

Vedanta

386 NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2015

Rabia the Slave Girl

Aga Syed Ibrahim Dara

De-Hypnotizing Ourselves

Swami Yatiswarananda



Divine Wisdom

Teachings of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

The Mystery Of Life And God-Consciousness

Mother: "The world is the Lord's. He created it for His own play. We are mere pawns in His game. Wherever He keeps us and in whatever way He does so, we have to abide by it contentedly. We suffer as a result of our own actions; it is unfair to blame anybody for it. We have to surrender ourselves completely to the Lord with faith and devotion in Him, serve others to the best of our capacity, and never be a source of sorrow to anybody."

Disciple: "If there is a God, why is there so much misery in this world? Does He not see? Or hasn't He the power to remove these evils?"

Mother: "The creation itself is full of griefs. How can one understand joy if there is no sorrow? And how can everyone be happy at the same time? There is a story that once Sita said to Rama, 'Why do you not remove everybody's miseries? Make everyone in your kingdom-all your subjects-happy. You can do it if you like.' Rama answered, 'Can everyone be happy at the same time?' 'Well, they can, if you so desire. Why not satisfy all their needs from the royal treasury?' 'Just as you wish'.

"Then Rama called Lakshmana and said, 'Go and tell everyone in my kingdom that all their needs will be supplied from my treasury.'" When the people heard this, they came and explained their needs. The treasury was laid open. Everyone lived in happiness. But such was the dispensation of Rama that soon the roof of the royal palace showed cracks and water seeped through.

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Editorial

Worship of the Divine Mother-1

'One must propitiate the Divine Mother, the Primal Energy, in order to obtain God's grace. God Himself is Mahamaya. It is His will that we should run about a little. Then it is great fun. God has created the world in play, as it were. This is called Mahamaya, the Great Illusion. Therefore one must take refuge in the Divine Mother, the Cosmic Power Itself. It is She who has bound us with the shackles of illusion. The realization of God is possible only when those shackles are severed.'

The concept of the worship of God as Divine Mother is ancient. It prevailed, in some form or other, in many countries. In Egypt, She was known as 'Isis'; in Babylonia and Assyria, She was worshipped as 'Ishtar'; in Greece, She was known as 'Sibyl'. The Catholics venerate the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God.

In India, the worship of God as Mother prevailed even in the pre-Vedic age. The *Vedas* contain a number of hymns addressed to the *Devi* (Divine Mother). The *Rig-Vedic Devi-Suktam* and the *Ratri-Suktam* of the *Sama Veda* refer to Her as the Empress of the Universe.

In the *Upanishads*, the Mother is worshipped as the embodiment of all spiritual knowledge. In later centuries, the great *Tantras* taught the worship and philosophy of the Divine Mother.

To look upon God as Mother is very natural and sublime. Just as the baby is nourished by the earthly mother, so also God as Mother, creates, supports and nourishes all beings. There is greater freedom and spontaneity in the devotee's relationship with God as Mother.

Sri Ramakrishna says, 'Just as a child can force its demands on its mother, even so the devotee can force his demand on God as Mother.'

The *Rishis* of the Upanishads conceived the idea that there is one cosmic power lying in the background of this universe. The power that is necessary in the biological world and in the physical world; in the mountains, in the rivers, in oceans; the power manifested in moral and spiritual life. There is only one power and that is the Divine Mother. This is the central idea at the back of Mother worship.

Vedanta declares that God is both absolute and dynamic; impersonal and personal; formless and with form; transcendent and immanent. This reality called Brahman is the background of the world. Brahman is beyond time, space, and causation; beyond thought or speech.

As long as we regard ourselves as psycho-physical beings, conscious of our body, mind, and ego, we cannot conceive of this Supreme Reality. So we need a Personal God, whom we can worship, pray to and approach for protection, guidance, and grace.

Thus, the worship of God comes into the picture. That transcendental Absolute God is thought of as having attributes (*Saguna Brahman*). This dynamic aspect of God is called *Shakti*, i.e., the divine power of Brahman. The Absolute Brahman and Its power are identical. Brahman and Shakti are not two separate entities.

The Hindu believes that there is only one God and the world of many is nothing but His manifestation or projection. The Hindu also believes that God alone is Real and everything else is an apparent reality.

The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* says, 'This divine power of Brahman is in fire, in water, in the plants, in the trees, and in all animate and inanimate objects.'

The devotee likes to take images and icons etc., as helps in the worship of God. He does not worship the image as God, but he worships God through an image. To worship an image as God is idolatry, but to worship God through an image is a valid form of worship. The external symbol is an aid to the awakening of the spirit of devotion within.

The devotee sees the manifestation of the divine power in nature, i.e., in the sun, the moon, the wind; the power on the moral level i.e., the power of goodness, self-control, non-violence, truthfulness, self-sacrifice, compassion; and on the spiritual level, i.e., the realization of God, or the realization of Brahman. The worshipper embodies all these powers and projects them onto God or Shakti, the source of One Energy as Divine Mother.

Even though the highest conception of God is the Absolute, when looked at from a particular angle of vision, that Absolute appears to us as the personal God, or *Ishwara*. The Mother worshippers insist that this personal God should be called Mother rather than Father.

Sri Ramakrishna worshipped God as Mother. It was his belief that for the present age the best relationship we can establish with God is to look upon God as our own Mother. The devotees like to look upon God as the Divine Mother, and Mother has various forms. All the different gods and goddesses are nothing but aspects of the same Mother.

Swami Dayatmananda
(To be continued)



Rabia the Slave Girl

Aga Syed Ibrahim Dara

Rabia was a rare jewel the like of which can hardly be found in the entire history of Sufism. She has no equal in her sincerity of aspiration and simple and direct devotion to God. Along with intense and ardent faith she had also absolute faithfulness which made her bear the hardest ordeals of her life with perfect grace and ease.

She was the first woman to preach Sufi truths, and so beautifully she did it, that, within a short period, her sayings became famous all over Egypt. The former ideas of Sufism which, till now, were under the firm grip of the Muslim Theology underwent a great change and, becoming free of theology and dogmatic religion, took their stand on pure spiritual experience and God-knowledge. It was after Rabia's time that Sufism became a separate and independent religion. The women of Egypt too for the first time got fired by her inspiration and took to spiritual pursuits, and a long line of Sufi women devotees came into existence after her, who played a very important part in the history of Sufism. Her work, though arduous, great and important, was done with a pure and childlike simplicity – without a single expression of selfishness or a trace of ego, a thing which makes Rabia unique among the greatest of sages. She spoke direct and spontaneous truths with so forceful and effective a manner that they set ablaze the hearts of her audience with divine love. Some of her simple sayings are more eloquent and inspiring than the greatest Sufi poetry. Everything about her shows what a great power and force can there be in a simple and sincere heart that aspires for the Union with the Divine. The incidents of her life are few and simple, but through them her being is reflected as the sun through a clear glass.

She was the fourth daughter of a very poor man of Basara. On account of a terrible famine which broke out in the land, her father sold her to a rich man who was cruel, hard and taxing. Rabia had to work very hard from the morning till night. She was not only scolded and rebuked but very often beaten severely. So intolerable was the treatment meted out to her that she could stand it no longer and one night ran away from the house. It was night and the road was dark and lonely. Rabia met with a number of small accidents and finally fell down and broke her arm. In her utter helplessness and misery she prayed to God saying, *"O Lord, I am an unhappy orphan and a miserable slave girl; moreover I have broken my arm. I do not complain of my misfortune to Thee, Who art Great and All-knowing. But I ask Thee to grant that I may never forget Thee and Thou be always near me and be pleased with me."* She heard a voice saying, *"My child, be patient. In a short time God will make you so great and famous that even angels will adore and praise you and you will get your realization."* She felt very happy on hearing it, and with full faith and confidence in God's help she got up and returned to the house of her master.

She liked very much to read the Quran and to spend time in prayers but she had to work all day long and found time to do it late at night when all had fallen asleep. Once her master woke up from his sleep late at night and hearing her voice went to see with whom she was speaking. He was surprised to see her in prayer and heard her saying, *"O God, Thou knowest everything. Thou knowest that I have obeyed all Thy commands. Thou knowest that I try to follow Thy least wish and utterly rely upon Thee and trust Thee only and that my only desire is to do the same to the end. I wish and aspire that the whole day and the night be spent in Thy service and prayer only, but I am a helpless slave girl and cannot devote as much time in Thy contemplation as I wish to. I feel acutely this neglect, on my part, of the most sacred duty for which I implore Thee to forgive me."*

Her master was filled with reverence on hearing her prayer. Just then he saw around her head a halo of light and was awestruck by it. Then he said to himself, *"It is not proper that I should exact any work from so great a soul. It is more fitting that I serve her in future."* The next day he freed her from slavery and said to her, *"My reverence for you is without limit. If you stay in my house I will be glad to serve you, but if you wish to go elsewhere you, are equally free to do that also."* Rabia thanked him and saying that her period of stay there had come to an end, wished to go elsewhere and trusting herself utterly to God's grace and help she left the house and went away in the world.

Since that day she devoted her whole life to God. She made a complete surrender and performed hard penance. Her life was full of devotional acts done with ardent love and sacrifice. She was always pure and childlike.

When she began to give discourses crowds of people used to come from far and near to hear her inspiring words and to have a glimpse of her face. Hossain Basarai,* who was a great sage of those days, used to say about Rabia, *"She is that great and rare soul who got her illumination and knowledge direct from God without the least help of any other man or guide."* Rabia used to go and attend the discourses of Hossain Basarai, where she was greatly honoured. If he happened to say anything exceptionally nice and people praised him for it, he used to say, *"It came from the heart of Rabia."* Once in the discourse someone asked Rabia why she did not marry. She replied, *"Marriage cannot be done without a body and I have no body left of my own."* Then Hossain Basarai asked, *"How did you attain to this high position ?"* She answered, *"By giving all I owned to God."* She was asked what was her conception of God. She explained, *"I can't say that God is like this or that. I know Him Formless and Infinite and feel Him near."* In all the sayings of Rabia one never misses the strong fervour of her ardent aspiration and

love for God. Her sayings take one out of the narrow walls of religion to the Reality and the Truth above it. Even in her moments of 'perplexity' we find her praying to God.

"My God, my heart is a prey to perplexity in the midst of the solitude. I am a stone, so is Kaba. What can it do for me? What I need is to contemplate Thy Face." Though Rabia was very often preaching things contrary to or different from the existing religious belief, yet so beautifully she did it that she never came in conflict with the upholders of religion. Once Rabia asked a man, *"Why do you pray to God?"* He replied, *"To go to heaven."* She put the same question to another man and he said, *"To escape the torments of hell."* She thereupon said, *"Only the devotees of the lowest order serve God for greed or fear. Suppose there were no heaven or hell, would we then give up worshipping God? True devotees worship God for no selfish reason or motive whatsoever. They want to feel His presence. They do not want the heaven nor seek any other reward."* One of her famous sayings in this connection is an example of her sincerity and devotion. She says : *"O Lord, if I worship Thee in fear of hell, burn me in hell. If I worship Thee in love of paradise, exclude me from paradise. But when I worship Thee for Thy own sake, withhold not Thy ever-lasting Beauty."* Once Rabia was asked, *"Do you regard Satan as your enemy and in your Sadhana did you have to fight hard and struggle much against him ?"* She answered, *"I was all the time so much engrossed with the love of God that I had no time either for enmity to or fight against Satan or anybody."* Someone asked her, *"You pray to God but have you seen God ?"* She answered, *"First I see God and then pray. Without His presence I cannot pray to Him."* Once Hossain Basarai said, *"If in the 'other world' I be separated from God even for a second, I feel that I will cry and wail so much that God Himself will be moved by it and be drawn to me."* Rabia answered, *"That condition will be possible in the other world, only if you can do it now in this life*

and if a moment of separation from God here also brings out such a wail from you."

A story is told about Rabia which shows her ideas about money. Once a rich man brought a purse full of silver coins for Rabia. But fearing that she might not accept it, he first approached and asked Hossain Basarai to plead to Rabia on his behalf to accept the offering. Hossain Basarai told it to Rabia but she answered, *"When God is always merciful and cares even for the wicked and the thief, is it likely that He will forget me, His devotee who remembers Him every minute? Tell him that since I have known the greatness of God I have ceased caring for anything of this world. Moreover I do not know how he has earned the money. For that reason too I cannot accept his money."* While discussing about the thing necessary to get Realization, Rabia said, *"O man, in the path of God nothing is necessary; even the eye or the tongue is not needed. What is required is a pure heart that ceaselessly aspires after God. Therefore always pray that your heart may hanker after purity and may love God fully."*

Sufian was a great sage living in the time of Rabia. Once he went to a mosque and the king too had come there to say his prayers. By chance Sufian happened to get his place just behind the king in the second row. Till then Sufian was not known to many people nor had he become famous as a sage. The king, who was very egoistic and proud, had also the habit of proudly twisting his moustaches every now and then.

(It is said when Sufian was entering the mosque that day, he was in a hurry and his foot fell upon the steps with great force. Just then he got a shock and saw a light and heard a voice which said, "Don't be careless in the house of God. Step lightly with reverence in future." It had a great effect upon him and probably for this reason he could not forgive the king's act and insisted on reverence.)

Sufian observing this told the king, *"O king, you are in the house of God and in His presence. You must give up your proud ways at least in this place and act humbly."* The king was offended and sharply replied,

"*Shut up.*" Sufian said that it was his duty to point it out and he did not care for the consequences and would continue to point out the truth. It was a brave reply given at the risk of life. Sufian was put in prison the next day and afterwards was sentenced to death. When the news was taken to Sufian he remained quiet and gave no reply. But that very moment it so happened that the court of the king collapsed and the king with his entire court perished under it. The king who succeeded him had untold faith in Sufian and the whole country began to honour and revere Sufian.

Abdul Omar was also a great and learned sage of the time. A story is told of his meeting Rabia, along with Sufian, when she was ill. That shows how much they all revered Rabia, and what influence Rabia exerted on those with whom she came into contact.

"Once," writes the biographer, "Rabia fell ill and the sages Abdul Omar and Sufian went to see her. Knowing the greatness of Rabia they did not speak but remained silent, till Rabia herself turned to them and said, *"Sufian, whatever you have to say please say it."* Sufian replied, *"O revered lady, pray to God that He might cure you of your illness."* Rabia said, *"Sufian, you are a great sage and yet you give advice in this way. Don't you know from whom this illness has come?"* Sufian thought a little and answered, *"Lady, you are right. This too is God's wish."* After some time he spoke again and asked, *"Do you wish to eat anything?"* Then Rabia related a story and said, *"Sufian, I am very fond of dates and like to eat them. Though they can be had in plenty in these parts, I did not eat any for the last twenty years; for it was not the wish of God."* The sages praised her and went away greatly touched and inspired.

Rabia's trust and implicit faith in God and her devotional reliance upon Him can be seen by the following incident: Once Rabia had only two loaves of bread, and two very hungry Fakirs came to her and asked for something to eat. She became anxious and before she gave them the loaves a third man also came.

Though he was not so much in need of food as the former two Fakirs, Rabia gave the loaves to him. All were very much puzzled by this act and asked the reason. Rabia did not say anything and remained silent. After some time a servant came with some pieces of bread and gave them to Rabia, saying, *"My master has sent these to you."* Rabia took them and counted and finding that they were eighteen in number sent them back saying, "I can't accept these. There seems to be a mistake. The servant went back but came again with two more added to the lot, at which Rabia felt pleased and gladly accepted the offering. She gave the bread to the hungry Fakirs. When asked to explain the meaning of all this, she said, *"I did not give the two loaves of bread to the Fakirs because they would not have sufficed for them. The third man who came up needed about that much. So I thought it was meant for him. I remembered at that time the promise of God, "What is given in My name I shall return back increased tenfold." I therefore prayed that God might return them tenfold, with which I might satisfy the other Fakirs. That is why I hesitated to take the eighteen loaves and waited for the right number which was twenty."* Every act of Rabia was prompted by God, and she never acted by her personal will or motive, as it is clear from the above incidents.

Let us in the end mention the following saying of Rabia, which shows that the perceptions got by direct contact and love of God are of the highest order. "O man," says Rabia, *"when in your aspiration for God you feel a great and unbearable pang of separation in which you wish to tear your hair and dash your head against the wall, have patience and know for certain that that very moment God is present before you and it is always His presence that invokes such an aspiration in a devotee."* To Rabia the aspiration for God was a sign of His presence.

While explaining how a true prayer should be performed, she said, *"At the time of prayer the heart becomes pure and in that state it*

should be opened and offered to God." The incidents of the time of her death are not known. It is said that she died in Jerusalem in the year 753 A.D. The well-known Sufi poet Fariduddin Attar collected all her sayings and preserved them carefully. And thus it is that their purity has been well preserved up to this day, and we find them as inspiring as on the day they were uttered.

When a life or a saying becomes the expression of Divine Power, it never loses its charm or beauty, though many years may pass by; it becomes immortal, it always supplies mankind with inspiration.

**Hossain Basarai lived in the time of Ali, the nephew of the Prophet and the 4th Khalif of Islam.*

(Reprinted from Prabuddha Bharata, August 1933)



"There is no treasure equal to contentment and no virtue equal to fortitude."

"You see, my son, it is not a fact that you will never face dangers. Difficulties always come, but they do not last forever. You will see that they pass away like water under a bridge."

'Don't be afraid. Human birth is full of suffering and one has to endure everything patiently, taking the Name of God. None, not even God in human form, can escape the sufferings of the body and mind. Even Avataras,, saints, and sages have to undergo the ordeal of suffering, for they take upon themselves the burden of sins of omission and commission of ordinary human beings and thereby sacrifice themselves for the good of humanity.'

Holy Mother

De-Hypnotizing Ourselves

Swami Yatiswarananda

Are we all Hypnotized?

Man remains hypnotized with the false idea of an ego. When this ghost is off from us, all dreams vanish, and then it is found that the One Self, only, exists from the highest Being (Infinite Spirit) to a blade of grass. 'says Swami Vivekananda.

Are we all hypnotized by our false ego? Are we dreaming false dreams, forgetting the Divine Reality which the great mystics of all ages, countries and religions realized—the Reality which, in our age, Sri Ramakrishna experienced as the Truth of truths?

Sri Ramakrishna gives the following parable :

'Once a tigress attacked a flock of goats. As she sprang on her prey, she gave birth to a cub and died. The cub grew up in the company of the goats. The goats ate grass and the cub followed their example. They bleated and the cub bleated too, Gradually it grew up to be a tiger. One day another tiger attacked the same flock. It was amazed to see the grass-eating tiger, Running after it, the wild tiger at last seized it, whereupon the grass-eating tiger began to bleat. The wild tiger dragged it to the water and said, "*Look at your face in the water. It is just like mine. Here is a little meat. Eat it.*" Saying this it thrust some meat into its mouth. But the grass-eating tiger would not swallow it and began to bleat again. Gradually, however, it got the taste for blood and came to relish the meat. Then the wild tiger said, "*Now you see, there is no difference between you and me. Come along and follow me into the forest.*"

Eating grass is enjoying the world of senses (considering it to be the only reality). To bleat and run away like a goat is to behave

like an ordinary (ignorant) man. Going away with the wild tiger is like taking shelter with the Guru, who helps in awakening one's spiritual consciousness. To see one's face rightly is to know one's real Self—the Divine Spirit who is the Guru of Gurus.'

'Having drunk the wine of ignorance, the whole world has become mad' is a Sanskrit saying. This aptly describes the state of the world.

Ignorance is the cause of Attachment and Self-Love

Patanjali, the great ancient psychologist declares : In our essential nature we are Spirit. Ignorance hides the Truth in us and breeds the unreal. It creates the false ego and leads to our identification with it. The ego, in turn, breeds attachments and aversions, which affect the subtle body and also the physical body. The spirit is identified with the ego, emotions, and gross body. This is our human personality.

Behind our attachments and aversions—likes and dislikes—lies our egoism, our self-love and self-esteem. We are in love with our own body, emotions, ego and personality. Modern psychologists use a word 'Narcissism'. According to Greek mythology Narcissus was a beautiful youth. He fell in love with his own reflection in the waters of a spring. He pined away, evidently because self-love cannot satisfy the longing of the heart. Narcissus died of frustration. And the flower that bears his name is said to have sprung on the spot of his death. The term Narcissism is used by modern psychologists for a morbid condition in which a person is in love with his own person. We are all more or less suffering from self-centredness, self-worship.

There are, no doubt, remarkable cases of selfless love in this world of ours, but in most of us what is predominant is our self-love. Sometimes we claim that we love others more than we love ourselves. In most cases this is a lie which we are not

prepared to acknowledge even to ourselves. However, on deeper analysis, we find that our love for another is based on our self-love. In loving others we make others the objects or rather targets of our emotions.

Speaking of the real basis of this self-love the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says :

It is not for the sake of the husband that he is loved, but for one's own sake that he is loved. It is not for the sake of the wife that she is loved but for one's own sake that she is loved. It is not for the sake of the sons, that they are loved but for one's own sake that they are loved. It is not for the sake of wealth that it is loved but for one's own sake that it is loved. It is not for the sake of all that all is loved but for one's own sake that it is loved.'

We love others for the sake of our little self. This is a bondage for us, as well as for others. If, instead, we could realize the True Self—the Supreme Infinite Self—that is in us and in all and love all for the sake of the Infinite Self, our love will be a source of eternal joy and freedom. This True Self is to be realized.

Yajnavalkya says to his wife who was yearning for illumination :

This self is to be realized by hearing of It, reflecting on It, by meditating on It.

False identification of Subject with Object

Patanjali defines egoism as the identification of the Seer—the Immortal Spirit—with the instruments of seeing—the mind and the sense organs. During our state of ignorance, we remain identified with our false knowledge of men and things, with our fancies, with our misconceptions, with our sleep and memory. We wish to acquire the right knowledge of the empirical world, gross and subtle, with the help of sense-perception, inference, and reliable information. But soon we find that our observations are faulty, our sources of information are unreliable, and so our inferences are wrong. With the help of correct observation, correct

information, and correct inference it is not only possible to know something of the world we live in but also something about ourselves.

We must remember, as our illumined teachers tell us, it is one thing to know things with the help of the senses and another to know with the help of right reason. But it is quite a different thing to know things directly with our inner vision. It is our intuitive experience that reveals to us our real nature. We then know our little selves to be reflections of the Infinite Self. This Self-realization is the goal of spiritual life.

Value of analysis in the process of De-Hypnotization

We must learn the secret of de-hypnotizing ourselves if we want to have this realization. But the task of completely de-hypnotizing ourselves and attaining knowledge of the True Self is not an easy one. The ancient Hindu teachers recognized the necessity of self-analysis for revealing the True Self of man.

Value of Religion in Psychology

Freud—the founder of the psychoanalytic school—evidently did not know about the Hindu system of spiritual psychology. He was so full of his own discoveries that he refused to believe that the ancient Hindus possessed any insight into the phenomenon and working of the unconscious mind. Had he studied something of the ancient teachings of India or even the writings of some of the Christian mystics, he would have known that many of his discoveries and those of other psychologists were long ago anticipated by many spiritual seekers and teachers of religions in many lands. We are grateful to the modern psychologists for their detached researches into the realm of mind and its working. We want to utilize all the great truths and

techniques discovered both by ancient and modern psychologists for sublimating our emotions and attaining spiritual illumination.

However, during the early days of psychotherapy, many of the psychologists looked upon religion with suspicion, and considered spiritual practices somewhat dubious. Fortunately, following in the footsteps of William James and profiting by wider experiences in connection with the treatment of their patients, some of the living psychologists are recognizing the value of the religious outlook and spiritual practices in the process of sublimation i.e. purification of emotions. According to some psychologists, religion is one of the best types of sublimation. Speaking of the Yogic system declares William James :

“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 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,” and comes face to face with facts which no instinct or reason can ever know.”

Then Professor James quotes from the Raja yoga of Swami Vivekananda :

“The mind itself has a higher state of existence, beyond reason, a superconscious state, and when the mind gets to that higher state, then this knowledge beyond reasoning comes. All the different steps in Yoga are intended to bring us scientifically to the superconscious state or Samadhi.”

Religion, naturally of the right kind, proves to be a great aid in our moral and spiritual struggles. Criticising Freud, who was sceptical about religion, Dr. Jung, the Swiss psychologist who was one of his students, declares :

‘Freud has unfortunately overlooked the fact that man has never yet been able single handed to hold his own against the powers of darkness; that is of the unconscious. Man has always been in need of the spiritual help which each individual’s own religion held out to him. It is this which lifts him out of his distress.’

Freud and psychologists of his school attribute sex urge as the main cause of mental disturbance and illness. Sometimes their explanation is very far-fetched. Adler—another student of Freud—differed with him and held that the will to power was the driving force of life. Jung takes a more comprehensive view and declares that the one basic energy may express itself as sex energy, or will to power, or in many other forms. This is in accord with the Hindu view.

Spiritual Anaemia

Dr. Sadler in his book *The Mind at Mischief* takes this view when he remarks :

'Not long ago I came in contact with rather an unusual case of mental disturbance brought on by emotional repression; it further illustrates my contention that 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.'

Dr. Sadler calls this a case of spiritual anaemia.

A business woman, about forty years of age, had an average religious training in her youth and had given more or less attention to her religious emotions until she was about thirty years of age. She came to be connected with a large concern. Her business and social activities multiplied. She became neglectful of all things religious. She went on suppressing the feeling. She tried to rationalize that religion as taught at home was superstitious. But she got little comfort from this. She consoled herself by saying that she should take full advantage of her business and social opportunities now and would attend to religious matters in future. She became fairly happy, putting out of mind her urge to spiritual growth. Years went by. Her health began to fail, she grew nervous, began to suffer from fatigue and developed insomnia. Then she sought medical advice. A thorough medical examination revealed that she was organically

sound. Emotional analysis revealed her spiritual starvation—suppression of religious emotion. She established connections with some of her old friends engaged in religious research. She made other connections of a religious and spiritual nature. This made a new woman out of her within a month. She gained in weight, to some extent got relief from her fatigue and began to enjoy refreshing sleep every night. We know many cases like this where persons come to have a new life as the result of directing and expressing their emotions along spiritual lines, through prayer, meditation, and spiritual practice.

Emotions Hypnotize Us

There are spiritual emotions and unspiritual emotions. We must have control over both. But our unspiritual emotions are more dangerous if we surrender ourselves to them completely. A psychologist observes about anger, hatred, fear and other morbid emotions as follows :

'Emotion is hypnotic. Emotion prevents one from thinking clearly, from seeing sharply, from hearing acutely. It makes one blind, deaf and dumb. It paralyzes activity that is just under your hand, keeps you from doing what you really want to do and makes you do things that you would not do if you were in full possession of all your faculties.'

In hypnotism brought about by another person, the subject's mind cannot function properly. In this forced inhibition, the suggestions given by the hypnotist become effective because they are not contradicted. The subject becomes passive, unable to resist the suggestions of the hypnotist. If the hypnotist says that the subject's arm is paralyzed, it cannot be moved. Intense anger, hatred, fear etc., have a similar paralyzing influence on our mind and body. How often they sweep us away as if we were automatons.

Modern psychologists are sometimes able to effect remarkable cures by de-hypnotizing their patients emotionally.

A young woman, who had been supporting her mother, was getting more and more nervous until she was unable to go to work. A conflict was going on within her as the result of a moral lapse. She started imagining that people were talking about her. No one was taking the slightest interest in her going and coming. But her imagination was real to her. She became afraid of meeting the whispering people. Her range of interests and activities contracted and finally she remained in bed all the time. False imagination and fear hypnotized her and brought about a sort of mental paralysis. Sanatorium, shock-therapy and psycho-therapy finally brought about her cure. 'She was', says the psychologist, 'de-hypnotized and became healthy again.'

De-Hypnotization is the first step to Self-Realization

In spiritual life, all of us have to pass through both moral and spiritual de-hypnotization. The student of Yoga is not a passive patient. He has to approach the moral and spiritual problems actively and intelligently, with faith in himself, faith in the scriptures, and faith in the teacher who brings him the spiritual knowledge which he is to discover in himself. The student of Yoga works hard at his self-appointed task.

In the paths of Yoga, great stress is laid on the right form of self-effort. At every step the spiritual seeker must face his moral and spiritual problems, conquer the lower nature by the higher nature, stage by stage, and establish newer and newer adjustments as he moves towards the Truth. Not many can bear the strain of struggle. Most of us find it easier to take shelter under some form of self-deception—misconceptions, fancy, day-dreaming, dwelling on old memories, or some such mental trick. We want to get drunk in some way or other by our lower emotions and desires.

One day Dr. Johnson was conversing with Mrs. Williams, a blind friend of his. She was telling him about the place where she had dined the day before. There were several 'gentlemen', she was saying and I found that there had been a good deal of hard drinking. She closed this observation with a trite moral reflection, '*I wonder what pleasure men can take in making beasts of themselves.*' Johnson replied, '*I wonder, Madam, that you have not the penetration to see that he who makes a beast of himself gets rid of the pain of being a man.*'

Most of us, whether we have a man's body or a woman's body, want to get rid of the pain of becoming undaunted seekers after truth by getting drunk physically and emotionally. We want to hypnotize ourselves by our own baser emotions and desires. We must not eat grass and bleat like a goat. Instead, we must take the first step in the de-hypnotizing process by boldly leading a strict moral life. What a great psychologist Patanjali must have been to observe that instead of moving onward, we make obstacles for ourselves. We must not live a life of ignorance by entertaining mental laziness, doubt, lack of enthusiasm, clinging to sense enjoyment, false perception etc.

How to De-Hypnotize ourselves

To get out of this ignorance we need steady spiritual practice. We can do it either by Karma yoga or the path of activity, Jnana yoga or the path of knowledge, Raja yoga or the path of meditation, Bhakti yoga or the path of devotion, by one or more or a combination of all of them.

Path of Action

In order to follow Karma yoga the aspirant must have freedom from attachments, have fortitude and enthusiasm. He must be free from egotism, possess 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.

Path of Knowledge

For following Jnana yoga the aspirant must strive for dispassion for all enjoyments, here and hereafter, and discrimination between the real and the unreal. He should further practise control of the mind and the senses. He should have great faith in the teachings of the Guru. He must have an intense desire to be free and he must practise meditation on the Supreme Spirit with one-pointed devotion.

Path of Mental Control

A Raja yogi must practise non-injury in thought, word and deed. He must be truthful, non-covetous, must practise continence and must not be dependent on others. He should acquire purity, contentment, asceticism, capacity for deep study and the spirit of self-surrender to the Supreme Being. He should, then, practise posture and Pranayama. Detaching the mind from all things non-spiritual, he should then practise concentration and meditation.

Path Of Devotion

The follower of Bhakti yoga must acquire truthfulness, sincerity, steadiness and cheerfulness. He must practise the spirit of doing good to others. He should avoid vain talks, repeat the Divine name and meditate on the Divine Spirit as the highest object of his love and devotion.

Moral life, of course, is the preliminary requirement of all Yogas. And the sign of our progress is whether we are expanding or not. Swami Vivekananda says, '*Expansion is life and contraction is death.*'

The process of De-Hypnotization in brief

The first step in the process of de-hypnotization is to lead a moral life which implies purification, sublimation and standing on one's own feet.

The next step is meditation which enables us to rise above our false ego, to feel the Divine Presence. The false ego is false because it is cut off from the cosmic existence and has lost its contact with the Infinite Spirit. De-hypnotization is to re-establish the soul's communion with the Supreme Spirit —the soul of all souls.

Only when we have de-hypnotized ourselves can we say with Sri Ramakrishna :

"Why should the universe be unreal? That is a speculation of the philosophers. After realizing God, one sees that it is God Himself who has become the universe and all living beings. The Divine Mother revealed to me that it was She who has become everything. She showed me that everything was full of consciousness. I found everything soaked, as it were, in Bliss —the Bliss of Sat-chit-ananda".



"People complain about their griefs and sorrows and how they pray to God but find no relief from pain. But grief itself is a gift from God. It is the symbol of His compassion. Tell me, who is there in the world who has not had to bear sorrow? Vrinda once said to Krishna, 'Who said you are merciful? As Rama you filled Sita's life with sorrow; as Krishna you fill Radha's life with sorrow. In Kamsa's prison your parents weep for you night and day. Yet we call upon you, because he who takes your Name has no fear of death. The Mother of the universe is the Mother of all. From Her have come out both good and evil."

Holy Mother

William Law

Nancy Pope Mayorga

A strangely neglected figure of the 18th century is William Law (1686-1761), Anglican divine, writer, and mystic. Strange that he should be neglected, because he is not only a master of English prose, but a deep and original thinker—insofar as the discovery of truth can be called original—and a great saint. Those who know him at all usually know him for his little book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, which sets forth in lively language a plan of life so thoroughly Vedantic that one looks for quotations from Hindu scripture—but looks in vain. He found those practical and universal truths not in scripture but in himself.

Serious Call, however, belongs to only one part of Law's life, and, for the spiritual seeker, not the most interesting part. His life, as orderly and logical as his prose, falls into three stages: a period of controversy when his lucid and witty pen was at the service of all morality; a period of reason and appraisal when he established his ideals and wrote *Serious Call*; and the mystical period which burst forth at last in divine fire after a lifetime of devotion.

Law was born at King's Cliffe in Northamptonshire, became a fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and an ordained minister of the Church of England. But upon the accession of George I as king and consequently head of the church, his conscience forbade him to take the oath of allegiance. This made him what was known in those days as a non-juror, and caused him to be deprived of his fellowship and of any opportunity for advancement in the church.

This fact, however, did not by any means cut him off from living the active life of a churchman and theologian, for he had a vigorous and interested mind and threw himself enthusiastically into all kinds of social, moral, and theological controversies. He defended the high church which had demoted him, he defended morality, he defended reason against superstition, and he even

published a piece called "*The Absolute Unlawfulness of Stage Entertainments*," whose very fist-banging title reveals the vigour with which he thought and wrote.

At the age of thirty-seven he became tutor to Edward Gibbon, and lived in the Gibbon household for fifteen years. It was in their home he wrote *Serious Call*.

This book was composed for a generation of people whom Law considered irreligious and hypocritical, to point out to them vigorously that the Christian life is more than lip-service, more than morality even, that true Christianity implies a new birth in spirit, a new principle of life, an entire change of disposition. He says that if all those who profess to be Christians, really were, "*it would change the whole face of the world.*"

From his acquaintances and observations of people, he created synthetic characters to make his points: among the many was Flavian, the orthodox churchwoman who, despite her riches, thinks that charity consists in giving a few pennies to the church; Flatus, restlessly searching for peace in the world and never finding it; Succus, whose greatest happiness is a good meal and who praises the minister who sets the best table; Negotius, the honest businessman who gives to the church hoping for success in his business. And Miranda, the true pattern of piety, who lives a life of renunciation, humility, charity, devotion, and abstinence.

It is when he describes the ideal Christian life that Law is most Vedantic. He begins with a plea for all Christians to have the sincere intention to please God in all actions. He begs them not to waste time. He points out that worldly business is to be made holy unto the Lord by being done as a service to Him. He urges chanting the name of the Lord, and praying for others. He says, "*There is nothing that makes us love a man so much as praying for him.*"

He even plans an ideal day for the devotee. "*I take it for granted*," he begins, "*that every Christian is up early in the morning.*" At daybreak, he says, chant a psalm to the glory of the Lord. At nine

o'clock meditate on humility. At noon pray for humanity. At three o'clock surrender to the will of God. At six o'clock make a careful examination of the day and of yourself resolving to correct wrongs and repent of mistakes. At bedtime think of death. Remember, he cautions, that "*the greatness of those things which follow death makes all that goes before it sink into nothingness. Then commit yourself to sleep as into the hands of God.*"

That he practiced what he preached goes almost without saying. If the fact needs a witness, one is found in the autobiography of his pupil, Edward Gibbon, who draws an appealing picture of Law as "a wit and a scholar, who believed all that he professed and practiced all that he enjoined. The character of non-juror which he maintained to the last is sufficient evidence of his principles in state and church. The sacrifice of interest to conscience will always be respectable."

The *Serious Call* which appeared in 1728 made a sensational impact on the public. Samuel Johnson said that it was the first work that set him "thinking in earnest of religion." John Wesley, the Methodist, was impressed enough by the book to seek out Law at the Gibbon home and become his friend. And many churchmen and writers of the day praised the book for its sincerity and its fine style. Even an agnostic, Leslie Stephen, sometime later wrote of it respectfully, "*It's power can only be adequately felt by readers who can study it on their knees.*"

But then, when he was forty-eight, William Law chanced upon the writings of Jacob Boehme. Into his open and prepared soul flooded the radiance of Boehme's strange teachings, vibrant, altogether overwhelming. Ethics immediately broadened away into mysticism. Rationalism was at once set afire with passion. And we have the paradoxical spectacle of the austere, conforming, soberly dressed, Anglican churchman, in a supremely rational century, burning and glowing with the unreasoning, unrestrained fire of God's love. Even the titles of his writings from now on show

the awakening that has taken place: *The Way to Divine Knowledge*, *The Spirit of Prayer*, *The Spirit of Love*, *Truths of Revelation*, and the like.

When a man becomes a mystic, he breaks with society and walks alone with God. He sets up revelation against orthodoxy and intuition against reason, and cares not for the consequences. Many of Law's admirers dropped away at this period, among them John Wesley who was too practical-minded to follow this new path. But there were others who recognized Law for what he was, became his true disciples, and followed him to the end. Two of them were women, Miss Hester Gibbon, sister of his former pupil, and a Mrs. Hutcheson, whose husband on his death-bed had urged her to put herself under the spiritual protection of Law. When Law's patron died and the Gibbon household dispersed, this interesting trio moved to King's Cliffe, his birthplace, where he had a house and small property, and set up housekeeping. There for the next twenty-one years, they lived the severely simple life set forth in *A Serious Call*, a life wholly given to devotion, study, and charity. They established a school for boys and one for girls, supervised the almshouses of the district, and offered charity and hospitality to both humans and animals.

For nine years after moving to King's Cliffe, William Law's pen was silent. It must have been a period of deep study and meditation, of extremely active spiritual work, for out of it came his greatest mystical writings. One thing was quite evident, that he made an exhaustive study of the works of Jacob Boehme, who, he announced enthusiastically, was "a guide to the truth of all the mysteries of the kingdom of God." Law's rational mind was able to sift out the sugar from the sand. He lovingly set himself the task of interpreting and clarifying the difficult and often fantastic metaphorical writings of the "illuminated shoemaker". But Boehme was not his only study. He was an assiduous reader. In his library

at King's Cliffe today there are more than six hundred volumes by mystical writers, said to be only a fragment of those that he collected.

His life now was a dedicated one, strict and ascetic to the point of austerity. He rose at five every morning for several hours of devotion. Most of his day was spent in his study, which was a room fourteen feet square, furnished with a table, a chair, the Bible, and his mystical books. Here he had his highest moments and put them down on paper for us.

The first writing that came from this period was *The Spirit of Prayer*, and the very first line of it shows the spirit of the new man. It states unequivocally, "*The greatest part of mankind—nay, of Christians—may be said to be asleep, and that particular way of life which takes up each man's mind, thought, and actions may very well be called his particular dream.*"

Law's treatises are completely ordered, planned to the last paragraph. There could be no greater contrast than between his writing and Boehme's. Boehme struggles with obscurities. Law presents his points with the greatest simplicity and clarity. Yet within this framework of reason, the mystic lifts up his voice and sings. Witness this definition of God, this hymn to God, at the beginning of *The Spirit of Prayer*:

"This is the amiable nature of God. He is the Good, the unchangeable, overflowing fountain of good that sends forth nothing but good to all eternity. He is the Love itself, the unmixed, unmeasurable Love, doing nothing but from love, giving nothing but gifts of love to everything He has made; requiring nothing of all His creatures but the spirit and fruits of that love which brought them into being. Oh how sweet is this contemplation of the height and depth of the riches of Divine Love!"

After defining the object of contemplation, he tells what results can be expected of spiritual exercise:

"Wherever this seed of Heaven is suffered to take root, to get life and breath in the soul, there in this new-born inward man grows up a true and real knowledge of the whole mystery of godliness in himself. All that

the Gospel teaches of sin and grace, of life and death, of Heaven and hell, of the new and old man, of the light and Spirit of God, are things not got by hearsay, but inwardly known, felt, and experienced in the growth of this new-born life."

Then he goes on to practical advice:

Stop, therefore, all self-activity, listen not to the suggestions of thy own reason, run not on in thy own will, but be retired, silent, passive, and humbly attentive to this new risen light within thee. Open thy heart, thy eyes and ears to all its impressions. Let it enlighten, teach, frighten, torment, judge, and condemn thee as it pleases, turn not away from it, hear all it says, seek no relief from it, consult not with flesh and blood, but, with a heart full of faith and resignation to God, pray only this prayer, that God's Kingdom may come and His will be done in thy soul. Stand faithfully in this state of preparation thus given up to the Spirit of God, and then the work of thy repentance will be wrought in God and thou wilt soon find that He that is in thee is much greater than all that are against thee. . . . Through all the whole nature of things nothing can do or be a real good to thy soul but the operation of God upon it.

In his spiritual advice, he shows himself to be an experienced guru. On the practice of mortifications, he cautions, *"Their only worth consists in this, that they break down what stands between God and us. But many people mistake the whole nature and worth of them. They practice them for their own sake, as things good in themselves, and so rest in them and look no further, but grow full of self-admiration for their mortifications."*

He has a most beautifully graphic way of making his points. Pursuing the subject of self-pride, he says:

"Stretch forth thy hand," said our Lord to the man that had a withered hand; he did so and it was immediately made whole. Now had this man any ground for pride or high opinion of himself? Yet just such is our share in the raising up of the spiritual life within us. All that we can do by our own activity is only like this man's stretching out his hand;

the rest is the work of Christ, the only giver of life to the withered hand or the dead soul."

Law's energy and enthusiasm for the work of God did not abate as he grew old, rather grew stronger, until, we have at the very end of his life, at age 74, a fiery attack in forceful language upon what was in that day considered Christianity. He gave this work the deceptive title of *An Humble, Earnest, and Affectionate Address to the Clergy*. True, it is all that, but much more. He rolls up his sleeves and efficiently applies his axe to the forest of deceptions, pretensions, and pride that he sees in the Christian community. Let the chips fall where they may! He had been independent since he left college, all his life careless of clerical standing or social esteem. At 74, just before his death, he was not likely to suppress truth out of any personal consideration. He strides right in and lays his axe at the roots of everything men held dear and important—learning, patriotism, comfort, social refinements, all self-deception.

In a way, this treatise is a summing up of all his conclusions of a life of spiritual practice. He begins in his usual straightforward manner by announcing the one thing needful for Christians, "*the Spirit of God brought again to His first power of life in us. Everything else, be it what it will, however glorious and divine in outward appearance, everything that angels, men, churches, or reformations can do for us is dead and helpless, but so far as it is the immediate work of the Spirit of God breathing and living in it.*"

Then he analyzes the problem and makes the simple point that all struggle is between self-pride and humility. On the one side, pride of learning, wealth, and power. On the other, love, goodness, and the perfection of the divine nature. Then someone may ask, is there no place for learning and erudition in the church? And Law replies, leaving no room for argument, "*He in whom the law, the prophets, and the Gospel are fulfilled is the only well-educated man and one of the first-rate scholars of the world.*" And he proceeds to thrust this sharp truth at the clergymen of the day:

"For until your heart is an altar in which the heavenly fire never goes out, you are dead in yourself and can only be a speaker of dead words about things that never had any life within you."

A fiery man indeed! He goes on to attack the preoccupation of the day, which was the spread of the Empire, in which the conquerors conveniently combined patriotism with Christianity, cruelty and barbarism and conquest and slavery — all in the name of Christ. *"It is my complaint against and charge upon all the nations of Christendom that this necessity of murdering is the dragon's monster, that is equally brought forth by all and every part of Christendom, and that therefore all and every part, as well Popish as Protestant, are at one and the same distance from the Spirit of their Lord and Saviour."*

This is the courage of one who knows he speaks the truth. For it should be noted that the period in which he was writing was a period of the greatest British military conquests in every part of the world.

He concludes his address to the clergy by saying, *"All that Christ was, did, suffered, dying in the flesh and ascending into Heaven, was for this sole end to purchase for all His followers a new birth, a new life, and new light in and by the Spirit of God, restored to them and living in them as their support, comforter, and guide into all truth. And this was His*

"Lo, I Am with You Always, Even Unto the End of the World."

The paragraph was written a few days before Law died—was written, it is said, on the last occasion when his hand was able to hold a pen.

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Introduction to Hindu Theology-6

Swami Sunirmalananda

(Continued from the last issue)

The one goal of all human beings, according to Hinduism, is to know God and to become liberated. Knowledge brings liberation from the clutches of karma and ignorance. According to some Indian philosophers, heaven is the goal, but it is reiterated that this goal is temporary and not everlasting. Though the Vedas themselves teach the path of karma, which leads to heaven, they continue to show the path to liberation through knowledge.

2. The Idea of Salvation

Ignorance is not a virtue. But we live in ignorance and think we are enlightened. Unfortunately, we do not know who we are or what our capabilities are. We do not know we are immortal, divine, all-powerful, glorious, and eternal. We come to the earth and assume various bodies and suffer endlessly as we do not know our higher nature. We cannot know our true identity easily owing to our delusion. We are deluded with the idea that this world is permanent, it is pleasurable, and it is our true home. This is the great mystery of nature.

The fundamental teaching of all schools of Sanatana Dharma is that we should wake up. They teach us that the living being is essentially Divine, or has the Divine element in him. The highest goal is to realize this truth, to know this Divine element within, and to stop identifying oneself with the material part. Our sufferings are due to this wrong identification. We are not our clothes, however expensive they might be. So also, we are not our bodies, however strong or able they might be. To identify ourselves with the Atman, to know God, and to realize Him, is the goal.

Through many lives of struggle and suffering, the soul realizes that what he thought to be the abode of bliss is only an abode of illusion and delusion, of suffering and misery. This awakens him to know who he is. Swami Vivekananda says: '*So when the Vedantist has realised his own nature, the whole world has vanished for him. It will come back again, but no more the same world of misery. The prison of misery has become changed into Sat, Chit, Ananda – Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute – and the attainment of this is the goal of the Advaita Philosophy.*'

All schools of Hinduism declare unequivocally that this physical world is not our home. However long it might have been there, it's not permanent. We are here only to work out our karma. Living in this world is living ignorantly, as slaves to our karma. So with the higher worlds. Thus, liberation is liberation from our entanglement to karma as well as from ignorance.

There are various levels, stages, or states of liberation. According to some, to be in the same plane or 'world' as God is the goal. That is, to enjoy the bliss of being in the same *loka* with God is the ideal. In order to attain this, the individual serves the Lord in His temples and images with devotion and leads a pious life. The next goal is to be able to serve God personally, through eternity. Ramanuja propounds this path. Almost all the devotional paths say that the soul will be able to serve the Lord personally in a divine sphere. The third goal is to attain the same form as that of God. We are essentially divine. Our true nature is divine. To manifest this innate divinity is the goal. To attain to the form of God is to manifest this inner divinity. Thus, this is a higher stage. The fourth goal is to become one with God. This is the Advaitic standpoint. The One is appearing as many. When ignorance goes, the One stands out as It is.

As the Vedantists say, the space in the pot becomes one with the all-pervasive space. There are three spaces: the physical space

called *mahakasha*, the mental space called *chitta-akasha*, and the eternal, spiritual space called *Chid-akasha*. The first two spaces are but unreal manifestations, which create multiplicity in the physical and the dream states of existence. According to Advaita, both multiplicities are relative and temporary. They are unreal. This universe is apparently real, but essentially unreal. The goal, therefore, is to attain to that eternal *akasha*, which removes all limitations and sorrow.

What has knowledge to do with liberation? Suppose I know I am the Self, or the Atman. How do I become liberated? The answer is, just as knowledge of ordinary things bring us wealth, food and so on and liberate us from poverty and suffering, essential knowledge liberates from assumed sorrow and limitations. Further, this knowledge is not acquired. It is already there. It is only made manifest.

Finally, even while living in this world one can become liberated. This state has been termed the state of *jivanmukta* in the scriptures. *'When one sees a mirage for the first time, he mistakes it for a reality, and after vainly trying to quench his thirst in it, learns that it is a mirage. But whenever he sees such a phenomenon in future, in spite of the apparent reality, the idea that he sees a mirage always presents itself to him. So is the world of Maya to a Jivanmukta (the liberated in life),'* says Swami Vivekananda.

We have mentioned elsewhere that Hinduism gives place for every way of thinking. Thus, some schools say that going to heaven is also a goal, though that is not the final goal. The *purva-mimasakas* say that through the practice of sacrifices, one attains merits and goes to heaven. To explain: The Vedas are classified into four broad portions. These are: the mantra (nature theology), the *brâhmana* (ritualistic theology), the *âranyaka* (ritualistic theology leading to philosophy), and the Upanishad (supernatural theology). The second, ritualistic theology, has been

called the brahmana portion in the Vedas. The brahmanas are a methodology. They train the aspirant in various rituals (*yajnas*). These rituals, when performed systematically, without errors, are bound to produce desired results. These rituals and rites can be performed both for worldly and otherworldly gains. Not everyone wants God in this world. Knowing this fully, Sanatana Dharma has broadly classified human beings into two groups: the working type (*karma-kândin*) and the knowledge type (*jnana-kândin*). It also has classified human beings into four classes: the helpless soul struggling for a living on earth, the one who wants worldly enjoyment, the one who inquires into the higher truths, and the one who seeks only God. In accordance to these four types of human beings, the Vedas have classified themselves into four broad divisions. According to this system, some perform numerous sacrifices and go to heaven.

Swami Vivekananda explains this: *'Nahusha was a great king, and when he died, he became Indra. It is a position; one soul becomes high and takes the Indra position and remains in it only a certain time; he then dies and is born again as man. But the human body is the highest of all. Some of the gods may try to go higher and give up all ideas of enjoyment in heavens; but, as in this world, wealth and position and enjoyment delude the vast majority, so do most of the gods become deluded also, and after working out their good Karma, they fall down and become human beings again. This earth, therefore, is the Karma Bhumi; it is this earth from which we attain to liberation. So even these heavens are not worth attaining to.'*

The pre-requisites for liberation have been stated categorically by all the paths of Hinduism: renunciation of attachment to one's ego and to the world, sincerity of purpose, reverence for the spiritual teacher and scriptures, struggle for consciousness, etc.

Liberation anticipates intense spiritual struggle. Without struggle, one cannot attain liberation. The aspirant can choose

any path and perform spiritual practices. However, the incarnation can liberate a soul just by mere sight. Grace of the teacher can also give the disciple liberation if he or she is prepared for that.

Any introduction to the theological concept of liberation in Hinduism would be incomplete if the Vaishnava approach to this subject is not mentioned. According to the Gaudiya Vaishnava theology, liberation or *mukti* is not the goal at all. Devotion is both the means and the end. Devotion is the goal toward which we should all strive.

3. THE IDEA OF CREATION

There is a big difference between the concepts of Creation in Semitic religions and Aryan religions. While the Semitic concept is of God creating the world as we know from the Old Testament, the Aryan, especially Hindu, concept varies. From no creation at all to God's making this universe, there are several theories.

The most ancient opinion is that of the Rig Veda (*Nâsadiya Sûkta*), which states that initially, there was neither existence nor non-existence. *'But motionless did That vibrate, Alone, with Its own glory. Beyond That nothing did exist. At first in darkness hidden darkness lay. Who knew the way? Who there declared whence this arose? Projection whence?'*¹ According to this famous hymn of the Rig Veda, initially "darkness was hidden in darkness". There was only space or Akasha. Then there was projection, and the universe came into being.

Creation has come out of thought, according to the Vedas. There was a thought in the primordial Reality: *'bahusyâm...may I be many.'* Thus the universe evolved out of his thought. This is scientific because all material has thought preceding it. Some philosophers consider this universe as a mere thought.

Creation proceeded out of sound according to some theories of Hinduism. *Shabda* or sound is a vibration which subsequently creates the universe. *Shabda-Brahman* is the primordial sound, represented by Om, which is the fundamental building block of the universe.

Swami Vivekananda says: *'There is deep meaning in the thought that God created everything out of the Word. God Himself being formless, this is the best way to describe the projection of forms, or the creation. The Sanskrit word for creation is Srishti, projection. What is meant by "God created things out of nothing"? The universe is projected out of God. He becomes the universe, and it all returns to Him, and again it proceeds forth, and again returns. Through all eternity it will go on in that way. We have seen that the projection of anything in the mind cannot be without name and form. Suppose the mind to be perfectly calm, entirely without thought; nevertheless, as soon as thought begins to rise it will immediately take name and form. Every thought has a certain name and a certain form. In the same way the very fact of creation, the very fact of projection is eternally connected with name and form.'*² The Vedas state in general that creation is but a manifestation of God's glory — *tat srishtvâ tadeva anu-prâvishat*, He projected it and entered it.³

Swami Vivekananda explains the process of creation beautifully in his lectures on Raja Yoga. He says: *'At the beginning of creation there is only this Akasha. At the end of the cycle the solids, the liquids, and the gases all melt into the Akasha again, and the next creation similarly proceeds out of this Akasha. By what power is this Akasha manufactured into this universe? By the power of Prana. Just as Akasha is the infinite, omnipresent material of this universe, so is this Prana the infinite, omnipresent manifesting power of this universe. At the beginning and at the end of a cycle everything becomes Akasha, and all the forces that are in the universe resolve back into the Prana; in the next cycle, out of this Prana is evolved everything that we call*

energy, everything that we call force. It is the Prana that is manifesting as motion; it is the Prana that is manifesting as gravitation, as magnetism. It is the Prana that is manifesting as the actions of the body, as the nerve currents, as thought force. From thought down to the lowest force, everything is but the manifestation of Prana.’⁴

Creation is not something like making a pot, but it is just a projection of what is existing in a subtle form. Thus, according to almost all the schools of thought, creation is cyclic, and unending. The manifested universe appears and disappears into a subtle form, only to appear again.

Who makes this universe? According to some Hindu philosophers, God is both the material and intelligent cause of everything. According to some others, Nature (prakriti), with her three modes of equilibrium (sattva), activity (rajas) and inertia (tamas) projects this universe. According to still others, creation is like a holographic projection — it is a mirage.

The word *otaprotā* is used to explain how God has permeated the universe. Not just that. This universe with all its millions of stars and planets is only a part of His glory. According to some others, this universe is the transformation of Brahman. To yet others, this universe is just the play of nature (prakriti). To some others, He Himself has become everything, He has manifested His glory in this way. Then come the Puranas, which narrate stories of how God made this world, how the ocean swallowed it, and so on. The Advaitic view is that Creation is an illusion, like a mirage. Yet, it has a virtual reality till ignorance goes. Amongst those who consider this universe to be an illusion, there are two groups: one says that creation is there because the individual observes it, and goes away when he stops observing it. Another group says that creation is there and so the individual observes it.

All schools of Indian thought agree in two or three points, though they may differ in their views about creation. *One*, they all say that this universe is impermanent. All schools agree that this world is not our goal and end. We are here, true. But our home is elsewhere. All warn against being attached to this world. *Two*, they all say that this universe is diverse and multifarious, but essentially the multiplicity can be classified into only a few categories: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Three*, all schools of thought agree that this universe is made of name and form, and that name and form can never be separated. God is beyond name and form.

According to some of the Puranas, creation is the result of Brahmâ's contemplation and desire to create. Prajâpati, Brahmâ, is the creator. In the *Vishnu Purana*, Sage Maitreya asks Parâshara: "*Venerable Sir, Please tell me about the origins of the universe, from where did all this spring, who created everything, what is the nature of this Being, and so on.*"⁵ The answer is that Vishnu is the source of all this. They again narrate stories of how the Divine Mother created the universe. This may be confusing, but evidently, each purana is glorifying a particular form of the Supreme Reality.

Why has this universe been created or projected? According to some, it is the ground of work for the soul. The soul accumulates experiences here, and struggles for liberation here. This is the ideal place to attain illumination. According to some others, creation is God's glory.

According to yet others, this universe is a suggestion. God is both immanent and transcendent—rather, He is everything. Furthermore, the moment we see everything as Divine and begin to respect everything, we begin to evolve spiritually. Religion is not merely going to the Church or the temple, but changing our outlook—of ourselves, of the world, and of God. This is the idea.

Further, since we have no idea at all as to what God could be, we can understand that in and through these elementary objects, He is manifesting Himself. His glory knows no limits. Finally, speaking from the scientific point of view also, nature theology is quite

important. The idea of Krishna, to deify everything, and of Christ, to see the Kingdom of God within—within not just human beings, but all living beings—is proven by phenomenology. It is a suggestion of the inner oneness, inner unity. Just as Edmund Husserl spoke of phenomenology, long ago, ancient Indian savants spoke of this universe as a suggestion, an objectification of the inner universe. One of the most important scriptures in this regard is the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna how one can realize God using external symbols. Your symbols need not be some image or the Shivalinga. You can consider the mountain, the river, the ocean, the sun, the plant or the living being as the symbol of God and meditate on that. Everything in nature can be meditated upon as the symbol of God. This is because, everything is God’s glory. So, nature theology for the Vedantist is to change his vision. The same thing which appeared bad sometime ago will appear good. From bad through good to God—this is the way. Nature theology, of seeing God in nature, has its wonderful positive result in that it makes us lead a spiritual life even while living ordinary, day-to-day lives. It also helps us to deify our activities.

This universe appears like nothing but dead matter to the unevolved soul. As the soul evolves spiritually, this universe appears to be a place of sorrow, then a place of experience of dualities, then a place of God’s play, then a place of bliss, and then a mirage.

(To be continued)

¹ *Rig Veda*, 10.129 (Swami Vivekananda’s translation)

² *Complete Works*, vol. 4, p. 48

³ *Taittiriya Upanishad*

⁴ *Complete Works*, vol. 1, pp. 147-8

⁵ *Vishnu Purana*, chapter 1



God is also Mother

The art of 'earthing' oneself

Hans Torwesten

(Continued from issue)

In this way the Motherly and the Earthly have the impartiality of the transcendental ground. Anyone who reproaches the female with only with capriciousness, irrationality and above all too much subjectivity, at the same time overlooks the bold and warm view of objectivity. It is a question of a feeling for realism, which not seldom escapes a man. Anyone who deceives himself, who likes playing a part and almost always stays in unreality, will be afraid of this view more than anything in the world – it penetrates through and through.

One can very clearly experience this in meditation. As soon as we begin to let ourselves go, letting ourselves go downwards, to "earth" ourselves, a feeling slowly arises inside us which exactly corresponds to this neutral viewpoint. Our whole spiritual paralysis lies naked before it in the undisturbed light of this consciousness, all too often as a disguised ego-trip. This observing consciousness, this alertness, has nothing to do with the critical view of the moral Super Ego, which continually reproaches us. This impartial view only just observes –but we feel it even more than the eye of the "fatherly" Super Ego. This also can finally drive us to greater efforts, it also has a transforming power, but it does so in a different, at the same time "healthier" way, which also goes deeper down to the deepest roots of our being – instead of only trimming our conscious Ego to "perfection".

It is significant that in many meditation courses today in Christian monasteries and especially in our western civilisation nothing is so much used as this "earthing" , the descent of the extravagances of the spirit. In Western Christianity there was traditionally only the push upwards, which does, of course, has its justification – and when someone stirred up the dust, it was not so much as to connect with the earth as to show himself to the eyes

of the man-godly Super Ego as the greatest sinner that this earth has seen. At this point a sobering up should have begun, and the spiritual help of the Asiatic traditions is not to be overlooked.

There is definitely a transcendental dimension to which one must ascend if one wishes to make use of such "spatial" indications of help. But the certain way is travelled by the person who is aware of the relationship between the transcendental ground and the Mother foundation. The "ascent" is then not a cramped climb upwards (Gottfried Benn once said this with regard to a young expressionist poet): There goes another one "climbing up", but a natural blossoming - after one has found solid earth beneath one. One can then not even say whether one is climbing higher or whether the divine flows into us. The "earth" is always at one and the same time a total self-opening. As Ramakrishna often stressed, the rain of divine grace cannot collect on the steep summit, but only in the valley. This means we must first become a trough, a hollow receptacle; and that also means that we must find the female in ourselves, irrespective of whether we are entered in the register of births as male or female.

In this way we do not wish to fix for ever the role which man has been glad to assign to the female: the role of the passive receiver. One can to a certain extent very well identify this attitude with the female constitution, but "man" always made the mistake of deducing a lower position of woman in society and not recognising all her other qualities. It is comfortable to regard woman as the silent sufferer, only as a passive creation, only as a vessel, into which one can pour the male divine grace. If the man regards himself as the human being, as is the case in many languages ranging from the Hebrew "Adam" to the English "man", woman is degraded to a female animal. If woman is however identified with the human creation, man again climbs a step higher and becomes God's representative on earth. This hierarchy is also recognised by women saints, as for instance by the mystic Hildegard von Bingen, who with regard to the two natures of Christ - the divine and the human -

wrote: *“The man is by his nature a pointer to the divinity of the son, the woman a pointer to his humanity.”* In this way man could always compensate a little for his awareness of his being a creation with the fact that he was for woman a little Lord God, while for the woman it was only left to be a created being.

In meditation it is not of course a question of such a hierarchy. In the net of relativity, which is so obvious in the Shakti religion, taking and giving oneself melt together. The creature does not crawl in the dust before God – it is a question of opening oneself without any kind of inferiority complex. Waiting, stepping aside and self-surrender is taught, where there is no kind of personal creator God, to whom one could submit. One opens oneself for a divine reality, which is equally male and female, and transcends both. The feel-earthy is also not regarded as purely a stool, which one can kick away with one’s foot, when we have practised “humility” enough. It accompanies us to the goal. We always need Its impartial clear glance – yes, we need it even more, the higher we climb. Because the higher we climb, the more difficult we often find it becomes. The greatest alertness is required to the very last, and that also means that we have to “earth” again at every step.

Here the question often arises: If we open up completely – do we know at all what powers and energies we are exposing ourselves to? Are there not also dark powers, which take advantage of our naivety and defencelessness and with all their power flow into the hollow space that has come into being?

In this regard also “earthing” oneself and the alertness connected thereto are important, because earthing is not an uncritical self-opening. If this is closely combined with a watchful humility, the dark forces will keep away. Only the person who wants to climb high by his own power gets into danger because the diabolical soon becomes a companion to this “Faustian” aspiration.

Anyone who opens himself up to the divine power, who surrenders himself to God in advance and says: Take over the rudder, grow in me, fill me completely – does not, it is true, always

go the easy comfortable way, because this surrender, this complete reliance on divine power requires the sacrifice of the ego. But we take no risk, we can rely on this divine power, as long as we have honest intentions and really surrender ourselves to it.

But it is right at this point again that many seem to have their doubts. Do we not say that she is also a “seducer”, that the Shakti religion – in contrast to the emphatically father religion – does not simply conceal the dark aspect of creation in an enemy of God, but openly admits that the darkness and the dark forces connected therewith are also an aspect of the Mother, one of her many masks? Is she then no more than a neutral energy, a creative power in the cosmos and as the Kundalini power in the individual, which can be used both for good or evil? And is it not somewhat thoughtless to give oneself over to this power? Is this not playing with fire?

We have already pointed out that praying to Shakti in the end demands such a lot from us that it draws us out to the distant and the depths, which cannot be sounded. In spite of her motherly love, Shakti is like a harsh Guru, who plays hide and seek with us, who continually irritates us, and deliberately puts a spoke in our wheels, laughs at us, pushes us into crises, until we are just an existence puzzle, the solution of which seems impossible.

But the Mother knows what she is doing. As neutral energy she is, it is true, the basis of everything that moves whether towards the good or the bad. In this regard she is like the Ground, the pure Absolute whose consciousness-light is also neutral. *“Brahman is not bound by good and evil”*, said Ramakrishna, *“It is the light of a lamp. By its light you can read the Bhagavatam, or by the same light forge a document”*. Jesus also said that God has his sun rise on the good and the bad – which in no way hinders men from trusting this God, his “Father” and energetically knocking at his door, so that he opens it. In the case of the Mother it is no different. She is neutral and impartial, but this in no way means that she would let those perish who fully trust her and devote themselves entirely to her. To anyone who still clings to his ego she may perhaps now and then appear to

be frightful, but for anyone who becomes a child before her there is nothing to fear. It all depends on us as to how the Mother appears.

Of course she is also a seducer, as we have already stressed; her whole creation is seducing for those who want to attain the Absolute. And as she is much more identical with this creation in all its various aspects, light and dark, than the “extra-cosmic” of the Father religion, it seems that something of the questionable of the relative existence is attached to her being. She presses us as “Mrs World”, she seems to deliberately scatter out in front of us all the colourful toys, which often makes us lose our minds without us noticing it. No one should underestimate this Maya power, with which the Mother makes fools of us, and anyone who ignores her soft chuckle, will soon hear her loud roaring laughter.

This picture of God is not “pure” enough for many of us. We have for hundreds, even thousands of years imagined god as exalted, enthroned in heaven, surrounded by heavenly hosts, the exact opposite of the shimmering Mrs World, at whose bosom we always like to suck, but whom we however would never confuse with God even though we often enough make her our God..

The Shakti religion admittedly in this case upsets our categorical thinking. We shall be horrified at the idea that we do not find God in heaven, but right here in “noble” pictures, in the famous “footprints” of God, in the rose and the pure lily and the clear mountain lake, but in all things. Meeting the Mother means first of all meeting life in all its totality, in all its contrast and also absurdities. Each of her creatures is at one and the same time one of her faces, who can become our guru. Grounding oneself in meditation will be thus continued in everyday life, in dealing with fellow human beings, with all living beings, with everything surrounding us.

(To be continued)

Translated by John Phillips



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Programme for November - December 2015

Sunday discourses begin

at the

Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Bourne End at 4:30 pm

Tel: 01628 526464 - www.vedantauk.com

Nov	1	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 78	Swami Dayatmananda
Nov	8	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 79	Swami Dayatmananda
Nov	15	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 80	Swami Dayatmananda
Nov	22	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 81	Swami Dayatmananda
Nov	29	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 82	Swami Dayatmananda
Dec	6	Day-Retreat	
Dec	13	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 83	Swami Dayatmananda
Dec	20	No Lecture	
Dec	24	Christmas Eve	
Dec	27	No Lecture	

Day Retreat

With Swami Dayatmananda and Swami Shivarupananda at the
Vedanta Centre, Bourne End, on 6th December
from 10:00 am until 7:00 pm

Note: Children are not allowed at the Retreat.

Please bring (vegetarian) lunch to share.

Christmas Eve Celebration

Thursday 24th December
at Bourne End at 5:00 p.m.

Holy Mother's Puja

Friday 1st January
at Bourne End at 4:30 p.m.

Masons were sent for to repair the crack. But there were none to be found. Where was any labourer to be found? The subjects also came and complained that because there were no masons or workmen, their houses and buildings were falling to pieces. Then seeing no other way, Sita said to Rama, 'We cannot suffer in the wet like this! Let everything be as it was. Then we can get workmen again. Everybody cannot be happy at the same time.' 'So be it', answered Rama. In the twinkling of an eye everything was as it used to be. One could get workmen again. 'Lord, it is true that this life is only a game of yours', said Sita.

"No one can suffer for all time. No one will spend all his days on this earth in suffering. Every action brings its own result, and one gets one's opportunities accordingly."

Disciple: "Then is everything the fruit of Karma?"

Mother: "What else, if not Karma? Each has to get the results of the actions he earned for this life. A pin at least must prick where a wound from a sword was due."

Holy Mother

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“Even a blade of grass cannot stir without the will of God, my son. When a creature falls on good times, his thoughts turn to prayer; when he falls on bad times, all is evil. It is all according to God’s will. It is God alone who expresses His will through the actions of man. What powers did Naren (Swami Vivekananda) have by himself? It was because God acted through him that he achieved what he did. The Lord knows what He is about to perform. But a man should surrender himself totally at His feet. He will do everything for him. One must bear with everything, because it is all due to cause and effect, according to one’s Karma. And Karma counteracts the effects of one’s previous Karma.

Holy Mother

