve the goal. Sri Ramakrishna used to often advise devotees that they must assume toward God a particular attitude. He used to say that one must think of God as one's father, or mother, or child, and so forth. That sort of superimposition can be of some help in the beginning. As we already have experience of love for all these earthly relations, we may find it easier to superimpose it on or direct it towards God. All the scriptures emphasise that one should have a definite relationship with God. Some even say that it is essential to feel that He is our everything in this world. Swami Brahmananda used to say, "Choose that aspect of God which most appeals to you, and when you feel a growing devotion toward that one aspect, when you feel a steadfast love toward your Chosen Ideal, you will love God in all His aspects." (*Eternal Companion*, pg.197.) In the beginning, however, it is a sort of imagination, and with the gradual deepening of feeling, this very imagination becomes realization. What is imagination today will become realization tomorrow. That is how love of God can be cultivated. This love of God is called bhakti or devotion, and the path to attain God through bhakti is called Bhakti Yoga.

The devotional path, though comparatively easy, involves a lot of struggle. People struggle so hard to acquire worldly things and get human love. Is it so easy to attain God who is the most precious possession in life? Sri Ramakrishna used to say that a man will surely attain God if he possesses in an intense degree three kinds of love – the love a chaste wife feels toward her husband, the attraction the worldly man feels toward the world, and the attachment the miser

feels toward his hoarded wealth. The idea here is that lust and greed are nothing but the desire to attain oneness. Lust and greed are misdirected aspects of the love for God or Oneness. People misdirect it toward the gross world instead of directing it inward toward the spirit. They remain immersed in the desire to acquire the gross and thus fail to carry it up towards the Pure Spirit or Consciousness, or God. However, we have many instances where people have begun with great intensity toward the gross but suddenly changed the direction and made rapid progress in their journey towards the Spirit or God. We have heard of Bilvamangala and Tulsidas, for instance. Tulsidas had an inordinate attachment toward his wife. She went to her father's house one day and Tulsidas followed her in a raging storm and flood, risking his life by crossing a river in spate, and finally reached her house at night. Disgusted at this, the wife remarked, "If you can bestow even a grain of this love on the Lord, you will soon realise Him." At once his power of discrimination was roused and he instantly renounced the world and became a great saint. Love and lust look very much allied but if we have the idea of a human being it is lust, and if we have the idea of Spirit or God it is love. Hence Sri Ramakrishna used to say that lust is blind, but love is pure and resplendent. Passion or lust is that which centres round oneself; and love is that which centres round God.

Practice is absolutely necessary. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, one must 'repeat God's name and sing His glories and keep holy company'. These are preparatory steps to devotion. Ritualistic worship, prayer and so on are called *vaidhi bhakti* or the way of devotion as prescribed by the scriptures. We will have to continue our preparatory devotion until we feel God's living presence. Even though we may assume some relationship with God and try to pray, worship and so on, there are several obstacles in the path—both internal and external. There are internal problems like lust, greed, etc., while lack of proper place, help, cooperation, and so on are

external obstacles. All spiritual masters have given a lot of importance to dispassion for the world. If we feel that life in the gross world is a great bondage, and that the world is ultimately an abode of misery, there will gradually come a distaste for worldly enjoyments and our love for God will increase. We will then desperately try to seek a remedy, which is to think of God and to repeat His name. In the beginning one may have to force oneself to repeat God's name, but as it becomes a habit one will find joy in doing it, and a stage may come when we will not be able to live without chanting His name. Swami Turiyananda, a monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, says, "Always repeat the name of God - while taking meals, while at bed, or when you are at your seat. Just close your lips and be busy only with the repetition of the name of God. Sri Ramakrishna would cite the example of the compass. The magnetic needle of the compass always points to the north. You may turn the needle away, but as soon as you let go the hold, it again points to the north. Your mind also should be so moulded. If somebody comes and diverts your mind to any other topic, as soon as he leaves you, the mind should be again repeating His name. Just see - so long I was talking with you; as soon as I have stopped speaking, the song (japa) is going on within." (*Spiritual Talks*, pg.306)

Sri Ramakrishna said that all problems cease when love dawns in the mind of a devotee. The fire of love burns to ashes our lust, anger, jealousy, and so on. In other words, intense love for God removes all obstacles from the path of God-realization. We say that there are terrible obstacles in this world. Such obstacles, however, are not in the world but they are in the mind. When love of God dawns in the mind, all obstacles disappear. How can we achieve this intense love for God? It can be achieved by regularly serving and remembering God with love and sincerity. The mind of one who leads a pure life gradually becomes tinged with divine love. Then, no worldly obstacles can stop that person's growth. That is called

real love. Sincere love for God removes all obstacles from the life of a devotee.

Sri Ramakrishna gave a few suggestions so that the devotees may be free from obstacles on the spiritual path. One is prayer. If one prays to God sincerely, God removes all obstacles and makes everything favourable. The Master's second suggestion is to have the company of holy persons. He is a holy man who lifts others' minds to a higher realm of spirituality. Holy persons are exemplars of holiness. Their lives vindicate the existence of God; otherwise, human beings could not have faith in spiritual life. The third suggestion is to live in a solitary place occasionally. So, we should go into solitude and think about the goal of human life. If we experience that the world is not real and is full of misery, we will not be attracted to it. Swami Brahmananda, however, cautions us, "But you should retire into solitude only when you have attained some growth in spiritual life. To retire from human society before one is ready is unwise. In this world of time, space and causation, it is impossible to find true solitude. True solitude lies beyond the mind and intellect... Therefore, it is better for a beginner to live in the company of holy men." (Eternal Companion, p.258.) Spiritual disciplines remove our attachment for the world and create in us a longing for God. Longing is the only thing needed. "Longing is like the rosy dawn. After the dawn out comes the sun. Longing is followed by the vision of God," says Sri Ramakrishna.

Lastly, one must remember that this path of devotion can be practiced by everyone. Even the vilest man can start with it, and gradually improvement will take place. The nature of that love is that it not only purifies the person who loves, but the conception of his or her object of love also undergoes change. That purification, or that transformation, goes on from the gross to the subtle and the subtlest and even beyond. This is the beauty of the path of devotion.

Indian Yoga and Western Psychology

Swami Yatiswarananda

Our modern world is full of stress and strain. Most of us are suffering from a mental fever which is increasing the number of mental cases everywhere. "Half of the hospital beds of this country," says an eminent American doctor, "are filled with persons mentally ill." As compared to those who are accommodated in the hospitals, there is an enormously large number of persons for whom beds are not available. This is true of all countries including India. In such a strait the question arises—Can Hindu Yoga and Western Psychotherapy help us and to what extent?

The System of Yoga

The word 'Yoga' has come to be associated with physical feats and psychic powers and phenomena. However, according to the ancient Yogic teacher Patanjali, the true meaning of Yoga is the cessation of all mental waves, as a result of which the spiritual seeker is established in his true Self. In the Bhagavad-Gita, Sri Krishna defines Yoga as "that state in which the mind is restrained by the practice of concentration, in which seeing the Self by the Self one enjoys transcendental bliss and remains unaffected even by the greatest pain."

In a lunatic asylum one of the inmates was playing solitaire—a card game for a single person—and his friend was watching him. "Wait," interrupted his friend, "I have caught you cheating yourself." "Don't you catch yourself cheating?" The man replied, "No, never. I am too clever." All of us are too clever like the mad man and are fooling ourselves in countless ways. The teacher of Yoga tells us that we are practicing self-deception and running away from our true Self all the time. In the waking state we remain identified with various ever-changing experiences. In dream we remain absorbed in our dream world and its phenomena. In sleep we are lost in the state of unconsciousness. How often do we daydream and live in the world

of memory and fantasy! Our observation is faulty, information is unreliable, and the conclusion is wrong. We certainly need clear observation, reliable information, and an accurate conclusion as a step towards realising our true Self.

Our True Self

What is our true Self? According to Yoga, man is pure spirit but owing to ignorance he comes to be identified with the ego, mind, senses and body. Western psychology has not yet discovered the true Self of man, although it seems to be searching for it. Many modern psychologists speak of the "person in the body", meaning that a human being is "an integrated body-mind".

The Achievement of Western Psychology

We are thankful to these psychologists for having refuted the materialistic theory that man is a combination of cells and his mind is an epiphenomenon. The materialistic thinkers hold that the highly organised brain secretes thought just as the liver secretes bile. The concept that man is a physio-psychical being is certainly an improvement over the old materialistic way of thinking. Modern psychologists are revealing to us how we do not want to face the realities of life and are playing tricks on ourselves in various ways. When we are faced with our enemies in the form of anger, sex, fear, pride, jealousy, instead of fighting them we suppress or repress them. Consciously or unconsciously we drive them to the subconscious plane. We try to forget our troubles, but they do not forget us. They go on working unperceived by us and produce neurosis and other ailments. The passionate man, the miser, the cruel person in us practices self-deception called rationalisation. We try somehow or other to justify our conduct by taking shelter under false reasoning, which makes us look better than we are. We put on false reasoning glasses and see the world coloured by our own ideas projected on it. We try to avoid conflicts by taking refuge under self-deception in some form or other, become intellectually and emotionally confused, and develop nervous and even mental illnesses.

All these forms of self-deception are like crutches and we want to use these under all circumstances. There is a story of a man who was injured in a streetcar accident. He had to use crutches under the direction of his doctor. His lawyer filed a suit in the court against the company and the case was pending. After some weeks, the doctor told him to dispense with the crutches. But still he continued to use this artificial support. A friend of his who met him after several weeks asked him, "Can't you give up the crutches now?" He replied, "My doctor says I can, but my lawyer says I can't." The doctor in us wishes us to face the realities of life, while the lawyer advises us to run away from it.

An eminent psychologist observes: "There is one way of walking without crutches, walking mentally upright. It is called sublimation." Sublimation means refining the crude, raising lower impulses to higher personal and social levels, utilising them for the good of oneself and society. Most psychologists do not know how to go further than this and to suggest methods for spiritualising our instincts and impulses. However, we are grateful to them for all the help and relief they can render us on the psycho-physical level. Sometimes they effect remarkable cures to the great relief of their patients.

Some Schools of Western Psychotherapy

There are various schools of psychotherapy based on different theories. Dr. Freud and his school hold that sex-urge is the primary motive force of life. According to Dr. Adler, it is the will to power that drives man to action. Dr. Jung, on the other hand, holds that the basic energy is one and all-comprehensive, and it finds its expression through sex-instinct, will to power and other impulses. However, in their therapeutic method all of them teach us how to sublimate and socialise our instincts in some form or other, to look upon our problems and troubles in an objective way and find ways and means to solve them.

However, we must beware of a certain class of psychologists who are becoming a menace to society. They think of man in terms of his lowest nature, associate his life too much with sex, and give him the advice to express his instincts freely. Sometimes they advise their

patients to forget their troubles, which, driven from the conscious plane, go on working and wreaking havoc in the subconscious. Further, very often they give the advice of getting married as if marriage is an all-heal panacea.

Speaking against such dangerous forms of advice, a great psychologist remarked that he had never known any case of neurosis being relieved or cured by libertinism, by giving oneself up to a wild, sensuous life. Referring to marriage, he observed that half of his patients were neurotic because they were married, and the other half because they were not married. Marriage is a great institution and most persons need the discipline and sacrifices of the married life. But those who are unmarried must also live a controlled, regulated life. This is the considered view of many wise psychologists, one of whom declares: "Sublimation is the lot of us all, nay our privilege. The object of all civilised life, married or unmarried, must be to find its sublimated interest."

Western Psychology and Yoga Compared

The psychologist's sublimation—socialising the instincts, looking at things objectively and living an intelligent life, being more or less adapted to one's own condition and environment—certainly gives an amount of mental balance, but from the Yogic point of view this is not enough. We need something more. Yoga, if we care to follow it, teaches us how to find a greater balance by living an ethical life which minimises our moral conflicts. Further, it shows us the way to co-ordinate our thinking, feeling and willing through the practice of meditation. Finally, it teaches us how to reach the superconscious state in which our soul becomes integrated in the Oversoul or Supreme Spirit which is the Soul of all souls. It is then that we feel our unity with our fellow-beings.

Western Psychology and Religion

Most psychologists do not care for religion, but some others do recognise its value. "Religion is one of the best types of sublimation," says one. Referring to his teacher Dr. Freud, who

was sceptical about the role of religion, Dr. Jung observes: "Freud has unfortunately overlooked the fact that man always stood in need of spiritual help given by religions." Freud evidently did not know anything of the psychology of Yoga and so, according to an interviewer, he refused to believe that the ancient Hindu teachers knew much about the unconscious mind and its functions. During the early days of psychotherapy most of the Western psychologists looked upon religion with suspicion and considered religious practices meaningless. However, in his Gilford lectures delivered in Edinburgh in 1901-1902, later published under the title "Varieties of Religious Experience," Prof. William James drew the attention of the Western world to the system of Yoga. "In India, training in mystical insight has been known from time immemorial under the name of Yoga. Yoga means the experimental union of the individual with the divine. It is based on persevering exercise and diet, posture, breathing, intellectual concentration .. The Yogi who has by these means overcome the obscuration of his lower nature sufficiently enters into the condition termed samadhi." He quotes Swami Vivekananda from his Raja-Yoga: "The mind itself has a higher state of existence, beyond reason, a superconscious state . . . All the different steps in Yoga are intended to bring us scientifically to the superconscious state or Samadhi." This is the common goal of all forms of Yoga, as will be discussed presently.

Illness due to Suppression of Religious Emotion

It has already been observed that some thoughtful modern psychologists recognise the value of religion. One of them mentions a case which he considers very remarkable. An exceptionally brilliant lady was deeply religious and had close association with persons of a religious nature, with whom she used to perform religious practices regularly. Later, she became a high executive in a company. Being deeply absorbed in her business, she lost all contact with her friends and had no time for the practice of devotion. Evidently there remained a subconscious conflict in her.

After some time, she started losing sleep and appetite and developed a kind of neurosis. She went to consult an eminent doctor. In his analysis of the patient, the introspective doctor found out that she was starving for lack of religious emotions, and accordingly advised her to re-establish her contact with religiously minded people and to do her prayers etc. in her old way. Having followed the advice of the doctor, the lady regained her health perfectly within a short time. Speaking of her the doctor has remarked: "Ill health from emotional suppression does not always indicate that the suppressed emotions are of a sex nature. This is a case of the suppression of religious feeling." In the course of our spiritual work in India and in the West, we come across many such cases where the persons regain normal health and even improve in body and mind as the result of following moral and spiritual disciplines. Dr. Jung too speaks of the need of religions when he says: "Among my patients in the second half of life, over thirty-five, there has not been one whose problem, in the last resort, was not that of finding a religious outlook."

The Paths of Yoga

Many of the modern Western psychologists speak of self-expression through social service. Teachers of Yoga recognise this fully, but they go further when they ask their students to give their tendencies a moral and spiritual turn. This is done equally in Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Raja Yoga.

In order to follow Karma Yoga, the aspirant must try to be free from attachment and egotism. He must possess enthusiasm, evenness in success and failure, and be inspired by the ideal of working in the spirit of worship. At first, he offers the fruits of his labour to the Supreme Spirit, later on he feels the presence of the Divine within and works as a channel for the flow of Divine will and power, promoting the welfare of mankind.

The one who follows Bhakti Yoga—the path of devotion—should be endowed with the virtues of truthfulness, sincerity, and the spirit of doing good to others. He must also practice cheerfulness, avoid

vain talk, repeat the Divine name, and meditate on the Divine Spirit as the highest object of his love and devotion.

In the path of Jhana Yoga, the spiritual seeker must possess very high qualifications: dispassion for all enjoyments here and hereafter, and discrimination between the real and the unreal. He must further practice control of the mind and the senses, withdrawal of the mind from all distractions, and also forbearance. Moreover, he should develop a burning faith in the teachings he follows and an intense desire to be free from all bonds, and also practice meditation on the Supreme Spirit with one-pointed devotion.

The aspirant who follows the path of Raja Yoga must practice the preliminary disciplines of non-injury, truthfulness, non-covetousness, celibacy and non-dependence on others. Besides these he should acquire purity, contentment, austerity, capacity for deep study and the spirit of self-surrender to the Supreme Being as much as possible. He should next practice posture and breath-control (Pranayama). Detaching the mind from all things non-spiritual, he must try to be established in concentration and meditation.

In all these paths the first step is moral purification, to be followed by the practice of meditation on the Supreme Spirit leading to the goal of Self-realisation. Speaking of this common goal, which apparently is taken to be somewhat different, Swami Vivekananda observes: "To the worker it is union between men and the whole humanity; to the mystic, between his lower and Higher Self; to the lover, union between himself and the God of Love; and to the philosopher, it is the union of all existence."

Swami Vivekananda's Ideal of Integrated Yoga

Swami Vivekananda places before us further the ideal of integrated Yoga combining all the elements of Yoga in our own lives: "Would to God that all men were so constituted that in their minds all these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and work were equally present in full . . . To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is my ideal of religion." If we can combine activity

with meditation and temper our devotion with knowledge, we can attain a remarkable integration of our thinking, feeling and willing. Yoga aims at even a higher integration through the practice of meditation. By rising to the spiritual plane of consciousness and thinking oneself as a soul, let one meditate on the Over-Soul, the Supreme Spirit of which all souls are, as it were, parts. This meditation leads to the realisation of the Infinite Being, the true Self of man which appears as many. The illumined soul that feels its unity with all beings starts living a fuller life of consecration and service. Thus we see that if the Western psychologists speak of self-expression through social service, Hindu spiritual teachers show their disciples the way to establish themselves in the highest spiritual ideal, to serve the God in man and try to transform this world into a veritable heaven as much as possible.

Yoga Showing the Way to Infinite Bliss

Owing to ignorance, the soul feels itself separated from the Infinite Spirit, the Sat-Chit-A nanda—Infinite Existence-Consciousness- Bliss; but it yearns for Divine Union and Bliss all the time. In its search for pure bliss it follows wrong directions. It tries to find infinite happiness in the finite and is disappointed. Not satisfied with the enjoyment of sex, power, wealth and other worldly objects, it continues its striving and search. Here Yoga is of immense help in giving the soul proper direction and enabling it to discover abiding happiness in the realisation and service of the Supreme Spirit who dwells in the hearts of us all. In the words of the Bhagavad-Gita: "The Yogi attains with ease Infinite Bliss of communion with the Supreme Spirit; he sees Him in all beings and all beings in Him; he worships the Supreme Spirit dwelling in all beings and enjoys abiding happiness in Him." Let us follow in the footsteps of such a true Yogi and try to become a blessing to ourselves as well as to our fellow-beings.

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Samkhya, Vedanta and Vivekananda - 1

Buddha Chaitanya

It would be difficult to trace the answer to the question of just how much influence the Samkhya philosophy had on the thought of Swami Vivekananda. The Swami considered himself a Vedantin, and accepted the Samkhyan system, to a large extent, as it is embodied in Vedanta. It would be artificial to attempt to point to influences in his thought and message which are purely Samkhyan. The reverse of the question, whether Swami Vivekananda influenced the Samkhya philosophy, is also interesting. It would certainly be pertinent if the Samkhya were a current and living philosophy, with a body of adherents and an open canon of literature, which it is not. Vedanta, on the other hand, is a continuously developing outlook, and his contribution therein has often been discussed.

Nevertheless, it seems meaningful to us to speak of a mutual interaction between Swamiji and the Samkhya. Of course, we do not mean that the Swami belonged to the Samkhya school, or that he ever doubted the superior logic of the conclusions of Vedanta. About that he was perfectly clear: "What can hold any more the admiration of cultured humanity but the most wonderful, convincing, broadening and ennobling ideas that can be found only in that most marvellous product of the soul of man, the wonderful voice of God, the Vedanta?"¹ But in a lecture in the West he warned that we must be perfectly clear about the Samkhya. "Its great exponent Kapila is the father of all Hindu psychology, and the ancient system that he taught is still the foundation of all accepted systems of philosophy in India today."² It was, he said, the basis of the philosophies of the whole world, in the sense that there is no philosophy which is not indebted to Kapila. In developing this idea the Swami made certain distinct contributions to its exposition, and in this article we shall be concerned with some of the Samkhyan concepts which he appears

to have regarded as important and tried to elucidate, particularly to his Western audiences, and with their relation to Vedanta.

Our discussion of the Samkhya philosophy is based primarily on the Samkhya-sutras of Ishvarakrishna, dated by many authorities at about 500 A.D., generally considered the earliest and most popular of the available texts.

Prakriti

Throughout his lectures and writings Swami Vivekananda uses the word nature freely. He says, "We all use the word nature. The old Samkhya philosophers called it by two different names: *prakriti*, which is very much the same as the word nature; and the more scientific name *avyaktam*, undifferentiated, from which everything proceeds."³ It would be interesting to know just why Swamiji thought *avyaktam* a more scientific word. We may suggest that being a negative term, it represented more accurately the spirit of science. Science means pigeon-holing, classification. The *avyaktam* is literally the unclassified, or in-discrete, a principle which, according to this philosophy, precedes all diversification.

Gunās

With the notion of the *gunas* we come to the concept which some Western people, their scientific preconceptions uppermost, have had difficulty in appreciating. Some Indian translators have not helped the matter. The general view of the Samkhya texts is that we know the *gunas* by their effects upon us: *sattvic* things are those which give us a pleasurable feeling; *rajasica* painful reaction; and *tamasica* things leave us indifferent. Swami Vivekananda does not handle the *gunas* in quite that way. He says, "We know that according to the Samkhya—and it has been admitted by all our sects of philosophy—the body is composed of three sorts of materials—not qualities. Not at all, not qualities but the materials of this universe." A gain, in his Karma Yoga he writes, "These are manifested in the physical world as what we may call equilibrium, activity, and inertness. *Tamas* is

typified as darkness or inactivity; *rajas* is activity, expressed as attraction or repulsion; and *sattva* is the equilibrium of the two." Why, then, we may ask, do we find Swamiji saying, in another Samkhyan context, "The Samkhyas define *avyaktam* as the equilibrium of three forces. . . . *tamas*, the lowest force, is that of attraction; a little higher is *rajas*, that of repulsion; and the highest is the balance of these two, *sattva*, so that when these two forces, attraction and repulsion, are held in perfect control by the *sattva*, there is no creation, no movement in this world." If we accept the words of the stenographer's as Swamiji's own, the discrepancies in these various renderings of the *gunas* may appear confusing.

But here we should bear in mind three considerations. The first is that Swami Vivekananda was faced with a difficult problem, the solution of which is not yet clearly in sight: how to translate and explain Sanskrit terms coming from a mental framework of perhaps 3000 years ago, in terms comprehensible to persons of the 20th century, educated in the concepts of physics and chemistry. Secondly, he had to familiarize himself with those concepts—the ideas of matter, energy, force, organism, evolution, etc.—which were current in the last decade of the 19th century (and which now differ considerably from our present understanding of the same terms). This surely was not always an easy matter for him. The Swami had had a basic education in Western science, no doubt, and with a truly astonishing capacity for absorption had digested many a book and encyclopaedia article in the process of self-education. But he was not a professionally trained scientist, and it would be most uncritical, if not unfair, to forget that Swamiji was still a student, as he himself said, and to attribute to him a kind of supernatural authority in scientific matters which he would have been the first to deny: for that is not what we mean when we say that a man of realization becomes omniscient.

Thirdly, we should note the fact that Swami Vivekananda was not a system-maker, even in philosophy. He could easily have written commentaries on the Brahma-Sutras and Bhagavad-Gita which

would have been landmarks in their histories. He did not choose to do this. Will it be too much to say that his nature was in truth so high and free that it rebelled against the usual restrictions of formality in the patterning of philosophic thought and expression? Commentaries and static patterns of thought are for lesser men. Will it not be too narrow to expect, in that boundless, untrammelled mind, a tidy and self-consistent (as we see it) system of thought? We think that in our pursuit of the following questions, it is some such outlook which will most help our understanding.

Mahat

According to Samkhya, the first evolute of nature is *mahat*, usually translated as cosmic mind, intellect or intelligence. Here it is important to remember that we are now involved in psychology. In fact, Swami Vivekananda often pointed out that it is the psychology of the Samkhya system which is adopted by the Vedanta and others. He took great pains to make clear to his audiences that in all Indian thought mind, like matter, is 'material'—it is never thought of in any other way. This, as many philosophers now recognize, is one of the chief differences between the unitary philosophy of India and the Western dualistic ones. Therefore, any cosmology is of necessity a psychology also. The make-up, the life-process, of the individual can never be truly separated from that of the whole universe. And in all that follows, concerning *buddhi*, *ahamkara*, *manas*, etc., the Swami would have us remember that all are material, are products of nature, for in this the Samkhya, Vedanta, and others systems are agreed.

About *mahat* Swamiji says, "I would not translate it as self-consciousness, because that would be wrong. Consciousness is only a part of this intelligence. *Mahat* is universal. It covers all the grounds of subconsciousness, consciousness, and superconsciousness" so any one state of consciousness, as applied to this *mahat*, would not be sufficient." He follows this principle consistently throughout his addresses. Even where Vedanta alone is being presented, i.e., without any reference to Samkhya, he reserves the word 'consciousness' for

individuated, or self-consciousness, the *ahamkara* of Samkhya, the *jiva* of Vedanta, the awareness of the 'little self'. "The first manifestation... is *mahat* or intelligence, and out of that comes consciousness." Again, "Consciousness is only one of the many planes in which we work; you will have to transcend the field of consciousness, to go beyond the senses, approach nearer and nearer to your own centre, and as you do that, you will approach nearer and nearer to God." This use of the word, while perfectly sound in itself, has given rise to some confusion at least in the West, because as Vedanta has been taught here in recent years the same word is used in translating *chit*, as in *sat-chit-ananda* of the Advaita Vedanta. Brahman is 'of the nature of being-consciousness-bliss', and sometimes to make it clearer the phrase 'pure consciousness' is resorted to. We find this use of the word again and again in translations of the works of Shankara. If, then, we turn to Swami Vivekananda and read that consciousness is something lower, it puzzles us. But if we bear in mind that the above usage is a part of Swamiji's technical vocabulary, so to speak, it will be easier for us to understand his philosophical discourses. It is especially important to bear this in mind today when many philosophers are denigrating consciousness. They are using the word in the same sense the Swami did. Whether they are yet aware of the *chit* underlying this consciousness is another matter.

Mahat, he tells us, changes into *akasha* and *prana*, primal matter and what he calls 'force'. (Today we would say 'energy': force has a technical application.) Here, as in so many places, he shows how much a Vedantin he is, as these terms belong not to the Samkhya system, but to the Brahma-Sutras, a basic text of Vedanta, demonstrating again his thorough knowledge of the *darshanas* and the abandon with which he used whatever concepts he found useful; here perhaps he felt it easier to meet physics on common ground with the terms *akasha* and *prana*.

Buddhi, Ahamkara, Manas

Here again, Swami Vivekananda's use of these terms differs somewhat from what we might expect, and his manner of bringing them into play may cause difficulty for those who are attempting to follow the intricately woven threads of Indian philosophic systems. Samkhya concerns itself with the individual aspect of *mahat*, which it calls *buddhi*. From this it derives the next evolute, *ahamkara*, egoism, which is of three sorts: *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. From the *sattvic ahamkara* come the *manas* and the ten organs. But in a number of Swami Vivekananda's lectures we find accounts such as this: "The mind is called the *manas*, the *chittain vritti*, or vibrating, the unsettled state. If you throw a stone in a lake, first there will be vibration, and then resistance. For a moment, the water will vibrate, and then it will react on the stone. So, when any impression comes on the *chitta*, it first vibrates a little. That is called the *manas*. The mind carries the impression farther in, and presents it to the determinative faculty, *buddhi*, which reacts. Behind *buddhi* is *ahamkara*, egoism, the self-consciousness which says, 'I am'. Behind *ahamkara* is *mahat*, intelligence, the highest form of nature's existence." Here we find that these words are used, not in the Samkhyan manner, in which *buddhi* is prior to *ahamkara*, but in the sense in which texts like the Vedantasara use them, where *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahamkara* and *chitta* are the four modifications of the *antahkarana*, internal instrument (mind as a whole). In this system their functions are respectively deliberation, determination, ego-relating, and remembrance; in fact, it is in this sense of determination that Swamiji, as befits a Vedantin, most often uses the word *buddhi*.

We should not be misled here by the added complication of the use of terms of the Yoga philosophy of Patanjali. The latter uses the same words in a slightly different way, but since the Samkhya and Yoga really form one system, it is not surprising to find Swami Vivekananda shifting from one terminology to the other, as in the following passage from the lecture entitled 'Samkhya and Vedanta'.

Here, in presenting 'a resume of the Samkhya philosophy', he introduces the word *chitta*: "The *chitta* in its threefold function of intelligence (*buddhi*),¹ consciousness (*ahamkara*), and mind (*manas*) works and manufactures the forces called *prana*." *Chitta* is the Yoga word for *antahkarana*, one could say meaning mind as a whole, or mind-stuff, and in this context not to be confused with *chitta* as memory-function in the Vedanta texts.

So it is not quite correct to say, as is sometimes heard, that Swami Vivekananda always uses the terms of a particular system when discussing that system, and other terms, in other contexts. The situation was not made so simple for us. We have to thread our way through the forest of Sanskrit terms, and for the Indian student these little usage-differences may seem trivial or obvious, but for the Western student, to whom all this is so new anyway, nomenclature can be a serious stumbling-block. Perhaps we can make the foregoing more clear by putting it in a sort of outline form:

Buddhi— Swami Vivekananda refers to the determinative faculty, as usually used in Vedanta, but emphasizes its reactive function, as precursor of the will.

Ahamkara—He equates it with self-consciousness (or just 'consciousness'), by which he does not, of course, mean *sachchidananda*. When speaking of the Samkhya system, he refers to that principle from which *manas* and the subtle organs evolve.

Manas— He uses it in senses accepted by both Samkhya and Vedanta, i.e., the collector of impressions, or the deliberator of pros and cons.

Chitta— More often he refers to the Yoga concept of mind-stuff (Vedantic *antahkarana*)¹¹ than to the Vedantic definition as memory-function.

We should not lose sight of the fact that Swamiji, as he himself said, was in a hurry. He had a message to deliver. Academic niceties weighed little in his presentation of Indian philosophy to the Western

crowds. If he dreamed of the day when floods of translations and treatises of Indian philosophies would come pouring into the West, following his historic mission, whereupon the bookworms would scrutinize his every word, that dream never caused him a moment's anxiety, nor slowed a whit the pace of his thought. He had none of our concern for the 'projection of an image'. There were certain things which were essential that his hearers grasp, in order that this strange new way of thinking might form some links with concepts in the Western mind. Because Swami Vivekananda understood this so well, he knew which aspects of the Vedantic structure to put stress upon and in which way.

Indriyas

The Samkhyan description of evolution continues with the formation of the five subtle sense-organs and five organs of action. Here we must quote at length from the Swami's Complete Works:

"Egoism again changes into two varieties. In one variety it changes into the organs. Organs are of two kinds: organs of sensation and organs of reaction. They are not the eyes or the ears, but back of those are what you call brain-centres, and nerve-centres, and so on. This egoism, this matter or substance, becomes changed, and out of this material are manufactured these centres. Of the same substance is manufactured the other variety, the *tanmatras*, fine particles of matter, which strike our organs of perception, and bring about sensations. You cannot perceive them, but only know they are there. Out of the *tanmatras* is manufactured the gross matter—earth, water, and all the things that we see and feel. I want to impress this on your mind. It is very hard to grasp it, because in Western countries, the ideas are so queer about mind and matter. It is hard to get those impressions out of our brains. I myself had tremendous difficulty, being educated in Western philosophy in my boyhood. These are all cosmic things. Think of this universal extension of matter, unbroken, one substance, undifferentiated, which is the first state of everything, and which begins to change in the same way as milk

becomes curd. This first change is called *mahat*. The substance *mahat* changes into the grosser matter called egoism. The third change is manifested as universal sense organs, and universal fine particles, and these last again combine and become this gross universe which with eyes, nose and ears, we see, smell, and hear. This is the cosmic plan according to Samkhya, and what is in the cosmos must also be microcosmic. Take an individual man. He has first a part of undifferentiated nature in him, and that material nature in him becomes changed into this *mahat*, a small particle of universal intelligence, and this particle of universal intelligence in him becomes changed into egoism, and then into the sense organs and the fine particles of matter which combine and manufacture his body." ¹²

Here Swamiji has presented quite faithfully the Samkhyan steps which have been taken over into Vedanta. The difficulty comes when we, with our scientific background still weighted with static and mechanical concepts, try to look at the *indriya* anatomically. On the one hand, the Swami tells us that they are what we call brain-centres, nerve-centres, and so on. Elaborating this he said in 1897 to an Indian audience, "You may call them what you like, but it is not that the *indriyas* are the eyes, or the nose, or the ears. And the sum total of all these *indriyas* plus the *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta*, and *ahamkara*, etc. is what is called the mind, and if the modern physiologist comes to tell you that the brain is what is called the mind, and that the brain is formed of so many organs, you need not be afraid at all: tell him that your philosophers knew it always: it is one of the very first principles of your religion." ¹³ Over against this we have the following: "The internal organs, the mind, the intellect and the egoism are composed of the finest materials, so fine that they cannot be resisted by anything: they can get through any obstructions." ¹ Now on the face of it this appears a flat contradiction. We are so accustomed to thinking of our gross sense-organs as the actual perceivers of impressions that we forget that through the gross the

gross alone can be perceived. The anatomist or the surgeon does not expose the *indriyas* to our probing gaze, but their loci in the gross body. The only mind a brain-surgeon directly perceives, presumably, is his own. Therefore, we venture to say that Swami Vivekananda did not intend a literal identification of *indriyas* with nerve-centres and brain-centres, which would be a contradiction in terms. We doubt that it ever occurred to him that one could believe (as the modern Behaviourists profess) that the mind is no more than the behaviour of the brain.

References

1. III. Pg 111 (All references are to The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda. 5th ed. The Roman numerals refer to the volumes.)
2. III. Pg 5. 3. I. Pg 431. 4. III. Pg 337. 5. II. Pg 431.
6. These he further identifies as instinct, reason, intuition respectively.
7. II. Pg 441 8. I. Pg 414. 9. II. Pg 436.
10. The three words in parenthesis are ours.
11. There is also this passage: '*Indriyas...manas... buddhi...aham ...* this whole series is what is called the *antahkarana*' (III. Pg 403).
12. II. Pg 442 13. III Pg 402 14. II Pg 422

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(To be continued)

Living Inwardly

Swami Shraddhananda

My body seems to divide my world into two compartments, the internal and the external. From a common sense point of view, my internal world consists of my interior organs, such as heart, brain, etc., with their actions and interactions, and also my mind, with its various processes. On the other hand, the external world comprises all the objects and events outside my body. These two worlds are of course very much inter-related. One often slides into the other. A cross-section of my life at any one particular moment would normally reveal events in both these worlds. But, as an average human being, I am more interested in the outer world. Probably God wanted me to be like this. Otherwise, why did He not furnish man with X-ray eyes so that he might see for himself what goes on inside? Why did He not endow every man with the power of keen self-introspection for exploring the deepest strata of his own mind?

For practical living, then, it is not necessary for me to have a comprehensive knowledge of my internal world. And even if I am interested in it, I have to gather information about it from the external world. Do I not have to study anatomy and physiology in bodies which are not my own? Have I not to learn the workings of the mind by a study of other people's minds? So, the world that counts for me seems to be the external world where I pursue most of the values of my life. My internal world, though an integral part of my existence, functions merely as a means to the utilization and enjoyment of the external. And it does not matter if I give only a minimum of attention to it for, as an average man, I consciously live almost completely in the outer world.

Under these circumstances, inwardness of living cannot be of interest to the average man. For him it is not only unnecessary but fanciful and queer. His only knowledge of inward living relates to the psychopath who withdraws from the objective world and lives entirely in his self-created fantasies. So much has been written in our times about such abnormal behaviour that the modern man has become suspicious of any kind of contemplative mood. He dislikes associating even religion with inwardness of thought. So, his religion has become no more than a social force, a behaviour pattern which must operate in the workaday world like any other element of his outward conduct. Many men regard the mystical tradition in religion with contempt and correlate it with psychic immaturity.

This state of things is described in the Vedantic scriptures. In the Katha Upanishad (2.1.1) this is described as the most characteristic way of the world: "God made man's senses pointed outward from his very birth, so that man always looks outside himself and never within. Extremely rare is that wise person who, desiring immortality, directs his senses inward and perceives the truth of his own innermost Self."

But rarity of a phenomenon should not be equated with either its absurdity or its non-existence. In the field of science sometimes far-reaching knowledge has been deduced from but a single and extremely difficult experiment. This is especially true in the field of spiritual knowledge. To attain spiritual truth we must be prepared for unusual undertakings. We should not be discouraged because this way is not the way of the average man of the world. These unusual endeavours by which we seek to unravel the ultimate mysteries of our own life and personality may be called inward living. Who am I? Why am I here? What is the meaning of this life? Why do I have to struggle this way? What is my place in this vast universe surrounding me? At certain moments of our life

these and other profound questions stir our heart and we want clear answers. We are not satisfied with mere intellectual speculations.

According to Vedanta, it is possible to find unequivocal answers to these questions by directly experiencing the spiritual order of reality. This kind of experiencing requires a suitable adjustment in our way of understanding. A shift of emphasis must be made from the external to the internal world, a reorientation of our habits of living. The core of our personality, says Vedanta, is a spiritual reality, birthless and deathless, unlimited by time, space, and causality and all the events within them. It is infinite consciousness and infinite bliss.

Far from the common man's view that supersensuous experience is not normal, it is the empirical life that is aberrant, a dislocation from this spiritual state of perfection. Let us not be caught up in such questions as how this so common aberration got started. This question is quite unimportant. For us, the important thing is to discover the truth. And Vedanta assures us that this discovery can be made here and now. The concluding verse of the Katha Upanishad says, "Having received this wisdom taught by the King of Death, and the entire process of Yoga, Nachiketa became free from impurities and death and attained Self-knowledge. Thus it will also be with any other who knows in this manner the Inmost Self." Any person, then, having the courage, patience and perseverance to carry on the experiment can hope to have Self-knowledge.

Again, Self-knowledge is, in the language of the Mundaka Upanishad, "the foundation of all knowledge": nay, the centre of man is identical with the centre of the universe. In the last analysis, the true nature of what we call the outward world is spiritual. In the vision of truth, the external and internal are only arbitrary divisions of what is one continuous, indivisible reality—the Spirit.

The Taittiriya Upanishad speaks of the five koshas or sheaths, coverings over the Self. They are, as it were, five screens preventing our vision of the Self. The technique of inward living gradually removes or sees through these obstructions and attains the eternal ground of our existence, the core of our personality, our Self. The first covering is our physical body, the *annamaya kosha*. Our consciousness is almost always centred in our body. When I say 'I', I mean my body. The identification of consciousness with the body is so natural and complete that it seems almost impossible to challenge it. Yet this extrication of the 'I' sense from the body can be done, and to the extent we do it we are prepared for the experience of higher truth.

The second covering of the Self is the *pranamaya kosha*, the totality of the vital energies which are responsible for the various physiological functions in our body. When I say, 'I am breathing', or 'I am digesting food', I identify myself with two forms of this vital energy called prana. The Upanishads prescribe various meditations about prana for the purpose of raising our consciousness from the body to the higher level of life-force. He who can feel his identity with that powerhouse of energy which is operating through every part of the body attains a great extent of control of the body and spontaneously experiences a new feeling of freedom, strength and joy. Consciousness on the level of the *pranamaya kosha* is subtler and more powerful than that of the first covering, *annamaya kosha*.

Next comes the mental sheath, *manomaya kosha*. It is that phase of our mind which receives impulses from the external world through the senses and sorts them in preparation for determining their nature. In the mental sheath, mind processes are in a stage of indefinite formation.

The fourth sheath, *vijnanamaya kosha*, brings these processes to a conclusion. *Vijnana* means definite knowledge. It includes all the three familiar mental activities of feeling, willing, knowing, when these are certain and definite. In the previous sheath, the *manomaya kosha*, thoughts have not yet specific shape; they are vague, amorphous and hence ineffective. But on the level of the *vijnanamaya kosha* the nature of the ideas has been determined and the resulting clear knowledge is ready to be connected with action. *Vijnanamaya kosha* is well translated as intelligence sheath. The *manomaya* and *vijnanamaya* sheaths together constitute what we call mind in all its phases.

The Upanishads have clearly distinguished mind from life-force, and special meditations have been described which teach us to be deeply conscious of ourselves as thinking and creative beings. Shifting the centre of our personality from body and life-force to mind opens up new channels of superior wisdom. Yet mind, in both its levels of vague collection and clear determination of ideas, is only a sheath, a covering concealing our true nature, and as we expand our awareness from body to vital energy and to mind, so we must know we are more than just a thinking being.

The fifth screen to be seen through is the *anandamaya kosha*, the blissful sheath. This is that element of our being which contributes joy to our experiences. The many and various kinds of pleasures and satisfactions which we derive from the wide range of our activities are all, according to the Upanishads, coming from this sheath of bliss. As we detach our consciousness from the four previous sheaths and approach this fifth one, our experience of bliss becomes more and more intense, and the gross delights which come from sights, sounds and tastes are left behind in the experience of subtle joys not requiring any external stimuli. What is beyond this fifth sheath? A *tman*—the Self, the core and true centre of our personality. This *A tman* is the Witness of all the

experiences coming through the five sheaths. Its function is only to know. It is the pure awareness. All that we know through our sense organs or our mental processes is known because of this innermost Self within us. It is, as it were, quietly sitting behind the five screens and is radiating consciousness through all these layers. The Atman is the true subject of all our experience. It is infinitely more than our physical body or our vital power or our mind and intelligence or all these together. And when we discover this inner Self which is our true nature the whole picture of our life changes. We can no longer use the term inner life.

It was only for starting the journey to the Self that we had to speak of living inwardly: from the standpoint of the Self there is no such distinction as inner and outer. We use these terms with reference to our body. Once we have arrived at the Self, we find everything resting on it. We find that this whole universe with all its multiplicity is nothing but an expression of the consciousness of the Self. At that stage we are able to say that this universe is resting in me and I am in everything. I am one with this universe. Self-knowledge is the realization of the oneness of my own truth and all the truth outside me.

In order to discover our true Self—this ground of our existence—we have to practice detachment from the non-Self, which comprises first our external world and then our internal world as represented by each of the five sheaths. By this practice of detachment, no flight from life is meant. Rather it means a sober, calm, and unbiased attitude toward the objects and events around us and in us. The aspirant for Self-knowledge should fulfil his duties and responsibilities as well as he can, but he should keep himself free from over-involvement in any affair. Let him not pin too much hope on anything in this perpetual flux of events. Let him not forget that the goal of his life is to realize the eternal truth which is his true Self. For in this realization alone can he

understand what this life means. All the deeper questions about our personality become clear only when we discover ourselves as pure Spirit.

The content of Self-knowledge is eloquently described by the Chhandogya Upanishad (7.25) thus: "I am below. I am above. I am behind. I am in front. I am in the south. I am in the north. I am all that is." And again (8.13): "From the one I pervade the many. From the many I go to the one. Shaking off all imperfections as a horse its hairs, shaking off the body-consciousness as the moon releases itself from the mouth of Rahu,¹ I who have realized my true Self am now identified with Brahman, the Supreme Reality."

1. Reference to the Hindu mythological idea that the eclipse of the moon is caused by the attempt of the demon Rahu to swallow it.

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How I Came to Vedanta

Gilbert Hanby

(Mr. Gilbert Hanby came to love and respect India during his war service there. He returned home, and, faced with the ills of the world, eventually found more peace and satisfaction in the Indian solution, which is typically philosophical, than in the solution of the modern West, typified by political action.)

In my early years my father told me many things which impressed me. We belonged to an agricultural village in the north of England. He said that all things were interdependent and in the course of life should develop to the full extent of their inheritance. As human beings we should develop our minds and physical efficiency and should husband animals, plants, and the land to grow to their best. It was man's duty and on it depended his happiness. He did not hold with pleasure as it is commonly known (i.e., hedonism).

His organic view of life reached deep into my mind. The truth of it seemed to grow more and more obvious. Our village was an entity comprising man, animals, land, streams, weather, etc., each performing its particular necessary function. Likewise, the next village, and the next, until they formed a group. Various groups with the towns formed a region; the regions formed counties and so on, ultimately embracing everything in existence.

My father said it was all the arrangement of matter which automatically adjusted itself according to circumstances. The village parson did not tell us about this aspect of things but said that if we respected and obeyed God in the person of Jesus, we should inherit something better. As I recall it, there seemed to be room for something more. The 'feeling' of things which can be so

evident in the country was not explained; on the other hand, there did not really appear to be any need for another life—this one was full and interesting, although at times rather trying.

Eventually, however, we had to go to the city for secondary schooling. This was a bitter, unpleasant experience. The city was grey, wet and cold in winter; in summer it was grey, dusty and hot. It was good to get up in the early morning to go out into our fields, but miserably depressing having to catch the early morning train to town. The country lads and town lads could not quite understand each other; there was even a language barrier. Going to High School was the beginning of years of doubt and frustration. In the city were many people unemployed and hungry, living in overcrowded slum houses and tenements. Barefoot children scavenged the markets for anything they could find for themselves and their families to eat. It irritated me to think this state of affairs should exist.

After leaving school it seemed to me that the way to cope with life in this urban mess was, as my father had said, to become mentally and physically strong—and then take political action. But having become a pupil in a professional office, there was little time for anything except study and the weekend game of football. War came. I saw it was my duty to put a stop to it. The Recruiting Officer agreed and I was in the Army. For the next two or three years there was time only for the immediate problems.

In 1942 they sent me to join the Indian Engineers, and the tension seemed to slacken. An important little incident took place in Delhi. Three of us were seeing the sights. A small, elderly, and immaculately dressed Indian with a little girl came up to me and said that if he could help us or show us anything while we were in Delhi, he would be very pleased. My reaction was, "There's a gentleman." The depth of his kindness and sincerity stirred something. I thought a lot about him and could only sum him up

as a 'gentleman'. A few days later, as we stood on the station waiting for a train to leave Delhi, another man attracted my attention. He was tall, powerfully built and middle-aged, and dressed in a simple long white garment. Amidst all the hullabaloo he stood absolutely calm, like a rock with a sea of humanity surging round him. I wondered about these two men in Delhi. Why did they seem so calm and composed; interested and yet indifferent? I could only put it down to the fact that they were 'gentlemen'—not, of course, in the way we describe the dominating group of Englishmen, but there seemed to be no other word and in my estimation it fitted.

The next year or so's work with the Indians and Arabs was interesting and never lonely. Eventually, I had to return to India with a damaged leg. Life in hospital was utter boredom from which there seemed to be no escape. The monotonous chain was broken by deliberately getting drunk and being charged with several military crimes. Fortunately an understanding officer judged my case and arranged for me a job collecting material and drawing maps for propaganda purposes. It brought a good deal of contact with Indian people outside the Forces. I liked their calmness and courtesy, and felt I should get to know something of their background. I decided to keep an eye open for someone to tell me about Hinduism. A public librarian from whom I officially sought some kind of information soon obliged. He talked about the religion of the Hindus and how it formed the basis of literature and art. He was a kind, patient man, but the seed seemed to fall on stony ground. I could not grasp his thesis, but it was interesting just to hear him talk. I remember no reaction.

On returning home, thoughts of political action returned. It seemed even more urgent now that I had seen the ills of the world manifested so clearly in three continents. I resolved that after

finishing my professional examinations I would turn to the study of political philosophies and systems.

I did so and felt quite satisfied for a few months. It then occurred to me that political manipulations would not help people to become like those two gentlemen in Delhi. No, we must be good enough to act rightly as a matter of course. This was a new thought and so far as I was aware people had not written books about it.

My leg was troublesome and general health not so good. I was advised to go to a particular bookshop in London and buy a book which outlined a regime that would improve my general health. I saw there an array of books on many outlandish subjects. Later I decided to have a serious look at these books and asked the bookseller about them. I told him that in the past I had interested myself in physical culture, but it did not seem to get me very far. I told him I had studied political theories and did not care for them, but I still liked my father's notion about the organic nature of the world. He pulled from his shelves a little book and said, "I feel sure this is what you want. It is a wonderful book." It was Jnana Yoga by Swami Vivekananda. I spent a good part of that Saturday afternoon in the waiting room at St. Pancras Station reading Jnana Yoga.

It impressed me very much, but I still thought "But what does one do?" A few weeks later I bought the three companion books and with them the bookseller gave me the address of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in London. By appointment I visited the Centre one summer evening and was very warmly received.

I heard about Sri Ramakrishna and eventually left the Centre feeling quietly encouraged and with a boxful of books to read.

I recall my gratitude at not being 'roped in' for anything, not asked to buy anything, nor join anything. Organizations have

always rather bothered me. It seems, if half a dozen people have a similar interest it is inevitable that one of them will seek to set up an organization complete with officers. The organization grows and soon becomes of more importance than the subject in which its members are interested.

All this reading produced something like an intellectual bombardment. It raised a lot of mental dust and it was a matter of waiting until some of this had settled to see what kind of a pattern all this mass of ideas formed. Various people have sold systems of something or other claiming theirs "would open up a new world". Vedanta did appear to hold out that possibility. It seemed remarkable that such a careful and intelligent analysis of life and its background should be kept so well hidden. This thought in itself raised doubts—was this after all just another new thing creating a burst of enthusiasm? But more reading and re-reading made it very convincing.

Introduction to the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre meant of course introduction to Sri Ramakrishna. To hear about Him and think about Him encouraged one and instilled devotion. He put abstruse matters simply, in clear perspective, and showed the smooth direct path through the thick jungle of metaphysical discourse. To build up one's intellectual strength to the point where it alone could break the net of ignorance would seem beyond normal ability. But through Him shines a light for the benefit of the humble and simple-minded. Sincerity is the only thing required.

However, difficulties arise after climbing the first steps of the ladder of spiritual practice. The depths of the mind are disturbed and the sediment lying there clouds the vision. This can be very disconcerting but is most revealing. It is probably the point at which serious consideration begins. Questions begin to pose

themselves: Is the ground of Vedanta really firm? How can I test it? And so forth.

It would appear that the thing to do is to take one's present convictions and beliefs and examine them, so far as personal limitations allow, in the light of Vedanta, and similarly examine Vedanta by turning the light round.

Firstly then, the organic idea of the world. It is obvious that all organisms die—some sooner, some later. This applies equally to the great and the small; all evolve and then disintegrate—individuals, species and genera. Oceans and Alpine ranges come and go. Apparently, it is a principle with which even worlds must comply. So, the organic arrangement is merely something we can note, but is not to be pursued any further. Death is still death irrespective of time.

However, the organic arrangement does exist and to that extent is an aspect of something. The question is: 'What is an organism and how does it exist as such?' The Bhagavad-Gita says it is God Himself who assumes bodies for the purpose of special functions and casts them like worn-out garments when that function is over. This accounts for our notion of the Soul. Sri Krishna (Gita. 15.7) says, "Part of Myself, having become a living Soul in the world of life, draws to itself the five senses with mind for a sixth, abiding in Prakriti." Thus, all created beings have one thing in common—they are part of the Lord. This is the basis of morals. By showing respect for others I am really respecting my true self.

Vedanta, therefore, confirms this organic view and takes it on to a satisfying conclusion. Whilst we look at evolution from the material point of view, we see the being evolving round some special physical feature which ultimately leads to extinction. But if in the depths of the limited being there lies something which is impersonal and unlimited, then evolution may be something quite

different. The body is an object astride the path to freedom. The latent tendencies will gradually manifest themselves and materialize, and ultimately be extinguished, leaving the impersonal essence free of encumbrances. Evolution, then, would appear to be progress towards freedom, not extinction. Patanjali calls it "the infilling of nature", that is to say, the period of physical manifestation between the Fall and Redemption.

We ask, why should all this be so? We can merely say the first cause is the individualization of consciousness, and thereafter the individualized consciousness, or soul, is bound by time and space. But time and space only came with its creation and are its medium of experience. In other words, the finite soul can only experience finitude. To enjoy infinity, that is, freedom, the soul must rid itself of individuality.

Vedanta, in its dualistic phases, says that, so long as we feel this Creation or individualization to be real, we are forced to think that it is the manifestation of the Will of a Supreme Being, and that it is ever subject to His will. Like the waves on the sea, whilst they may appear to behave as individuals, it is the vast ocean current which forms them and determines their character and behaviour.

The geneticists now believe that character is formed in the pre-embryonic stage. Once a creature is born it can do nothing to alter that which it inherited through the chromosomes. It does not possess free will. Sri Ramakrishna said we have the same choice as a tethered animal which can graze as it wishes within the limits of its chain. But we can show impatience at being tethered and strain in the direction we wish to go. The Will which fastened the chain can obviously untie it.

The trouble is that we have got so used to it. However, we really know that we want to be freed. Selfish thoughts always seem to

bring the reaction of unselfish thoughts (conscience). The tether in itself infers the possibility of freedom.

But apart from the above, is it not sufficient to note the difficulties in which society finds itself through the common belief that man is a simple economic animal and that all he need do to reach Utopia is to concentrate on his economic aims and conquer nature? This has led to the growth of the socialist state and the sacrifice of individual freedom to the needs of the state, which finds it can only maintain itself by more and more repressive legislation. Education degenerates into a means of forming social creatures who will be subservient to the needs of the state. Matters of life and death are allocated to the various professions—legal, medical, and military. The matrix of society is weakened, and gradually social cohesion destroyed.

There are those who wish to have some say in their destiny and serve a Master other than the State, an organism subject to the laws of change. This would appear to create a dilemma, for we must respect society and observe its conventions. Sri Ramakrishna said,

“But do I look down on worldly people? Of course not. When I see them I apply Advaita, the Knowledge of Brahman, the Oneness of Existence. Brahman itself has become everything.” This is the conclusion of the Advaita philosophy, which was developed by sages of the deepest insight.

In this world of diversity, we can instinctively feel the attraction of unity and feel aversion to duality. In any form of composition—pictorial, musical or anything else—there must be a feature which is dominant and to which all other parts are complementary. This must possess something to pull all the parts together. Duality irritates. The fact is we are fundamentally monistic, but monism seen through the medium of time is dualism. Individualized consciousness, as it seems, infers ignorance, and therefore unrest.

Consciousness itself, that is, co-extensiveness with Being, eliminates a 'second' (duality, the Devil, etc.).

To summarize, Vedanta appeals to me personally for these reasons: —

- (i) It is not 'other-worldish' but promises results here and now.
- (ii) It recognizes people as individuals and indicates suitable practices to achieve positive results.
- (iii) It is entirely optimistic.
- (iv) It accepts the challenge of reason without having to create a Devil who is a serious competitor with God.
- (v) It produced an Incarnation very close to us in time, that is, a highlight, so to speak, whose limiting adjuncts or individualism were purely nominal for the sake of recognition by highly individualized beings.

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Sri Sarada Devi in our time

Dr Vayu Naidu

A fundamental truth is everyone has a Mother. The reversal of that is: no one can be born without a mother. To have a Mother we can call our own is Sarada Devi, a blessing and reassurance she gives the seeker daily, as Her presence is Sri Ma, That, which is with us eternally.

This sharing is a meditation on two inspirational sayings of Sri Ma. They seem simple but are clear instructions of a profound Advaita that can be practiced in the midst of our daily routine.

The Covid-19 worldwide lockdown is a unique and capital time to meditate on these sayings. It is the time to understand the relevance of the domestic, realise it as a portal to the inward gaze, and practice simple tasks in the light of these instructions for our spiritual growth. The great reassurance is that we will try, and we will falter, but we will also know Her presence in our cry each time we feel we are failing. That space, too, She guarantees as the path to the spiritual goal.

The great motivation as solace is that Sarada Devi's birth and life was a teaching for all of us in this millennium, as women and men, to be resilient and constantly strive through devotion and liberation to make a world realise diversity with harmony—across faiths, cultures, race, sex and gender.

A conch shell was blown to announce the birth of Sarada Devi our Holy Mother, our Sri Ma, who was born on December 22nd 1853, on a Thursday evening, in historical time. She was the first child of Ramachandra and Shyamasundari. But the preparation for her arrival is preceded by two significant experiences of her mother and father. Before she was born Shyamasundari was on her way to Bihar when suddenly she had an urge to go into a grove of

trees. There she felt herself being filled with air and a girl of six years old in a red sari climbed down from the tree and stood in front of her and put her arms around her neck and said: "Here I come to your home, Mother." Shyamasundari fell unconscious and had to be carried home. In Sri Ma's own words: "that girl entered my mother's womb and thus I was born".

Ramachandra had an experience before he left Jayrambati for Kolkatha. In his dream a young girl with golden complexion and precious jewellery appeared and spoke in a musical voice: "You see, I have come to your family."

By Ma's village companion and playmate Aghoremani Devi's account: "Sarada was straightforward, and the embodiment of simplicity." She was always a mediator and peacemaker. She loved making images of Kali and Lakshmi and worshipped them with flowers and bel leaves. She did backbreaking hard work without complaint.

The Bengal Famine of 1864 made her encounter the devastating impact of starvation and hunger in spite of her father's generosity to all who came and knocked on their door. One of her characteristic features that holds for all of us who worship her presence at home, hold cooking and serving food as a sacred act of delight. More than anyone, Sarada Devi's empathy stemmed from her early imprint of the suffering experienced during the famine.

"Is hunger a small thing? Hunger and thirst remain as long as a person has a human body." And she more than anyone knew that the practice of religion is not possible on an empty stomach.

In visualising this young girl in a remote village working, collecting water from the pond, teaching herself to swim by bobbing on an empty water pot, cooking and looking after her younger siblings, cutting stalks, eating puffed rice by the banks of the Amodar river, Ma's own recollections of a young girl accompanying her, helping her with tasks but disappearing when

anyone else was around, is recorded. It is an aspect of her divinity manifested in the daily incidents of the early years that offer us a vivid meditation on simplicity, common sense and endurance that gives us hope, and in our understanding, claim her as the saint of our times.

Let us look at one of her inspirational sayings that particularly comes into great use during Covid-19's lockdown.

1. "Do Not complain":

I want to take you to Basilica di Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello, Italy, where there is a 7th century Byzantine chapel. In the nave is a counter façade of The Universal Judgment, where the tiny pieces of mosaic form a pattern. These become pictures. In the centre is the great egg. From it, Beings are emerging—the same egg of creation. There are strong Beings, sickly ones, wild ones and serene ones. If you stay still and look long enough, the Beings represented by the Byzantine mosaic start moving before your eyes. Some exert ferocity while there are others who calmly sweep through the commotion. The energies are negative and positive—from the same origin—the great Garbha—the womb of Creation.

In work and art that reflects life, we hear sounds. Some are energy-giving and others are energy-draining. The very notes of music bring us into contact with the notes in the air—some hit us in the stomach, some in the throat, and many others which ought to more often open our heart. There are ancient and modern sciences across cultures that give us evidence of this; but why go elsewhere, let's start from here, from us, from this 'I'.

Venki Ramakrishnan was the Nobel Prize winner for Chemistry in 2009. His work on cell particles making the ribosome protein and neutron scattering informing our DNA reminds us that everything is a current from the brain. This thing we call emotion, the fluid stuff, doesn't really translate. But even he and his team arrive with their evidence at the idea that there is a 'knowledge'

built up of particles informed by a Consciousness that is letting us arrive at these understandings.

It is as if, in seeking evidence, we are plucking at the particles of notes from this vast music of consciousness, from the air, that we can recite. There are notes that are resonant, that make us harmonise the nerves and appreciate as music. There are other notes that distort, whine, and make experience a negative spiral.

So when Sri Ma's advice was 'Do not complain' she is protecting us and our capacity to complain.

When a complaint is 'administered', it is about a problem that is identified on the outside. It follows that there is an obstacle to finding a solution. However, it is never considered that the real problem is within ourselves as it unwinds the whingeing sound of a voice drawing the mind to a **negative** energy. Why? Because when it becomes a process of victimisation and self-justification, then the negative energy that we open ourselves to is draining. Also, the 'high pitched' whingeing sound starts veiling the infinite possibilities of finding solutions to what is inside ourselves that can be effectively executed externally. The great science of Sri Sarada Devi's words are to draw the mind **away** from fault, blaming, or making judgements.

The unblemished, pure radiance of the moon light of what she gave to us as a method is that every situation offers dark and light forces, negative and positive energy, and we can use the torch of knowledge to find the thorn of ignorance that takes the form of a

complaint and pluck it out through self-reflection. If one has a complaint, then the fault line is in us too to see it in others. Empathy works both ways.

2 "Do not find fault with others, instead look at your own faults":

This is another inspirational instruction about self-reflection. As we grow in experience, we sometimes feel stronger in life. But it

also closes our understanding of how others see, experience things. Meditation on Light on pure souls and the lives they lived enables us to become witnesses to our own thoughts and actions. The path is as fine and narrow as a razor's edge.

3 "Make the world your own":

This sounds simple. It is beyond sympathy and empathy, yet it holds a profound Vedantic Truth. Through the process of looking inward, first in reflection of our little self, and slowly but surely, if we are sincere, opening the door to the One Self, even if we cannot see it at first, or if glimpsed once, we cannot see it all the time, we sense the Reality of connectedness with everything. E. M. Forster understood this.

It takes us to the Aloneness of the Shiva within us and the companionship of self as ardhhanarishvara. The sincerity and depth of the Reality we touch in the inward gaze is the emanation of that sound Consciousness, and connectedness of all Beings. So how can we be strangers or estranged by the world? It is our own string of numbers.

These are the three very simple sayings that are recited after Brahmarpanam Brahmahuvih at our Vedanta Centre in Bourne End. They have the deep presence of Sri Sarada Devi's diet and menu of simple instruction, as she feeds us with the most profound and subtle truth for what we ask and when sometimes we do not even know what we are asking for.

In the last century, facing famine, and in this one Covid-19, Sri Sarada Devi's living practice offers a sustainable response for those who have been infected, ill, in isolation, or in multiple cases of bereavement, possibly more than any other time in our living history. She has afforded us the time to value the domestic as a radical turning point to change our future ethos. She has amply provided us with processes of self-reflection, solitude within to seek

God in spite of demands whirling around, attitude toward each task and interaction with people.

Sarada Devi, Shri Ma, whatever the name and form, is an ocean by whose shores we are dipping our toes. Her depth and ability to enable change in a time of caste, plague, famine, colonial rule and widowhood is remarkable. But the crystal clarity of the way she lived in constant touch with Brahman and Shakti is a close encounter. She introduced a feminism of the daily, and with a quiet force led the way in time, for all time.

There are more instances where Ma revealed herself in a way that no ordinary intelligent woman could.

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End of the Story

Swami Vidyatmananda

It had happened more than thirty years ago. I had then been new to the ashrama. It had been my first problem there as resident. Another disciple, X, far senior to me and older, had been behaving in a fashion that other members and I considered scandalous. How could that be? How could it be allowed to go on? Finally I had gone to the Head and complained, expecting the Head to take disciplinary action against the offender. Nothing of the sort! In fact, whatever disciplining had been meted out had been directed toward me myself, as the Head pronounced severely these words: "Never, never judge till you know the end of the story."

Now, more than a generation later, I recognize that the Head had been right. For recently the story of X had been completed. I'd seen how with the passing years that offending disciple had changed, sweetened, and finally died a saintly death. I held in my hand a letter which X had sent a few days before the end: "How stupid I was in those early days; I didn't realize it. But thank God our guru never condemned me, and because of his comprehension I somehow gained the courage to keep on. Well, it's almost finished now. I spend my days repeating my mantram, waiting with tranquility to go Home."

Casting my mind back to that ancient episode, I felt ashamed. And equally "the end of the story" could mean the end of my own story. That too is what the Head must have meant. For I could see how I was not the same man who had complained against X long before. In these latter years my readiness to judge, to condemn, had quite gone out of me. I had come to see how little

exterior signals actually mean. What one takes to be personality traits in others, aspects of their character, revealing actions—on which one bases one's evaluations—these may disguise more than they reveal. They are like camouflage or protective coloration obscuring the truth. "Do we ever," I had asked myself in recent years, "do we ever have an inkling of what goes on inside other people? Who knows what fear, what sense of inadequacy, what hunger to be loved, what need for recognition form the visage with which people face the world? I was so sure of my own conscientiousness and yet so ready to discover its lack in another. I know the end of my own story, or practically so, and I can see clearly that judging others is something no one who is in the least wise should ever dare to do.

There was another paragraph in X's letter: "As this may be the last time I shall be able to write to you, I wish to make a confession. All those years ago when you first came to the ashrama some of us found the things you did shocking. I seriously considered complaining to the Head about you, but then I remembered that he was fond of saying, 'Never, never judge until you know the end of the story.' So I'm glad I didn't. As I have watched your development these three decades and seen what a devotee you have become, I know that such an early evaluation would have been hasty and wrong. I'm sorry I ever had such feelings."

I read these lines with burning cheeks.

(To be continued)

Love conquers all fear. Fear comes from the selfish idea of cutting one's self off from the universe. The smaller and the more selfish I make myself, the more is my fear. If a man thinks he is a little nothing, fear will surely come upon him. And the less you think of yourself as an insignificant person, the less fear there will be for you. So long as there is the least spark of fear in you there can be no love there. Love and fear are incompatible; God is never to be feared by those who love Him. The commandment, "Do not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain", the true lover of God laughs at. How can there be any blasphemy in the religion of love? The more you take the name of the Lord, the better for you, in whatever way you may do it. You are only repeating His name because you love Him.

-- Swami Vivekananda

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Every system, therefore, which weakens the mind, makes one superstitious, makes one mope, makes one desire all sorts of wild impossibilities, mysteries, and superstitions, I do not like, because its effect is dangerous. Such systems never bring any good; such things create morbidity in the mind, make it weak, so weak that in course of time it will be almost impossible to receive truth or live up to it. Strength, therefore, is the one thing needful. Strength is the medicine for the world's disease. Strength is the medicine which the poor must have when tyrannised over by the rich. Strength is the medicine that the ignorant must have when oppressed by the learned; and it is the medicine that sinners must have when tyrannised over by other sinners; and nothing gives such strength as this idea of monism. Nothing makes us so moral as this idea of monism. Nothing makes us work so well at our best and highest as when all responsibility is thrown upon ourselves.

- Swami Vivekananda

