



YUVA BHARATI

Voice of Youth

Vol.40 No.5 Margashirsh-Paush 5114 December 2012 ₹.15/-





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Invocation



क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते ।
क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परन्तप । ३ ।

*Klaibyaṁ ma sma gamaḥ Pārtha naitatvayyupapadyate
kṣudraṁ hrdayadaurbalyam tyaktvottiṣṭha Parantapa*

3. O Pārtha (son of Prtha), do not give in to this frailty. It does not suit you. Drop this faint-heartedness and arise, O Arjuna.

The vision of the Rock is the mission of the Gita



December has a very special place in Sri Ramakrishna – Vivekananda tradition. It was on December of 1892 that Swami Vivekananda meditated in solitude for three days and three nights on the rock with waves roaring around him. Like Nachiketa who waited in solitude at the gates of Yama to penetrate the mystery of the very existence, Swami Vivekananda meditated on the mystery of the National Existence of India – feeling the Essence of its spiritual heartbeat. Like Siddhartha of Sakhya clan who felt the sufferings of all beings in his own heart and meditated to discover the ultimate liberation, Swami Vivekananda felt the pain of the Nation and Her multitudes, pulsating in all intensity in every cell of his being and he sought a vision to galvanize Her children from her slavery and slumber.

A mendicant young monk was given a vision and a nation rose from her deep sleep resolving a mission.

Sri Ramakrishna - Swami Vivekananda tradition is unique in the spiritual history of India. Swami Vivekananda was the first Hindu monk to tell in modern times that our downfall was due to the neglect of the masses. We need to take the Vedantic message to the masses of India and then they shall liberate themselves. However Sri Ramakrishna – Swami Vivekananda did not stop at mere taking of Vedanta to the masses. The very notion of superiority and inferiority which is well rooted in the socially stagnant pseudo-culture of traditionalists had to be destroyed utterly. And that is not easy. As Dr.Ambedkar rightly points out the inequality of the system is not universal inequality in which case it could be easily combated. But it is 'graded inequality'. Such an inequality cannot be fought with binaries and hatred. It needs extreme spiritual strength and courage. That courage and spiritual strength was given to the nation through the Sadhana of Sri Ramakrishna.

As Swami Ranganathananda Maharaj points out in his famous lecture 'Adi Shankara and the Untouchable', Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's sadhana was unique in the history of humanity. It signifies a new dawn. Sri Ramakrishna cleaned the toilet of a Dalit, with his own hair, all the while praying to the Mother of the Universe, to remove all feelings of superiority or inferiority and praying to the Divine Mother to make Him the servant of all humanity. And that is Karma yoga at the highest, the practical Vedanta

in action. Today caste wars are fragmenting our society and our brothers and sisters are rendered homeless, killed and maimed in the name of caste. Forces of fragmentation are working overtime to exploit every injustice many real and some perceived. Cycle of violence is reinforced and rekindled. To break free of this cycle of violence one needs to break free of the conditioned mindset of caste differences. It is here that the meditation on this Sadhana of Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna will liberate us from the evils of casteism. It is a sure armour and also a weapon to unite and not divide the society in harmony, peace and justice.

Viewed from the hermeneutics of Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda tradition, the message of Bhagwad Gita becomes the message of social harmony too. Here Sri Krishna rejects the idea of Kula-Dharma as put forward by Arjuna and in its place He provides Swadharma – individual's Dharma. If this great leap forward is not enough Sri Krishna terms those who consider themselves superior by birth or lineage as 'demonic' (16:15). Bhagawad Gita's Varna system is not only not birth-placed, it even implicitly ignores the stratified though organic symbolism of Purusha Suktha. After all when Bhagwan shows His cosmic form in which even timelines are subsumed, the Varna-mapping of Purusha Suktha is conspicuous by its absence. It should also be noted that contrary to the popular conception the word Varna is never mentioned in Purusha Suktha. The origin of Varna system as elaborated in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad does not refer to any social gradation amongst the Varnas.(BU 1.4.11-15). If we remember that the Upanishads are the epicenters of Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta, then in the framework of Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda tradition, Bhagavat Gita becomes a strong spiritual source for social justice.

We live today in a fractured world and we live today in a wounded society. This month brings both Gita Jayanthi and also the days of meditation of Swami Vivekananda on the rock. May we dedicate ourselves to the mission and vision of Swami Vivekananda – which is to annihilate injustice through love and benediction, so that Mother India shall again arise and give this planet the message of Samanvaya. And that mission like charity begins right in our own house.

Aravindan Neelakandan

YB-ET

AHIMSA – SAARVABH'AUMA MAHAVRATAM

N. Krishnamoorti

Sowmya: Guruji. Why do all our saints and sages, scriptures and tradition lay so much stress upon Ahimsa? Patanjali places AHIMSA as the first among Yamas moral restraints. Sri Krishna mentions Ahimsa as the first in the list of Daiva Sampattis. Buddhists and Jains give Ahimsa the central place in their religions. Gandhiji gave Ahimsa the pride of place among his eleven ABHANGA VRATAS. To top it all Vyasa Muni himself says that Ahimsa is Parama Dharma. What is the reason for giving Ahimsa such an important place in man's worldly affairs as well as spiritual sadhanas?

Guruji: A comprehensive reply to your question is given by Sage Vyasa himself in his commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutra (2/30) – "Harmlessness (AHIMSA) means in no way and at no time to do injury to any living being. The other restraints (YAMAS) and observances (Niyamas) are rooted in this, (AHIMSA) and they are practiced only to bring THIS (AHIMSA) to its culmination, only for perfecting this. They (Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Swadhyaya, Aparigraha, Saucha, Santosha, Tapa and Iswarapranidhana) are taught only as means to bring this out in its purity. For so it is said

whatever many vows the man of Brahman would undertake only in so far as he thereby refrains from doing harm impelled by delusion, does he bring out harmlessness in its purity.

To these wise words of Vyasa Muni, Acharya Shankara adds his commentary. Ahimsa means in no capacity and in no fashion to give

pain to any being whether immobile or active. Harmlessness AHIMSA is the most important among the Yamas / Niyamas to be practiced in every capacity – body, speech and mind. Truth speaking etc. have Ahimsa as their goal, perfection in Ahimsa is the culmination of all Yamas / Niyamas. Patanjali calls these values Ahimsa etc. universal – to be practiced without qualification of birth, place, times, or obligation. They are called Mahavratas.

Sowmya: When Ahimsa is given such importance by our scriptures why does a man injure another man?

Guruji: Patanjali himself gives the reply.

Himsa done, or caused to be done or approved of, preceded by GREED, ANGER, and Delusion (MOHA) result in endless pain and Ignorance (2/34)

Sowmya: Patanjali says that when a Sadhaka



Patanjali Maharishi

is established in Ahimsa, in his presence all living beings abandon enmity (Vairatyaga). (2/35) Is it humanly possible to practice Ahimsa to that extent that it catches even those who stay nearby?

Guruji: Why not? Recent history has shown some examples. Pawahari Baba whom Swami Vivekananda met, was visited by a thief. Baba's love changed the thief's heart and he becomes a monk. Swami Vivekananda himself faced a ferocious tiger in Rajasthan (Ramthambore?) which got quietened at the saint's sight. In England a fiercely charging bull became docile like a wet rag in Swami Vivekananda's presence. Sufi saint Rabia was so much peace loving that doves and sparrows used to sit on her shoulders fearlessly. Acharya Shankara established his Sringeri math at a sacred spot where a snake spread its hood to protect a pregnant frog from the scorching sun. I shall tell you an interesting local story. In 1972-73, Col. Ramsingh IAS was the Home Secretary of Rajasthan Government. He had studied and practiced Maharshi Mahesh Yogi's Bhavati Dhyana. He arranged to teach Dhyana to the prisoners in Jaipur and has recorded that the crime rate in the city actually came down, when the prisoners were practicing Dhyana. Col. Ramsingh concluded that even if one percent of the city's population practiced devotion, Dhyana and Ahimsa, the impact will be felt by the whole city.

Sowmya: Is there any relation between the food that we eat and our capacity to practice Ahimsa?

Guruji: Yes. A scholar has related the amount of non-vegetarian food being eaten in a particular state and the amount of violence in that society. Some people argue that even vegetables are living beings. Our shastras ask spiritual sadhakas to give up not only non-

vegetarian food but also very spicy food, onion, garlic etc. as Tamasic. The United Nation's children's emergency, Fund, UNICEF, has given an economic reason for practicing vegetarianism. If in one hectare (2.5 acre) of land you can feed 10 persons with vegetarian food, you can feed only 4 people, if you feed the grains from 2.5 acres to poultry, goat, etc. and consume their meat. The unicef says at least a good percentage of people should switch over to vegetable food, to ensure future food security of the world, especially the children.

Sowmya: Naturally for Sannyasis there will be a much higher standard of Ahimsa!

Guruji: Yes. A sannyasi's final vow is called Abhaya Pradanam. He gives the gift of fearlessness to all living beings. He eats only ripe fruits the seeds of which he will allow to sprout. You might have heard Parvati, when she was practicing Tapasya, was eating only leaves of plants. Then she gave up even eating leaves and she was called APARNA. A true Sannyasi does not even pluck a fruit from the tree. He waits for the fruit to fall. This is the intensity of AHIMSA a sannyasi would practice. Even those who eat non-Veg food, avoid eating it on sacred days, at sacred places. Total Ahimsa is the ideal. Each member of the society will practice it to the best of his capacity, and the social norm would be going up the ladder of vegetarianism, more and more people practicing AHIMSA, Ahimsa of the finer and finer type.

Sowmya: But Guruji! Can these values be practiced by large sections of our people? Nowadays in the power-hungry world, Ahimsa is equated with cowardice and it is believed goons, rascals and terrorists cannot be corrected. They have to be dealt with sternly; fire has to be met with fire alone.

Guruji: Our shastras have faced the problem.

The King and the government will have to put down the rowdy – elements with a firm hand. Tiruvalluvar says that a king punishing the criminals is like – a farmer weeding his crops. Manu says that the King should control the people like Yamaraj controlling people impartially.

Sowmya: How do you reconcile an individual practicing Ahimsa with the state practicing Danda Niti that restrains the evildoers?

Guruji: It is very clear that no individual can take the law into his hands and mete out punishment to errant fellow - men in any lawfully constituted state. That is the duty and the right of the government. The government as well as the individual citizens should constantly endeavour to educate the public through Sama (persuasion) dana (gifts) bheda (political isolation) and Danda (punishment). The problems with Himsa is that it makes the person more and more insensitive and you have to increase the dosage of violent methods to get the same results as time goes on.

Sowmya: Some people say Ahimsa is a failure.

Guruji: If violence could solve any problem, humanity would have solved all its problems by now. From the dawn of human civilization to date so much violence has been practiced. Ahimsa like god consciousness, is inherent in every civilized gesture, in every act of saints. It is Himsa that is an aberration. You read history books. Our Kings were spending all their time in warring, with little time left for anything else. Luckily for humanity, terrorists, gang warriors and invaders now say that they indulge in violence only in order to bring the Government to the table for dialogue. All old terrorists, so called revolutionaries agree that they also know that violence solves no problems. They say they practice violence to force the pace of Non - violent negotiations to

solve the problems of the society. But this is like Parashurama – Vad-using violence to counter violence. Ultimately Parashurama regretted his violent actions.

Sowmya: How about National Defence, Self defence! Right for survival. **Guruji:** The government has to protect its people from external aggression and internal disturbance.

Sowmya: Why is Ahimsa so difficult to practice?

Guruji: When there is hidden violence in the depths of the society in the form of exploitation, inequity, inequality, dvesha and anger, a lot of negative energy is on work. To counter this a practitioner of Ahimsa has to suck this poison out. He has to practice great amount of self - restraint, sense control, control of his mind. Nobody would listen to your lectures on Ahimsa, if your life is not one of purity, restraint and love. Many who shout in the name of Ahimsa, do not exhibit these values in their personal lives. That is why true Ahimsa is hard to come by.

Sowmya: How does Ahimsa originate, emerge and express itself?

Guruji: Gita says Kamat Krodhobhijayate. Vinobaji says all the wars start from the hatred in the minds of the people. The United Nation says the same. “All wars start in the minds of men.” Therefore peace also should germinate in the minds of men. So long as there is dvesha, hatred in the mind, man will always forge his weapons to express that hatred, whether it is a flint or an atom - bomb.

Sowmya: By the way Guruji how much weaponry is there in the world?

Guruji: You can say, that the money used for weapons, drugs and alcohol together exceeds all other expenditures of the Nations of the world. Man has forgotten that LIFE is a rare,

unique phenomenon in the entire cosmos and he is shamelessly creating weapons and drugs to KILL LIFE. Weapon making and weapon trade are the greatest economic activities in the world and even the smallest and poorest Nation cannot escape these demons.

America spends 500 billion dollars a year (500 x 100 crores x 50 Rupees – 25 lakh crores a year) as defence budget. It spends another 100 billion (100 x 100 crores x 50 rupees 5 lakh crores) on intelligence, spying operations) America's allies spend another 225 billion dollars (225 x 100 crores x 50 rupees 11.25 lakh crores)a year on their defence budget) You can be sure that the other 200 nations spend an equal amount on their defences. In the meanwhile crores of people are going without food, medicine, water or shelter. In olden days capturing the enemy king or threatening his life was the main goal of a war. In modern democracy, threatening the ordinary citizen who is the voter is the purpose of a war. Since the second world war more civilians than soldiers have been killed in military operations. The weapon technology targets the man's body, his health, his water supply, his food, his mental state, his relatives, families, his social system, His loyalty to his Nation, his moral values, his weather, his agriculture, the purity of his atmosphere, the cycle of his rain fall, his language, every aspect of his human life.

As a part of his warfare a soldier, a scientist, a politician can use the following methods in his encounter with his economy. 1) Disturbing the oil petroleum energy security, creating Price war, economic warfare 2) Disrupt the water supply, poison it 3) Create diseases like AIDS 4) Atom Bombs of infinite varieties, atomic radiation 5) Use robots, unmanned aero planes to attack targets 6) Mind control of the enemies,

psychic medicines, noise as a weapon 7) Bacterial weapons, Biological weapons 8) Disrupting economic development, industrial, agricultural production 9) False propaganda, media war 10) Economic warfare, trade wars, market wars, 11) Corrupting the enemy leaders, political infiltration 12) Race war, colour war, Religious war, sectarian war, clash between various linguistic groups 13) Creating tension, fear, panic, 14) Spreading cancer, smallpox, malaria, genetically Induced diseases 15) Riots, local clashes, civil unrest, disobedience, strife, inner city turmoil 16) Manipulating outer space war, 17) Chemical weapons, poisons, 18) Weather manipulation, climate changing, polar ice cap melting, ozone depletion, earth quake engineering, ocean wave control, acid rains, air pollution.

Sowmya: Oh my God! Guruji I shall go mad. It is mind boggling. Shall humanity survive? Already thousands of animals, insects, plants and other forms of life are in danger. Biologists say that the SIXTH EXTINCTION CYCLE OF LIVING BEINGS HAS STARTED. Will man survive, shall life survive?

Guruji: Yes. Humanity can survive if Man practise AHIMSA. If man practices self-restraint, DHARMA. Otherwise humans will join Dinosaurs, Hamsas, Yalis and thousands of species which died on the way. If individuals, groups, Nations societies learn to practice LOVE, AHIMSA, We do have a chance of survival. Compared to the odds, dangers, risks and sheer improbability, it is a MIRACLE that life survives on the Face of the earth. It is a great challenge to human ingenuity. Let us hope that wisdom prevails and MAN survives.

Advaita Vedanta of Sankaracharya

Prof.Arthur Isenberg.
Eminent Physicist

Without being a serious student of either philosophy or Sanskrit, I am pleased about Vedanta and Sri Shankaracharya: pleased, because, without becoming a Vedantist I have come to admire the system known as Advaita Vedanta and the lonely spiritual giant who has given it a cohesion and clarity unknown to most, if not all, other philosophical systems. As for philosophy, once again I am not a scholar but merely one who agrees, that "the unexamined life is not worth living." One who has read, perhaps widely, but certainly unsystematically.

If, then, there be anything of value in what I am going to say, might be well this, that it may be interesting to learn how certain concepts of Advaita Vedanta appear to a sympathetic and interested layman from the Western world. And I know that I can count on the generous indulgence of the readers if my words betray my ignorance; for as students of

Sri Shankara, you are of course familiar with the great importance he attaches to Avidya.

I have often been struck by a strange fact : Our ignorance about the lives of so many of mankind's wisest members. We do not know with certitude when Li Pe-Janj better known as

Lao-Tsu was born or when he died. We do not know when Gautama, the Buddha lived. We are not sure of the years of birth and death of Socrates, Jesus Christ, Mahavira the Tirthankara. These men have somehow managed to remove egos from the scene and to live on in their thoughts. Perhaps we have here one of the laws of spiritual eminence; that the great spiritual teacher must—and I should emphasise

'must'—be self-effacing.

Be that as it may, Shankaracharya shares with those already mentioned the mystery that veils their personal lives. Tradition places his birth somewhere in the second century B.C.



Modern scholarship moves the event nearer to our own times, to the seventh or eighth century, with perhaps a preference for the year 788 A.D. All agree that he died young, in his early thirties. We are told that he was born in Kaladi, in Cochin, in a family of Nambudiri Brahmins, that he wandered all over India, from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas, engaging the learned men of his time in philosophical discussion; that he founded maths ; and that he died in Kedarnath in the Himalayas. Most of the rest of what we are told of his life is legend and anecdotes and need not detain us now, for after all mankind has always felt compelled to surround with legends and anecdotes—they are usually remarkably similar whether told in China, India, or Greece the lives of its greatest sons. We are told that they could and did revive the dead, heal the sick, tame the wild, and so on. The *Kernel* of philosophical truth in all this is that the lives of our greatest are symbols and symbols are inexhaustible for those who ponder thereon.

The lofty system of thought reared by Acharya Sri Shankara to be summed up inevitably oversimplified—is that there is "*Only one Entity that is ultimately real*" the Nirguna Brahman of which nothing positive can be predicted, since to do so would be to limit it. Of IT, we can only say "*Neti, Neti.*" It cannot be described, but IT can be experienced.

From this ineffable entity everything else is derived: The entire cosmos, the phenomenal universe including our egos (the "Aham") but not the self (the Atman) is derived "like the spider web from the spider." This is the result of Maya.

Maya is what? The word is often translated as 'Illusion', properly qualified or understood, 'illusion' may serve. But the danger is that many people do not distinguish between

'Illusion' and 'Hallucination', and whatever Maya may not be, it is not hallucination. The Universe has more reality-contact in Vedanta than the snakes seen by an acute alcoholic out of nothing. Shankara has given us many analogies; the snake which turns out to be coils of rope, the silver which turns out to be mother-of-pearl, the thief who turns out to be a post, etc. Note that, in all these analogies Maya is portrayed as a creative misinterpretation of something real rather than a total creation out of nothingness. Good logician that he is, Shankara does not violate the doctrine "*exnihilo nihil fit*".

But, what, then, is Maya? I propose to translate the word by the phrase 'artistic creativity'. Maya is the power which enables a Kalidasa to seize a number of words and ideas mere words! and arrange them into an enchanting Shakuntala. Maya enables a Rembrandt to filling pigments of dyestuff on to an empty canvas and to create a Nightwatch. And, looking at a good painting, we are so carried away that we do not-fortunately realize that the beautiful landscape, the charming woman, the playful child are none of them really there, that all is colour pigments cunningly grouped and arranged to make us forget the raw materials out of which the work of art is really wrought.

Let us stay with the analogy of the painting a little longer. Suppose we have before us a painting of an old man, say one with a white beard. If one is asked to gaze at it, he could easily do so. If he is asked to pick up the painting of the old man, he could do that, too. If he is asked "what do you see?", he would tell 'an old man.' And if he is pressed and asked "Is it really a picture of an old man?"- the persistence might puzzle him, but he would reply "-Yes, of course it is."

But another question might be asked now: "This painting of an old man: will you not agree that it is really just a clever arrangement of pigments?" Considering one would agree, and pursuing the discussion, it might be asked "Will you not agree that pigments are really just mixtures of chemical compounds, and can be separated?" Having secured the concurrence the enquiry should continue by asking whether, 'in reality', the chemical compounds were not 'really' just configurations of atoms; and whether the atoms were in reality, not merely groupings of electrons and protons.

Let me, at this stage, propose a definition. Let us agree to call that of two things more relatively real which has greater independent duration. Perhaps an example will make the meaning clear. Suppose that a potter is asked to fashion a pot out of clay. The clay existed before the pot and the pot can be squashed out of existence again without any loss of clay. In other words, the clay is a necessary antecedent for the pot. The clay can go on being clay without ever once being shaped into a pot. The pot owes its very existence to the clay, but not vice-versa. Using the proposed definition, it could be said that the clay in the example is more relatively real than the pot.

If this definition is applied to the painting of the old man, we discover a hierarchy of relative realities, the least relatively real aspect being that of painting as such, followed in ascending order of relative reality, by the pigments, the compounds, the atoms, the electrons and protons.

Two features of this analysis may be noted: First there is nothing mystic, let alone mysterious, in the definition and concept of relative reality. Second, we are led to the perhaps astonishing conclusion that the more

relatively real something becomes the more abstract and intangible it grows. The painting of the old man can be handled. Pigments can still be seen and held in the hands. Molecules may still be rendered visible through an electron microscope.

But electrons and protons can be rendered perceptible, only through their effects, and this is the place to note that we are, after all, dealing only with an analogy; for the electrons and protons are not the end of the line, even in physics. They are regarded as congealed energy. This leads me to suspect that, since matter is now regarded as merely another aspect of energy, that energy itself may be merely another aspect of yet another something: Congealed mind-stuff, for instance.

But we are not yet through with our painting of the man. If we look at the painting through a microscope, the painting will literally disappear. In fact, we may, say without fear of contradiction, that on the level of electrons and protons, the painting simply does not exist at all. On the other hand, we may see and say that to a person absorbed in painting as painting, there are no electrons or protons simply because on that level they are irrelevant.

This explains why so few of us, absorbed as we are in the business of living, pause to think of Maya, of the fact (if our definition was right) that the phenomenal universe represents merely a relative or a derived reality. It is hard to tear oneself away from the contemplation of what is pleasing or at any rate fascinating and, in a sense, to destroy it in order to uncover a deeper, let alone the ultimate reality. It is to *Shankaracharya's everlasting glory that he did just that*. One more lesson which the painting analogy teaches can be noted and be done with

it. To say that the painting level is unreal because it is relatively less real than, say, the pigment level, is to talk nonsense. Of course it is real! But it becomes unreal as we proceed to levels of progressively greater reality.

Similarly, the universe in which we live is real enough. But, if Advaita Vedanta is right, it becomes progressively less real as we grope towards levels of greater reality: and when we are once more back in ultimate reality—the Nirguna Brahman—the phenomenal universe will then-and only then-become totally unreal. Here, too, we may say with an Italian Scientist: "It is the scale of observation which determines the phenomena."

Maya the creative, transforming power which orders the progress from one level of reality to another has been dealt with at some length. Now, we shall take up another key concept of Advaita; Avidya.

Avidya, as is well-known, is ignorance. But what kind of ignorance? In the strictest sense, Avidya is not just any form of ignorance, but a necessary concomitant of Maya, creative ignorance. Shankara declares that the Nirguna Brahman is the only ultimately real entity and that it is both immanent and transcendent. It is inactive, yet responsible somehow for all activity.

This raises a question to which there can be no certain answer, only speculative reasoning. The question: Why this Brahman activity at all? What is the motive? Let us see how Shankaracharya answers this—perhaps the ultimate-riddle. He says:

"We see in everyday life that certain doings of princes or other men of high position who have no unfulfilled desires left, have no reference to any extraneous purpose but proceed from mere sportfulness, as, for instance, their

recreations in places of amusement. We further see that the process of inhalation and exhalation is going on without reference to any extraneous purpose, merely following the law of its own nature. Analogously, the activity of the Lord also may be supposed to be mere sport, proceeding from his own nature, without reference to any purpose. For, on the ground neither of reason nor of scripture, can we construe any purpose of the Lord. Nor can his nature be questioned. Although the creation of this world appears to us a weighty and difficult undertaking, it is mere play of the Lord, where power is unlimited."

This, as many of you will recognise is taken from Shankara Bhashya on the Vedanta Sutras, (Second Adhyaya, First pada, Sutra 33) the one which says:

"But (Brahman's creative activity) is mere sport, such as we see in ordinary life."-
"*Lokavattu Lila Kaivalyam*"

What has all this to do with Avidya? The answer could well be this; If Brahman is the only entity that really is, its sporting must of necessity proceed within itself. But what sport can there be in an activity which is exclusively self-created and self-conscious? Since neither the Vedanta Sutras nor Shankara disdain drawing on 'ordinary life' for an analogy in this difficult task of assessing the ultimate motive, let us make bold to follow their example.

Suppose we go to a theatre to watch a play. Surely we can derive no entertainment, no 'Sport', if we remain at all times fully conscious that *we* are watching mere make belief. To enjoy the play we have no choice but somehow to manage to forget for a while that what we are watching is not really real; that the end of the play already exists that the heroine is not

really a suffering queen—is not queen at all—but just an actress. If at all times we keep thinking "Oh well, it is all make-belief", we cannot enjoy the play.

Or take our dreams. In them, we participate in strange doings, now enjoyable, now frightening, always interesting. We are not, as a rule, aware of the obvious fact that we ourselves are the dreams, the playwrights, the actors, the designers of stage set. If we are aware of these facts, we can no longer 'sport' in our dreams. In other words, this is the point, there can be no 'sporting' without Avidya. To remember, to gain 'Vidya' is to end the dream, to end the enjoyment of the play. Hence Avidya.

Let me quote Shankara once more. He is, as usual, unambiguously clear on this point.

He says: "As clay is the efficient cause of the pot, so is ignorance declared by the Vedanta to be the efficient cause of the universe. When that ignorance itself is destroyed, where then is the universe?..... When the Ultimate Reality is realised, the universe vanishes." —(The quotation is taken from Shankara's 'Aparokshanubhuti'.)

I cannot resist the temptation to digress for a moment.

I happen to think that one of the finest artistic and philosophic conceptions ever created by the mind of man is that of the Dancing Siva, Nataraja. To me, it sums up the essence of Shankara's Conception of the world. We find in it a representation of the universe as an emanation of Siva, the sporting deity. Many of the symbolic features of the work of art are well-known and well explained: how the material universe (represented by tiruvasi, prakriti) springs into existence as vibrations emerge from Siva's drum, how the universe

will end temporarily, through the fire held in Siva's hand, the gesture of 'have no fear': the pointing to the auspicious foot—all that I learned long ago. But it was only until after some six years of thinking about the Nataraja concept from time to time, that yet another meaning implied in the symbol suddenly struck me:

Most of the Nataraja statues, as we all know, show Siva dancing or trampling on a dwarfish figure. This figure is, of course, none other than our old friend, Ignorance, Avidya, although it has many other names, including 'Evil' or 'Sin'. But I like to think of it as Avidya. Siva stamping out ignorance! I liked that thought. When it occurred to me that if Siva is stamping out ignorance it is equally true, that ignorance provides the only footing for Siva. Look at the statue of Nataraja; remove the figure of Ignorance, and what will Siva have to stand on? Literally nothing. And thus we see again how right Shankaracharya is when he declares "when the ultimate reality is realised, the universe vanishes."

It is Siva's destiny to help man to overcome ignorance. His own end is implicit in the success of that mission. For, as Shankaracharya says, "end ignorance and you end the universe," including Siva. What is left is only Nirguna Brahman, ultimate reality.

I do not find in this awesome edifice of thought much consolation, unless it be the affirmation, by a ruthlessly honest and profound thinker, that there is, there exists ultimate reality at all. But if the thought edifice is stark, it has the tremendous virtue—at any rate I so regard it—of being completely self-consistent. I know of no other system so free from internal contradictions. To have been the architect of so flawless a building is an achievement that must leave us, lesser men,

breathless and awed.

There may be more consolation in the philosophic and religious systems of others, particularly of those who assure us that the purpose of the universe is the eventual triumph of good over evil. I frankly admit that I find it personally impossible to reconcile my experience of the universe with the notion of the supremacy of morals at the core of creation. I reckon it an advantage, not a flaw, in Shankaracharya's system that it leaves morals wholly and entirely within the realm of man's responsibility for man's good and evil deeds:

You will derive no authority from Shankara for any attempt to saddle the ultimate deity with responsibility for man's good and evil deeds. Morals are of utmost importance to us as mortal men and women. We-and we alone-must bear the responsibility in this sphere. No ultimate Real can ever be used as a scapegoat by us for the evil we bring into the world. This may be a harsh sentence. But it lends significance to our lives; I-we are not someone's marionets.

Progress along those lines may be painfully slow. But can we afford to disagree with the words of a German poet, Ruckert, who said:

"Whither we cannot fly, we must go limping,

the Scripture saith that limping is no sin."

One final remark; I believe that it is not an accident that among the world's outstanding theoretical physicists of the western world so many—I am speaking relatively—should have been attracted to Vedanta. The reason is, I think, quite easy to see. *Advaita Vedanta provides a complete philosophical and conceptual framework within which the findings of advanced modern physical science can be placed without stress or tear.* Monism seemed unattractive as

long as scientists had to believe in the separate natures of matter and energy. But now that matter and energy have been proved to be equivalent aspects of one underlying something, the appeal of monism has become far greater, if not indeed irresistible.

It is an interesting fact that Eastern and Western thought should in our century, for the first time, find themselves arriving at similar conclusions after journeying through the centuries in diametrically opposite directions. For time was when the East said, in effect: "Our external environment is purely phenomenal. No approach to ultimate Reality can be made by its observation and manipulation. The road lies through introspection." "While the West, at least ever since Galileo, said, in effect: "We can make progress towards an understanding of reality only through experiments. All other roads are not to be trusted, are purely subjective and without probative value." And for a while throughout the nineteenth century—it looked as if the Western approach would lead to a universe based on nothing more complicated than levers and gears, a gigantic but perfectly orderly mechanism. The dream came to an abrupt end with the discovery of the phenomenon of radioactivity and its following of a non-mechanical set of laws. The end of materialism in science was not long delayed. One by one, mechanical and material models had to be given up. But to me the most surprising thing about this state of affairs was the realisation that the thought structure reared by man like Shankaracharya was fully capable of accommodating the 'perplexing new insights of the men of science of the West.

The scientists-or at any rate some of them are aware of these changes. Says Sir Arthur Eddington:

" We are no longer tempted to condemn the spiritual aspects of our nature as illusory....we have travelled far from the standpoint which identifies the real with the concrete.....Our system of philosophy is itself on trial."

- *Science and the Unseen World.*

India today is benefiting in many ways from Western Science—a science no doubt greatly enriched by the many contributions of Indian scientists, men like Raman, Bose and Chandrasekharan. This is as it should be. But the Western world too is beginning once more to benefit from the deep voyages of exploration into the nature and role of man undertaken by

Indian explorers no less intrepid and infinitely more lonely than the men who braved Mount Everest. A growing number of people in my own country, the United States, are delving into the treasures of your philosophy. A recent translation of the Gita found more than two and a half lakhs of readers in the United States within less than one year. I envy my fellow-countrymen the intellectual excitement which will be theirs when they first discover the writings of men such as that of Sri Shankaracharya.

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'Are you growing spiritually? Can you love others? Can you feel oneness with others? Have you peace within yourself? And do you radiate it around you? That is called spiritual growth, which is stimulated by meditation inwardly, and by work done in a spirit of service outwardly.

Swami Ranganathananda



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Money and Monk

-Dr. K. Subrahmanyam

Ordinary people are drawn to money. Monks are withdrawn from money. Worldly people have a tendency to grab money, to accumulate money and to die in money. Spiritually inclined monks have a tendency to give up money, to remain without money and accept willingly the concept of voluntary poverty. Normal people seek power, position, name and fame. Monks shirk power and position; shun fame and name.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa is an ideal monk because he has no desire for wealth, woman or fame. He lived a life of simplicity and modesty. He went to the river Ganges with sand in one hand and gold in another hand. He threw them both into the river to indicate his total detachment from land and gold. Nor did he ever seek any pleasure of the body. He developed such distaste and disgust for money that his body felt the pain of a scorpion's sting, if it came in contact with money. Swami

Vivekananda initially could not believe Sri Ramakrishna's total withdrawal from possessions. He doubted his master's reluctance and repulsion for accepting any money. He wanted to test if his master would really feel the prick and pain, if money touched his body. One day he took a coin and placed it under the bed-sheet of his master's bed. Sri Ramakrishna came and sat on the bed without knowing the presence of a coin there. The moment his body contacted the coin, there was a severe pain in his body. He jumped out of the bed screaming as though bitten by a cobra or stung by a scorpion. Everybody was shocked to see the painful expressions of Sri Ramakrishna. Somebody went near the bed to find out the reason for his suffering. He pulled out the bed-sheet and the culprit coin rolled out. Swami Vivekananda was convinced that Sri Ramakrishna was totally withdrawn from the money physically and psychologically.

The master's body, mind and intellect equipment was so finely tuned that it would be disturbed and damaged by the very touch of money. Like the string of Veena, Sri Ramakrishna's nervous system is highly sensitive and allergic to money.



Therefore he is a great monk.

Sri Ramakrishna had many devotees. Some of them were very rich. One day one rich gentleman brought a bundle of currency notes (Rs 10,000). The amount now perhaps is equivalent to more than 100 Crores. The rich donor repeatedly requested Sri Ramakrishna to accept the cash. Sri Ramakrishna did not have even the slightest inclination to accept it, or to touch it, or even to look at it. When the donor was repeatedly pestering him to accept, Sri Ramakrishna suggested that he might give the money to Holy mother Sri Sharadadevi. With the hope that she would accept, the rich man proceeded to the Holy mother and begged her to accept the gift. She smiled a spiritual smile and very politely declined to have anything to do with what the master had refused. When the donor was repeatedly begging her Sri Sharadadevi suggested that he might try his luck with the noble, old mother of Sri Ramakrishna. The rich man hoped that the elderly lady at least would accept the money. He proceeded to Sri Ramakrishna's mother and pleaded with her to use the money for a good cause. She also said 'No' to money. When the donor repeatedly requested she said "Thank you for the offer. For past some days, I have been suffering from severe pain in one of my teeth. If a small bit of tobacco leaf or a piece of clove is placed near the point of pain there may be some relief. Therefore, instead of giving me money you get me a small bit of clove or a tobacco leaf". And that is the family of monks. Neither Sri Ramakrishna nor his wife, nor his mother has any desire or attachment to money. Even when they suffer from any pain and poverty they don't seek to accept any money from any source.

In the footprints of Sri Ramakrishna is grown Swami Vivekananda. When he was a

wandering monk, travelling from Calcutta to Kanyakumari, he never asked anybody for money or food. He did not accept money even if anybody had offered it. He never thought of the night or the next moment. He did not pack either food or even water for the night's use. He depended totally on God all through his life. And that is the quality of an ideal monk.

Sri Ramakrishna was once on a pilgrimage. On the way he found some hungry beggars. He asked the co-pilgrims to part with their food and feed the beggars, himself setting an example. Generosity, service and compassion are the essential traits of a monk. A true disciple, Swami Vivekananda was ready to sell the land meant for Sri Ramakrishna Math in Belur to take care of the cholera victims in Calcutta.

If Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples are worshipped today, it is because of their detachment from money and compassion to mankind. Swami Chidbhavanandaji was once offered a heavy amount by a rich man in Tamil Nadu. Swamiji did not accept it because he found it to be impure money. At Kutralam, when there was an offer of land, Swamiji took only that much, which was needed for the Ashram. Even when the monks do a service activity, they are not expected to accept help from all hands. Sri Ramakrishna did not eat or drink from impure hands. Similarly, even for a noble cause, Swami Chidbhavanandaji did not accept help from impure hands. Monks are pure and pious, simple and modest, saintly and spiritual. They are not mad after money, power, position, name or fame. They are totally devoid of egoism. 'Aham' conceals 'Atman'. Atman shines when Ahamkara is removed. Monks are free from Aham and so they shine with the brightness of Atman.



Hands

A short story

-Alanthur Mallan

Raghunathan started his desktop and slowly reclined on the chair. A swift feeling of pain that coursed through his spine reminded him that he had crossed half a century. The screen lit red. The old St. Petersburg which is now again St. Petersburg was then Leningrad. And there a younger Raghu, actually Comrade Raghu was standing with flowers in his hands in front of the eternal red fire. Good old days of Komsomal and Soviet Union. Today all that remained of those days was the photo now digitalized and desktop wallpaper.

Raghu opened his mail box. After the regular mails, there was something new – a mail from Bulgaria. Raghu frowned. Most probably it should be a phishing scam or a spam that has escaped the filter of his mail box. With the lines in his forehead getting more pronounced he looked at the sender's name. Sergi Leonski! Ah... now that name rang a bell. Decades after, in fact more than a quarter century after, a message from an old friend or was it a mere acquaintance. With a smile he clicked opened the mail.

Dear comrade Raghunandan,

I hope you would remember me. Now I am working in Bulgarian Bionics Institute where I am in charge of Prosthetics division dealing with digital neural architecture of artificial limbs....

Raghu's mind swam back in time. It was 1987

and an October day. The ambassador car was speeding along the road from Pondicherry to Madras. Raghu was with his close friend comrade Niranjan Basu. They were both members of PPASMP (Pondicherry People's Art and Science Movement for Social Progress). PPASMP was celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Great October Revolution. A seminar on the scientific progress achieved by Soviet Union had been planned. Sergi Leonski the cyberneticist from Soviet Union was coming to give a lecture. Yes. He was the cyberneticist from Soviet Union. His book 'Soviet Cybernetics' published by, the Mir publishers Moscoe was one of the few books on cybernetics then available in India.

Raghu had savored the book thoroughly, every page of it – not just for the lucid explanation of the subject matter. Every chapter in the beginning had an apt quotation from either Friedrich Engels' 'Dialectics of Nature' or Lenin's 'Materialism and Empirio-Criticism'. Then there was a separate chapter on how in USSR, dialectical materialism had been an abiding guiding light for not only every physical science but also new synthetic disciplines like cybernetics. The chapter explained that this phenomenon unique to USSR removed the dichotomy one finds in US – the inevitable divide between bourgeois idealist philosophy and progress of physical sciences that existed in capitalist societies like

US. Now Sergi himself would come and deliver a lecture in Pondicherry and he would be accompanying him. What a great opportunity it was!

'Get up ... you lazy comrade... Revolution has arrived' Raghu woke up to see that they had arrived at the airport. Niranjan Basu was patting him mildly. Basu was a student of ecology at the Pondicherry Environmental Studies Institute. He was a member

of the party, a kind of senior and secretary of PPASMP. He had made his pilgrimage to USSR at a very young age for Chess tournament. They both walked inside the airport. Those were days of less threats and lesser problems. So they could very well go inside and watch the planes landing and take off. Raghu still remembered watching the shining gigantic metallic bird landing down with the symbol of proletariat revolution shining in mighty red. Raghu remembered saying to Basu "The aircraft looks like pure Volga from the sky. The river of revolution descends. And unlike Ganges it is not locked in the dark matted hair of Siva – the stranglehold of Sanatana Dharma." "Wah Wah" exclaimed Basu, with a mock Mughal salute "Raghu I never knew a revolutionary bard is hiding inside you."

Meanwhile the passengers from the Aeroflot flight started arriving and soon they spotted their man. Sergi Leonski was taller and thinner than they expected and he was markedly different from the black and white photo of him they had seen in the back cover of "Soviet Cybernetics." As the ambassador headed back to Pondicherry, Raghu tried starting a



conversation with Sergi many times. Sergi answered in monosyllables and had an evasive look in his face. Raghu attributed it to tiredness of travel.

Sergi was put in one of the most expensive hotels of Pondicherry. He would stay there for three days and everyday except the day of his lecture, he would visit the house of one comrade for cultural interaction it was decided. Raghu and Basu were to look after him. Soon Raghu noted a pattern in the behaviour of Sergi. He talked more freely without Basu and in a reserved manner when he was around. He talked eagerly like a child about cybernetics and was at his evasive best whenever questions cropped up about dialectics or Marxism. If Raghu felt a bit disappointed about this behavior of Sergi what was blasphemous for him was when Sergi was fired with enthusiasm about US scientists like John Von Neumann or Heinz von Foerster. Worse still he was lukewarm when talking about Soviet cybernetics. All these, Raghu noticed, happened only in personal conversations. In public gatherings he always talked very generally and very

vaguely and sounded proud about the scientific achievements of the USSR.

Raghu came to the present and looked at the e-mail:

Comrade, I hope you remember that evening. The events that happened that rainy evening really affected me very much. The conversation happened on that day was not exactly pleasant but its impact never left me.

That evening was etched equally in Raghu's memory to this day.

It was the evening of the third day, the last day of his stay at Pondicherry, that he was visiting Raghu's house. Then there was a hitch. Raghu's father was a Sri Aurobindo – devotee and a staunch Goddess worshipper too. So in his house there was 'Kolu'. All Gods and Goddesses along with different village scenes and animals wild and domestic – all made of burnt mud or clay and grotesquely painted – Raghu had to explain not only to Sergi but also to any accompanying comrade this 'Kolu' – some primitive custom still preserved in his own house for all his embarrassment. However he was in for a worse shock that morning. His father announced that one Madhav Pundalik Pandit was coming to the house on the occasion of Navarathri and he would give a small lecture on Sri Lalita Sahasranama.

“Appa” Raghu remembered protesting in vain to his father, “Cannot you postpone this just this one day. You know very well that today my comrades are coming. And among them is Sergi the world famous cyberneticist. It is already enough that I have to explain to them the primitive Golu ritual. But now this lecture by this Pandit... Appa Please...”

But his father was amicably adamant, “See my dear boy... M.P.Pandit is a great scholar and

you do not know how much I am happy he is coming to our house. If this opportunity is missed then I do not know when the next might arrive. Believe me my boy he is not the run of the mill religious preacher. Who knows even your comrades may enjoy his company.” There was something decisive about his father's voice.

In the evening when Sergi got down from the taxi along with Basu there was a little drizzle. Sergi had already learnt to remove the shoes before entering the households. He even respectfully folded his hands to Raghu's father. Then Raghu took both Sergi and Basu to see Golu. As Sergi looked at the arranged exhibit of mud and clay idols, the women folk of the household watched peeping from behind the doors, Sergi the lean tall white man and whispered in audibly hushed voices. Raghu felt the bile of embarrassment swelling up from deep within and felt a bitter taste in his tongue.

“The idols are all burnt clay”, he said to Sergi, “I think some kind of primitive preconception about materialistic monism which had to wait centuries before being scientifically put forth by Friedrich Engels... At some point the emerging priest class converted this primitive communist premonition into an idol venerating superstition so that they could wield power.” Even as Sergi affirmed what Raghu said with polite head nods, his eyes indicated a disinterest.

A small commotion outside distracted them. A man in spotless white kurta and dhoti, with a dangling shoulder bag, was getting down from auto. Raghu's father hastened to welcome him. Raghu understood. Mr. Pandit had come. Mr. Pandit was a clean shaven man with his pitch dark hair submissively combed down. His round face with sparkling eyes

seemed to hold a mischievous smile not limited to his lips. He was medium built and his walk was quick. After initial pleasantries they all settled down in the front verandah. The rain was still drizzling.

“A scientist from Russia Mr. Sergi...” Raghu's father was finding difficulty telling the second name as he introduced the Russian to Mr. Pandit. Raghu intervened, “Actually a cyberneticist from USSR, Academician Sergi Leonski. Sergi, this is Mr. M.P.Pandit. ... A person delivering religious discourses... kind of a guru from a nearby Ashram.” The condescending tone was obvious. Sergi extended his hands again in a disinterested way. But M.P.Pandit was enthusiastic. “Well to put things straight, I am not a Guru. But a cyberneticist” his excitement was childlike and genuine. And Raghu was surprised that a religious person should have been knowledgeable about something like cybernetics. It seemed M.P.Pandit was a good conversationalist and he seemed to have connected with Sergi as Raghu noticed Sergi suddenly fired up and listening to Pandit.

“Understanding the interaction between consciousness and machine systems is very important in your field”-Pandit was saying and Sergi was affirming the statement with animated interest – a rarity. If Raghu was amazed, Basu was visibly irritated.

“You should be having some Vedic sloka to substantiate that Mr.Panditji. Bionics is Prof.Sergi's field. Now you people should also have proof that bionics existed in your Atharva Veda...” irritated voice of Basu rudely entered the conversation. Even Raghu was a bit appalled. However, Pandit remained his smiling sweet self.

“Why go to Vedas, my young friend, Take Sri

Lalita Sahasranama about which I am going to have a conversation today with your father. An interesting coincidence I would say, and Jung may call it synchronicity. The name we are going to discuss today is 'Sarva Yantratmika'. We can say that this Name of Divine Feminine has relevance in the context of Bionics too. I am not claiming we have all the knowledge of science already. But this can act as a guiding post for science in providing creative new frameworks to understand the multi-dimensional nature of reality. If the Divine Feminine symbolizes consciousness cannot we see all instruments we create an extension of that consciousness rather than mere material objects?”

Now Raghu interfered. “But Mr. Pandit, it seems you are ignorant of Marxist contribution to scientific understanding of the emergence of tool usage. Friedrich Engels explains how tool making hands of human species through labour created human civilization. Whatever you call consciousness is in a way subordinate to labour in the process of human evolution”.

Sergi coughed lightly. Then he spoke in his characteristic whispering voice. Without an audio system one has to strain attention to catch hold of his words, “Engels was not an anthropologist or a physical scientist. He was essentially a speculative philosopher. His guesses may be right or may be wrong. But in creating a digital-neuro interaction between machines and an organism – particularly conscious organism like human being, I am not very sure how helpful will be the guesses of Engels...”

The rain was increasing in intensity outside and no thunders or lightning. Only the wind was blowing hard. But the words of Sergi struck Raghu heavily like a thunder. “But

comrade, you yourself has used Engels' quote in your book...and there was an entire chapter..." Sergi simply smiled a weak smile. And an embarrassing silence briefly followed.

Now the voice of Pandit broke the silence. "The problem is not only with Engels. The Western philosophical system itself likes to create a conflicting binary - subjective idealism and objective materialism. What came first? Mind or Matter? They want to put either one at one side of the cause-effect arrow. Then they go on fighting. But Mr. Leonski, in Indian philosophical systems ...well. We call them Darshanas and they are not exactly philosophical systems as a western mind understands the term... eh... coming to the point, in some of our Darshanas, we have what is called 'Satkarya Vada'. This sees Cause and Effect as embedded in each other. They are involuted in each other. So where is the problem of which came first? For example if you consider matter as the primary causal substance and consciousness its effect, then according to 'Satkarya Vada, consciousness the effect is involuted in the cause. Again the litany of the thousand names of Divine Feminine has the following names, "Jada Sakthi", "Jadaathmika" meaning the consciousness that is deep within matter...And you know that Sri Aurobindo speaks of consciousness as indwelling in nature."

Sergi made his characteristic cough. "But Mr. Pandit... we cyberneticists see consciousness as something different from what you say. Consciousness is an emergent property of the brain - a central processing system if I am to use the computer jargon now getting familiar in the West, and commands pass on to peripheral organs including hands which create and operate tools... so how consciousness be embedded in tools or more

fundamentally in hands which too are essentially tools of the brain?"

Raghu expected Pandit to wince. And Basu made an audible voice of triumph. He should have hated that mention of the West by a Soviet scientist yet here the enemy is a more primitive eastern mysticism and all is fair in love and war. And this is not just war but class war. Pandit continued the conversation naturally, "Even cybernetics has come a long way from von Neumann model of consciousness. Most of the impressions that our reactions to stimuli come from the brain is, one can say, an illusional construct. Does not modern brain research tell us that even before we take a decision in a so called conscious way our neural system becomes pregnant with electro-potentials anticipating that so-called conscious decision? So is not the idea of brain alone being the only command center a bit exaggerated?"

Sergi was visibly impressed, "For an eastern Guru, you are well aware of scientific research Mr. Pandit. Are you referring to experiments by Libet?"

"Yes and No. No for calling me a Guru and Yes, exactly..." Pandit smiled "Backward time referral experiments by Benjamin Libet." Both Raghu and Basu looked lost. As if sensing their feelings, Pandit looked at them and said, "Libet's experiments are important in neurological research. You know that any stimulus to reach the brain, should build a critical amount of electrical strength. Scientists call this neuronal adequacy. In many controlled experiments Libet showed that though it takes say 500 milli seconds for a stimulus to build this neuronal adequacy, the subjects become aware of the sensation within a few milli seconds, as brief as 10-50 milli seconds after the stimulus. In other words, a

person becomes aware of a sensation, even as the stimulus gathers strength to reach the brain and has not yet reached the brain."

M.P.Pandit now turned to Sergi, "I think this experiment actually has opened new possibilities for cybernetics. Perhaps researches of Scott Kelso also show the way..." "Brilliant!" exclaimed Sergi and then in a subdued voice said, "But it is tough for us to get his works in our place."

"Who is Kelso?" Raghu asked. Sergi after making his customary little cough said in a hushed tone, "Well... his works are not exactly liked in Soviet Union. He is a British or rather Irish brain scientist. He employs non-linear models to explain cognitive processes....If what he says is true, it is going to be very difficult to explain consciousness through the simple computer model..." Basu whispered in a way every one could hear, "Explicit idealist uncooked meat..." Basu now said belligerently, "Even if we are to consider all your bourgeois lies to be true, still you cannot wish away materialism from science Mr.Pandit".

"No not at all. Of course not at all." saying M.P.Pandit rubbed his forehead. Then he looked at Basu "Permit me also to quote my young friend. Of course we do not want those quotes in every chapter of a text-book on science. But nevertheless it is worth quoting..." Then he rummaged through his shoulder bag and took out a thick bounded book that looked like a Bible and turned a few pages, And then he said, "Ah its here..." and started reading. One could feel a reverence in his voice.

"If modern Materialism were simply an unintelligent acquiescence in the material life, the advance might be indefinitely delayed. But since its very soul is the search for Knowledge,

it will be unable to cry a halt; as it reaches the barriers of sense-knowledge, its very rush will carry it beyond and the rapidity and sureness with which it has embraced the visible universe is only an earnest of the energy and success which we may hope to see repeated in the conquest of what lies beyond, once the stride is taken to cross the barrier."

"Complicated quote but brilliant, evidently from a quantum physicist. Heisenberg or Schrödinger?" queried Sergi.

"Sri Aurobindo" answered M.P.Pandit

"Who?" even as Sergi was asking again Basu rudely entered the conversation, "Decadent Mystic Bullshit that is what it is."

Every one was shocked by the rudeness and Sergi recoiled with a shocked fear dawning on his face. Again an awkward silence followed for two minutes. Once again M.P.Pandit ended the heaviness of the atmosphere and commenced the conversation in his typical soft voice, "Coming back to cybernetics and consciousness, yes, the cognitive processes are all not in the brain coming down like commands in a computer's central... ah... What do you call that friends?"

"Central Processing Unit (CPU) in short" answered Sergi.

Even today that memory makes Raghu smile. M.P.Pandit who was talking about then cutting edge neural research did not know a simple term that is today so common a primary school vocabulary. Then in 80s, computers were rarities and marvels. But now how fast the technology has proliferated!

"Yes CPU, CPU... Often that word slips my mind.", continued M.P.Pandit, "As I was saying cognitive processes are not like commands from CPU going to other parts of computer. Cognitive processes can build up

from other areas also... like say hands and go upwards and influence brain processes. So any part of the body can become a focused seat of consciousness. This understanding is deeper and more holistic than the idea of hands importance in human evolution as put forth by Engels. And this idea has been there in Indian culture for a long time integrated in our daily practices. Is it not?" He was now looking at Raghu and Basu.

"Like what?" asked Raghu.

"Well... Have not we been taught as children that every morning when we get up the first thing we do is bring the hands together and..."

Basu violently interrupted with a derisive laughter that even shocked Raghu, "That was a chant for daily luck Mr.Pandit... How can you link a primitive luck chant with some idealist confusions emerging in science? But that is what you priestly class has been doing in this country... coining webs of words to cheat people into slumber...You will see Panditji that dialectical materialism will triumph over all these castles of lies and falsehoods fabricated by word magic and idealist falsehoods in the name of science."

Even Raghu felt bad about Basu's outburst though his sympathies were with Basu. Pandit remained the same smiling self and Sergi shifted uncomfortably. Raghu could see his father's face gaining a light shade of red due to a well controlled anger. And then they heard the taxi to pick up Sergi arrive. "Saved by the Taxi" Raghu thanked the Gods he never believed. And as Sergi departed one could see a warm understanding smile pass between him and Pandit. From Pondicherry, Sergi left for a lecture organized by people's science and art movement in Rajasthan.

Raghu came to the present from his past

memories, strained his eyes and looked at the mail.

Comrade Raghunandan I should actually apologize for being evasive to many questions you asked me during that visit. There were two reasons for that. One was that I had reliable information from a friend that Mr.Basu was an informer for KGB about my activities. Secondly all those quotations in my book from Engels which you loved to quote and that chapter on dialectical materialism were neither placed there nor written by me. It was a prerequisite for publishing any book in USSR. Every book a group of party ideologues sit and decide those things. You have to accept that whether you like it or not otherwise the book will never see sunlight. In fact there was a time when Cybernetics was outlawed in USSR labelled as Bourgeois science.

Comrade, when I came to your place you were all praising Soviet sciences but do you know my real purpose of visit? It was to study the cost-effective artificial limbs fabricated in Jaipur. We were in need of that technology urgently for our soldiers in Afghanistan who were losing their legs in Mujahideen mines. My instructions were to study the technology and improve it in a digital way. Or in otherwords even as you were singing praises for our science achievements I was in India to get technological know-how from an Indian workshop. Do you realize the irony?

When Soviet Union became a thing of past, I joined the Bionics center at Bulgaria. Here we work on a digital neural interface for artificial hands. And frankly some of the things that Mr.Pandit told on that day in your house have been continuously throwing new light in my area of research. Yes the word he used was 'Darshana'. Later I found out that it means a unifying vision. It is verily true – an inner vision that does provide new lights of perspectives in such complicated situations like neural coordination of artificial hand ... Now from reseraches we do know that skin based electric

responses develop even before brain becomes aware of the stimulus. You can google and get many such papers in the net. In our field the brain-centerism has become a paradigm of the past. What strikes me is that one Eastern Guru on a rainy evening in South India could predict this paradigm shift almost twenty years ago. Yet he was also able to face not just countering views but also angry outbursts with an unchanging smile. You Indians are so lucky to grow in such an environment. Perhaps you cannot understand my appreciation but if you had grown up in Soviet censorship I am sure you will definitely appreciate.

Raghu sighed and continued to read.

Can the artificial hand with its digital neural interface be considered as a locus for a localized emergence of consciousness? We do know from experiments that in higher apes the instruments they use are considered as extensions of their own self. Can an artificial hand be integrated at the neurological level to be an extension of one's own self and then can it become a seat of emergence of consciousness which will facilitate the artificial hand to be integrated with the human subject? Thank goodness there is no USSR today. Otherwise how many petty minded party ideologues I would have had to beg and explain to each one of them that there are not Bourgeois conspiracies in the name of science. And they would be determining whether to allow this research based on the statement made by Friedrich Engels in nineteenth century.

Anyhow after I had that conversation with Mr.Pandit, I left for Jaipur. I was accompanied by a Professor from Jawaharlal Nehru University. I visited the Jaipur foot manufacturing unit. It happened to be the day of celebration – victory of a Goddess over an evil demon they said. All the instruments in that simple workshop were garlanded and respectfully kept for some ritual. Professor who accompanied me stated that this was

the result of fear – fear of the priestly class at the progress of tools. I would have agreed to that disinterestedly had I not met Mr.Pandit. But now I saw that in a different way. So I told him that perhaps they see the tools as extended manifestation of their creative consciousness. He rejected that as idealist babble. He openly chided me for catching mystic virus in the tropical climate. I laughed in order to avoid any suspicion and then kept my thoughts to myself.

They never left me even as I left India. They constantly churned in my mind and being. So recently for the integration of neuro-digital interface of the artificial hands I have created a mental exercise which has been extremely successful particularly in unfortunate children who had lost their hands. As I have derived the basic idea for this from your culture and spiritual tradition, I thought that it will be only fit to ... well Comrade, Raghunandan please see it. The video clip is attached.

Raghu clicked the attachment and the video player opened the clip.

A black teenage boy, was sitting in a chair and a lot of cables connected his amputated limbs with a pair of shining metallic hands in front of him. He was sort of sitting straight and there were a lot of sensors attached over his head and shoulders which were feeding data into a lot of computerized panels around him.

The woman's voice though in English had a deep East European accent.

Bruno is a teenage boy from Rwanda. He lost both his hands in ethnic violence when he was barely two. They were chopped off by warring ethnic groups. He survived thanks to immediate medical help by a native healer who also saved the boy's life. Bulgarian Institute of Bionics had taken the challenge of integrating this cost-effective artificial hands to him thanks to an innovative method

developed by Prof. Sergi Leonski.

The documentary showed some recordings of Rwandan violence followed by Bruno as a toddler and a faded photograph of old medicine man who saved him and then came to Sergi. Sergi looked older but Raghu could see in him a fire. Sergi talked:

In building this digital artificial limb I have differed a bit from the usual architecture of making the digital path ways mere conductors of electric impulses. I have developed a psychological package that makes the subject – consciously feel the artificial hand as part of himself and as something that has the capacity for developing a conscious dialogue with what we generally consider as higher brain centers. So this is not just a technological innovation but a techno-psychological integration package for artificial limbs – a first in the world.

Now the camera moved on to the boy sitting in the room. The commentary stated that Sergi acknowledged that the idea originally came to him from a spiritual teacher in South India with whom he had an accidental conversation. Now the camera zoomed in on the boy. The boy looked as if he was concentrating. He started repeating a chant and slowly the artificial hands came together, reversed themselves and rose a few millimetres. As the audio of the chant became clearer, Raghu could feel a familiarity. He clutched his headphones and listened to the faint audio of the chant that the teenage black boy was chanting repeatedly all the while intensely looking at the artificial limbs that were soon to be his own hands...

*Karagre vasathe lakshmi,
kara madhye saraswathi,
kara moole sthithe gowri,
prabhathe kara darshanam*

Raghu sat frozen even as the video player

started the clip once again. In the wall before him his father was smiling from within the garlanded photo-frame.

For more information:

Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1983.

Slava Gerovitch, From Newspeak to Cyberspeak: A History of Soviet Cybernetics, MIT Press, 2002.

<http://www.thecomplementarynature.com/>
(web site of Dr. Scott Kelso)

For a detailed explanation of Libet's experiments: Dr. Fred Alan Wolf, The Dreaming Universe, Simon & Schuster, 1995.

The Extended Mind, (edited by Richard Menary), The MIT Press, 2012.

Note by the author:

The seed for this short story came when reading eminent writer Jeyamohan's novel for children 'Pani Manithan' (Yeti or Abominable Snowman, Tamil) where he has written about the evolution of hand and the importance given to hand in Indian culture. The author thanks him for this. Sri M.P.Pandit was a true personality and a great Sri Aurobindo-Mother scholar and was well-versed in mystic traditions and also modern science. However, all the incidents in this short story are purely imaginary. The story aims to provide a speculative imaginary flight into possibilities of science based on some of our traditional understanding of consciousness. However what is depicted here as science is in no way a final word or the only possibility in machine-neural interaction.

WINDS OF CHANGE

VIVEKANANDA OF THE “SISTERS AND BROTHERS OF AMERICA”

Philip Goldberg

A 'perennialist with a capital P', to whom Vedanta provided a framework for understanding all religions

In 1943, in the context of a particular book of Heard, Huston Smith wrote that 'it had converted him from the scientific worldview (which makes the visible world to be the only world there is) to the vaster world of the mystics'. Heard's premise was that humanity is on the brink of an evolutionary leap forward that will be guided by the insights of the mystics, whom Smith would later call "the advanced scouts of mankind who have transcended their egos, and in exceptional cases, merged with God completely." Their spiritual technologies, he added were practical means to achieve the "breakout" in human evolution that Heard predicted. Years later (he was eighty-eight) on an interview, when Smith was asked 'how important was Vedanta in shaping his life's work', he proclaimed, "Immense", and went on to say that after he had completed his Ph.D., *'The Perennial Philosophy'* of Aldous Huxley became "my bible for the next ten years." On moving to St. Louis, and visiting the local Vedanta Society, Smith bought a copy of the *'Katha Upanishad'*. "I was overwhelmed in just two pages", he said later on, "astonished by how much truth could be compressed into so few words. I was hooked." At St. Louis, he took up a meditation practice and probed deeply into Vedanta under the guidance of Swami Satprakashananda - the head of the Vedanta Society, virtually every week for ten straight years. Vedanta provided a framework for understanding all religions, he said, and its



delineation of different approaches to spiritual development for different personality types "came as a welcome revelation". So did the Vedantic elaboration on the dictum "Truth is one, sages call it variously", which, along with Huxley's book and various scholarly works made Smith what he called "perennialist with a capital P". He maintained that stance through his decades as a revered educator, always distinguishing the exoteric aspects of religion (rituals, forms, behavioural codes, stories, etc.) from the esoteric (the innermost experiences resulting from spiritual practices). "Exoterically, they're very different," he summarized, "but esoterically they are one."

'The various major religions are alternate and relatively equal paths to the same God'

Smith's first foray beyond the academy was a televised course called *The Religion of Man*, broadcast in 1955 by a St. Louis educational channel. Almost one hundred thousand viewers turned in. The response was so strong that the series was aired in twenty other cities and prompted Smith to write his now-classic book, *The Religion of Man* (later re-titled *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions*). Published in 1958, it still sells four thousand copies a month. It was, as Smith wrote, "a different kind of book on world religions," centering on "the meaning these religions carry for the lives of their adherents." The book was a landmark. "To treat the religions as equals was unusual, since there tended to be a Christian bias at that time." In the 1950s, "Christian theologians were launching polemic about why other religions were theologically inferior. So, to take religion seriously, rather than deconstruct it out of existence, and see to them as equals was unusual." Smith wrote this book with the active guidance of Swami Satprakashananda. It has a chapter on Hinduism, and the Vedantic point of view sets the tone for the rest of the book. He highlights the notion that "the various major religions are alternate and relatively equal paths to the same God" with a classic Vedantic image: "It is possible to climb life's mountain from any side, but when the top is reached the pathways merge. As long as religions remain in the foothills of theology, ritual or church organization they may be far apart." The mountain top, in this famous metaphor, represents the heights of union with the divine. The book's final two pages consist of a long excerpt from Sri Ramakrishna's teachings on the unity of religions, which Smith calls "Hinduism's finest voice on this matter."

'Yoga - one of the most realistic systems of thought and training ever set up by the human mind'

In Smith's hands, as in Campbell's, the ancient and foreign become fresh and relevant. His book was not only far ahead of the curve of pluralism and interfaith respect but also in its use of terms like "state of consciousness" and its reference to yoga as "one of the most realistic, matter-of-fact, practical-minded systems of thought and training ever set up by the human mind." This was radical stuff in midcentury America, and its impact on how students and ordinary people viewed India, Hinduism, and religion in general cannot be exaggerated. The point of spiritual experience, he pointed out repeatedly, is not altered states but altered traits. In a PBS series aired in 1996, Smith speaks warmly of the decisive impact of Vedanta on his life and work. Smith tells that the origin of yoga is the same as the English yoke, and its purpose is to yoke human spirit to Ultimate Spirit. He also describes the eight limbs of classical yoga. Extolling the spiritual emissaries from the East, who "are bringing an emphasis on experience and a method of attaining that", he concludes by noting that spirituality is ultimately beyond words, citing a Hindu prayer: "O Thou before whom all words recoil." While Campbell emphasizes the power of myth, Smith focused on the importance of transcendent experience. He stood up for the efficacy of deep religion in a secular age, illuminating lofty ideas and ancient texts for the masses. In his life and work, he was, in the best sense, a Vedantist.

They helped to promote Vedic wisdom in the West

The process by which these five men: Christopher Isherwood, Huston Smith, Gerald Heard, Joseph Campbell, and Aldous Huxley, assimilated Vedic ideas, combined them with their own fresh insights, and passed them along to others would be repeated by many of the millions who read their works or heard them speak. Those who say they are indebted to one or all of them include some of the leading persons who were educators in a bigger way. They helped to promote Vedic wisdom in the West.

Translating the message of Vedanta into American soil

The trailblazing work of Vivekananda and his handpicked successors established a template for translating the core message of Vedantic philosophy into American soil. While maintaining some traditional elements for ardent devotees, they framed their teachings as a rational science and placed before the public English speakers who were familiar with Western history and values. There is a great irony in this, as the English colonizers had introduced their language and their educational system to wean Hindus from their "idolatrous" religion. The Swamis reversed this process, like martial artists who turn their opponents' energy against them.

Vivekananda himself said his purpose was "to put the Hindu ideas into English and then make out of dry philosophy and intricate mythology and queer startling psychology, a religion which shall be easy, simple, popular and at the same time meet the requirements of the highest minds." The Vedanta Society never asked anyone to convert to Hinduism or to forsake the religion of their upbringing. Instead, everyone was encouraged to apply Vedantic wisdom and Yogic practices to his or her own life and activities. The Vedanta Society was pretty much the only game in town for Americans drawn to Indian philosophy in the early twentieth century. It enjoyed substantial growth, led by enthusiastic followers such as Josephine Macleod, a socialite who saw to it that Vivekananda's message was heard by prominent citizens. The 1920s were expansionary years, as new centers opened in Chicago, Seattle, and other cities. While the movement has never employed aggressive marketing techniques, its early leaders, notably Swami Abhedananda and Swami Trigunatitananda in San Francisco, used lectures and publications to get the message out, sometimes speaking to thousands at a time.

As the interest in Eastern philosophy explodes

In the late 1960s, when interest in Eastern philosophy exploded, thousands of seekers found their way to the Vedanta Society or fed their curiosity through books published by the organization's press. Some of the youngsters drawn to the movement then are now its leaders, serving either as a lay devotee or as monastics. There are now about twenty Vedanta Society centers and retreat houses in the United States, along with study circles in places without a resident Swami. Some centers are doing so well they had to acquire bigger spaces. In some cases, for the Indian immigrants, the Vedanta Society is a taste of the homeland. Some American followers enjoy the Indian cultural elements.

The Indian philosophy penetrates the intellectual heart of America

The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda legacy extends far beyond the walls of its centers and temples. As historian Carl T. Jackson has put it, "Few other religious bodies have equalled the movement's impact or historical significance." That is largely because of the Vedanta Society Swamis - some of the twentieth century's most decisive thinkers - and through whom Indian philosophy penetrated the intellectual heart of America.

The confluence of Indian philosophy and science

The confluence of modern Indian philosophy and modern science began in the 1890s when Swami Vivekananda spent time with luminaries like Sir William Thompson (Lord Kelvin), Hermann von Helmholtz, and Nikola Tesla, the legendary inventor. The Swami and Tesla apparently saw eye to eye on a vision of nature that seems axiomatic now but would have seemed as fanciful as a unicorn at the time. "Mr. Tesla thinks he can demonstrate mathematically that force and matter are reducible to potential energy," Vivekananda said in a letter to a friend, adding, "I am

working a good deal now upon the cosmology and eschatology of Vedanta. I clearly see their perfect unison with modern science." Tesla did not succeed in constructing his proof, and Vivekananda died three years before Einstein's $E=mc^2$ united matter and energy forever. But both men were remarkably prescient, and their meeting must have impressed Tesla, judging from his subsequent use of Sanskrit terms such as *akasa* and *prana*.

Carefully shaping the ancient ideas to fit modern society

"Avert the danger that has not yet come" (*heyam dukham anaagatam*) is a maxim worth remembering as we continue to assimilate Vedic ideas and practices. And we surely will. Why would we not want to employ methods that enhance mental capacities and foster compassion, empathy, kindness, and other desirable qualities? Why, given the escalating cost of health care, would we not make use of yogic techniques that alleviate and prevent illness cheaply? And given the perilous state of the planet, why would we not encourage a world view that rejects materialism and directs the pursuit of happiness inward? But while adaption is inevitable and desirable, one hopes the process will be carried out with care. If we do not treat authentic Vedic teachings with respect, we will deprive the future of their true value. The task - a delicate and sacred one - is to carefully shape the ancient ideas to fit modern society without disturbing them or diminishing their value.

Vedanta's ecumenical spirituality is the need of the hour

Vedanta's ecumenical spirituality has never been more necessary. In an ever-shrinking world, authentic pluralism - by which I mean genuine respect for religious difference within a framework of underlying unity - is obviously a needed counterweight to the deadly forces of tribalism, ethnocentrism, and fundamentalism. "Truth is one, the wise call it by many names" is far better than "Mine is the

one true religion." That world view is likely to ascend. Studies show that human beings tend to move upward along a continuum of spiritual expansiveness. Universalizing faith, individuals acquire a "taste and feel for transcendent moral and religious actuality, devotion to universalizing compassion, enlarged vision of universal community." The 'deadly forces' still are, no doubt, but evidence suggests that they have become less rare, thanks in large part to the technologies of consciousness we've imported from India.

The Eastern traditions and an expansion of mind and heart

Research suggests that each stage of development enlarges the individual's center of identity. That is, one's sense of "I" and "we" opens out from the narrow identification with family, tribe, race, political affiliation, religion, and so on, to encompass a broader swath of humanity. With that comes a corresponding expansion of the moral compass. This is not a fanciful imagining of "we are the world" harmony but a living experience of unity with other humans, with nature, and ultimately with the cosmos. The Eastern traditions propose that such an expansion of mind and heart can be cultivated and so far the research suggests that they are right. "We don't know all that much yet about how to foster human development in an effective way, but what we do know so far is that meditative practices move people through developmental stages, and they do foster the development of certain qualities, like love, compassion, generosity, kindness, and service orientation that we associate with higher consciousness."

The experiential components of the Vedic heritage

The result of such internal shifts can only be an uptick in interreligious and interethnic harmony. But that desirable outcome can only be realised, it must be emphasized, if the experiential components of the Vedic heritage - the practices, not just the philosophical ideas

and theological precepts - are maintained in their integrity. Otherwise it would be like a developing nation importing the philosophy of science and not the technologies that emerged from it. We don't just need tidbits of a cosmic philosophy; we need the nuances and details in all their deep complexity. More important, we need cosmically conscious minds and cosmically compassionate hearts. Vedanta itself says that its own eternal truths are virtually useless unless grounded in the direct experience of Ultimate Reality. We need to pay attention to that message and not settle for bullet points from an inspiring worldview, even if it is a "new paradigm."

Enabling the human race to grow together into a single family

To conclude, in the words of the distinguished historian Arnold Toynbee: "It is already

becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race. In the present age, the world has been united on the material plane by Western technology. But this Western skill has not only 'annihilated distance'; it has armed the peoples of the world with weapons of devastating power at a time when they have been brought to point blank range of each other without yet having learnt to know and love each other. At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is an Indian way ... The Emperor Ashoka's and Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions: here we have the attitude and the spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family - and, in the Atomic Age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves."

to be continued...

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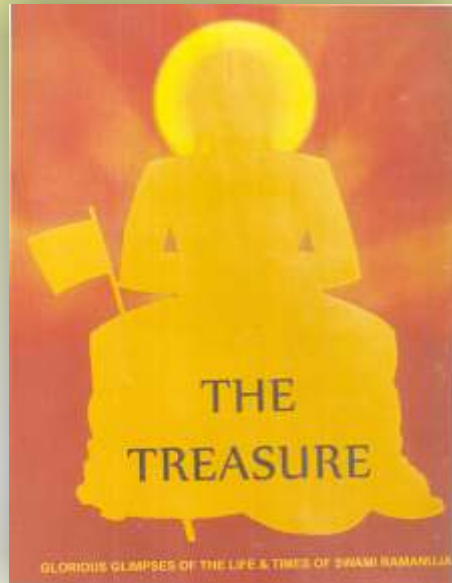
The Treasure: Glorious Glimpses of the life and Paintings of Swami Ramanuja

Sri Ramanujacharya (1017-1137 CE) respectfully called Bhagavan Bhashyakara by Swami Vivekananda was a saint of incomparable spiritual attainments and achievements in the social and literary spheres. He was considered as Avatara of Adishesha and Lakshmana, hence the name RAMANUJA.

A philosopher-saint, social activist, scholar, Sri Ramanuja lived the complete human life-span of 120 years and lived to see his schemes tested in real life situations and proved successful.

A worthy successor to a great chain of Saints and Acharyas, Sri Ramanuja gave new strength to the philosophy of Visishtadvaita, and the religious sect of Shri Vaishnavism worshipping Sri Vishnu and Mahalakshmi. His compassion found no limits of social castes or even religious set-ups and defying one of his Guru's restraining orders, he preached the Lord's name to the lost and neglected men. He organized the temple worship according to Shri Vaishnavism beginning with the central shrine of Shrirangam. He established a pattern of chanting the 4000 divine verses of the Alvars in Vishnu Shrines completing the cycles in seasons, years and 12 years.

On his visit to Viranarayanapuram lake, he saw the 74 gates discharging water for irrigation. This sight reminded him of Vishnu's



grace flowing out through countless channels. Ramanuja organized 74 jeer pithams dividing Bharat into 74 segments and appointing a Jeer (Saint) to take care for the spiritual needs of the people of each of the areas.

Sri Ramanuja paid back his debt to his beloved teachers by creating a large band of brilliant and devoted disciples. The disciples carried forward the great man-making work the Master has started.

Sri Ramanuja released an amazing gush of spiritual energy and great changes in the society naturally followed. Literary and philosophical work, social reform, moral uplift of individuals, vegetarianism all came in the immediate aftermath of the Master's work.

Inspired by his work and devotion other sects of Vishnu worship were created to engulf the whole country and to try encompass the whole world. Madhvacharya's Dvaita, Vallabha's Pushtimarga, Chaitanya Deva's Gaudiya Vaishnavism and Shankara Deva's work in the North-East India could be directly or indirectly linked to Shri Ramanuja and Sri Ramanuja's work. Today the Hare Krishna Movement, an offshoot of the Chaitanya sect is a sort of spiritual grandchild of Sri Ramanuja. The effects are there for all to see.

Sri Ramanuja left behind him his monumental Shri Bhashya on the Brahmasutra, his commentary on the Bhagawat Gita and other philosophical works defining the core tenets of his teachings. Add to this his rich band of devoted disciples and followers, a colourful tradition of worship in temples and a brave and precious attempt at bringing social cohesion in a fissured society, the astounding picture of Shri Ramanuja's work will be clear.

When the saint's thousandth birth year comes in 2017, there will be a natural enthusiasm to remember and thank the saint, to propagate his messages further and to live upto his life saving message with the twin facets of compassion towards all living beings and surrender to the Lord.

Shri Sudarshan Chakravarty has conceived, written and published this priceless pictorial book on Sri Ramanuja. Printed in art paper, reproducing the Thanjavur style of paintings

from the Shrirangam temple, the book is printed by RNR Printer No.19, Thandavarayan Street, Triplicane, Chennai 600 005. It is marked for private circulation only. Naturally limited copies can be had from sudhichak@hotmail.com.

The original paintings are inspiring, the reproduction is very good, except where the original itself is smudged or faded. The short descriptive linkages are pithy but sufficiently informative. The entire life story of the saint has been covered in the series of paintings.

As an appendix, a short essay on the philosophy of Sri Ramanuja has been included.

The year 2017 is not faraway. But there is time enough for all devotees to prepare themselves to celebrate the thousandth year of the saint's advent. Naturally his Bhashyas and original works will be reprinted and made accessible to more people. The importance of his philosophy to the God-hungry, peace hungry-world will be highlighted. What is more, the life of Sri Ramanuja who loved God and man together will be known to more and more people. Thus beautiful book is an excellent beginning in that direction.

N.Krishnamoorti

Due to Oversight we missed printing a portion of the above review. Hence, we republish the review in full in this issue. We regret for the mistake.

YB-ET

Remembering Dr. Rajendra Prasad

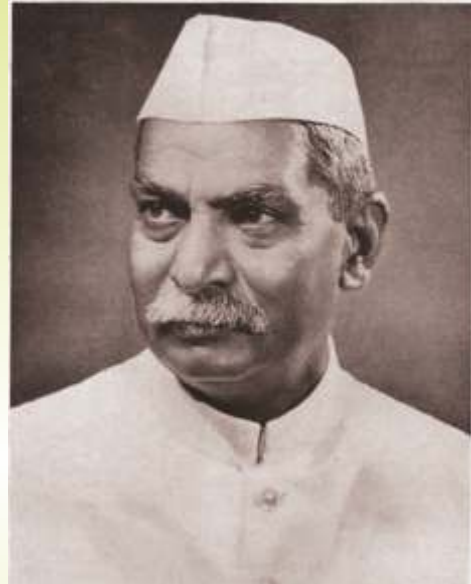
[Birth anniversary + 3rd December]

Rajesh Pathak

Devotional mood pervaded everywhere to mark the celebration of Navratri Utsav. And so was it where I live, in my residential complex. By the evening the complex got to be reverberated with the chorus of some devotional recitation. On approaching there, I learnt it to be the Hanumat shakti jagran anusthan- the 11 times recitation of Hanuman chalisa, which was organized, obviously, on the occasion of Navratri. With the others I also began the recitation. At the end of recitation, one of us stood up and said that he would read a resolution, which everybody of us was to repeat. Only when he finished reading the resolution that I came to know it to be about building of Ram temple on the very site where once Babri Mosque existed. Everybody there repeated the resolution; and so did I, though reluctantly. My mind being crowded with the thoughts regarding the logic of movement to be launched for the restoration of Ramjanambhoomi, I asked the proposer of resolution, after the crowd little dispersed- "Why cannot there be the co-existence of Ram temple and Babri mosque in the disputed site?"

"Because of national honor"

"National honor! – What do you mean by it? - National honor connected with religious



issue?"

"Of course- as it [national honor] was connected with the restoration of Somnath temple," answered the proposer.

"Means?"

"Dr Rajendra Prasad, President of India then, himself participated the restoration ceremony of Somnath temple- perhaps you would be aware of it. And, he did that despite Nehru advised him to not participate religious occasions because he being a head of the secular state. Do you know what he said at this to Nehru?"

"No-I didn't know it."

"Dr. Rajendra Prasad said, 'it is not a matter of religion- rather, it's a matter of national honor,

Nehruji! Mohammad Gazanavi was a foreign invader; his intention behind vandalizing the temple was to disgrace and demoralize our nation. It is to undo the national disgrace the restoration of temple is necessary. And it is because of this everybody, irrespective of his or her creed, religious or whatever must join the occasion.”

“Similarly”, the proposer continued, “Babar was no saint, but a brute invader, imbued with rabid exclusivist theology. His intention was

no different from Gaznavi. Having any mosque after his name is like raising in the country the monument after the name of Julfikar Ali Bhutto or, for that matter, Gen. Musharraf. Could we accept such monuments today?”

After this argument of proposer I got convinced and gave a nod as my response.

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