

## Magazine Articles July / August 2004

1. Editorial
2. A Christian Devotee Meets Sri Ramakrishna - *Swami Prabhananda*
3. The Blessed Theoktista Mikhailovna - *John Phillips*
4. Who is Wise? (From the Mahabharata)
5. The Philosophy of Ernst Mach (1838-1916 ) - *Hans Heimer*
6. Leaves of an Ashrama: 4 ,The Law of Karma as Punisher and Rewarder  
-*Swami Vidyatmananda*
7. Religion and Life (continued) - *Swami Bhuteshananda*
9. Discrimination - *Swami Dayatmananda*
10. Book Reviews

### Editorial

#### Fearlessness

Fearlessness is one of the first qualities Krishna advises spiritual aspirants to cultivate. Fear is the result of selfishness, and the cause of selfishness is ignorance about the real nature of man.

All of us are subject to various types of fear: fear of old age, disease, death, etc, and even fear of fear. Then there are all sorts of irrational fears known as phobias. But the greatest of all fears is of the loss of individuality.

Fear is an existential condition. If fear were not there, no creature would survive for

long. A fear which helps one to survive and lead a righteous life is good, but a fear which makes life a living hell is to be got rid of.

The opposite of fear is courage. The greatest of all courages is the 'Courage to Be'.

How do we cultivate this courage? Through reliance on God and a philosophical outlook on life.

Accept the inevitable with equanimity and poise. Every spiritual aspirant knows that whatever happens is for his good and through every event, God is slowly leading him forward. This faith makes him face life with courage and strength.

Prayer and a righteous life can equip us all with strength and courage.

**Swami Dayatmananda**

**A Christian Devotee Meets Sri Ramakrishna**

**Swami Prabhananda**

Persuaded by the elderly devotees, Sri Ramakrishna, who was suffering from what was called 'clergyman's sore throat' had in 1885 moved to Calcutta for better and more systematic medical treatment by experts. The devotees had rented the first floor of a two-storeyed building in Shyampukur in North Calcutta, and Sri Ramakrishna occupied one of the two large rooms. Some doctors in Calcutta examined him and diagnosed his ailment as cancer. Although there was no known cure for it in those days, Dr.

Mahendralal Sarkar, the leading homoeopathist, came forward to treat him to the best of his ability. In spite of himself the patient frequently entered samadhi in divine emotion; but he also talked to people who needed his help. As soon as he was moved to Calcutta, Sri Ramakrishna, by then admired as the most revered saint and doyen of all spiritual giants of Calcutta, began to draw large crowds of people, both friends and strangers.

On an autumn morning, 31st October 1885, there came to the saint a stranger. Brown-complexioned and large-eyed, the thirty-five-year-old new arrival had a beard and wore European dress. With a hat and a walking stick in hand, he entered Sri Ramakrishna's room. As was his wont, Sri Ramakrishna was the first to greet the stranger politely. The new arrival returned the greetings and took his seat on a carpet on the floor. He introduced himself as Prabhudayal Mishra. He was born of a Christian family and belonged to the Quaker sect.

After a preliminary exchange of words, Mishra gave expression to a religious sentiment by quoting Tulsidas, 'It is Rama alone who dwells in all beings.' The highly spiritual soul that Sri Ramakrishna was, he could see the ins and outs of the new arrival. Presently Sri Ramakrishna, appreciating Mishra's attitude, said to the younger Naren, within Mishra's hearing, 'Rama is one, but He has a thousand names. He who is called God by the Christians is addressed by the Hindus as Rama, Krishna, Isvara, and by other names. A lake has many ghats. The Hindus drink water at one ghat and call it Jal; the Christians at another, and call it Water; the Mussalmans at a third, and call it Pani. Likewise, He who is God to the Christians is Allah to the Mussalmans.' Sri Ramakrishna had experienced God directly and immediately in the context of Hinduism and Islam and Christianity, and on the strength of his personal experience he upheld the unique conception of the unity and purity of God in spite of there being differences in the names and in the paths

followed by different sects. Each individual may have his own way, but all paths have but one goal and that goal is God-realization.

Silence followed for a while. Among those present in the room, one person referred to Mr. Williams who had visited Sri Ramakrishna and had appreciated Sri Ramakrishna's realization of the harmony which pervades the teachings of the major religions of the world. Mishra said: 'Perhaps a probationer in the path of God, Mr. Williams might have comprehended this concept intellectually.' Sri Ramakrishna remarked: 'But he shed tears in the name of God' The degree of yearning for God was the test by which Sri Ramakrishna used to assess a man's progress on the path of spirituality. We are not sure if Mishra could appreciate the wonderful concept of the harmony of religions which Sri Ramakrishna was trying to drive home, and he came out with his own feelings and personal experiences. Mishra remarked: 'Jesus is not the son of Mary. He is God himself.' Urged by the feelings which he had experienced at the very sight of Sri Ramakrishna, Mishra then gave expression to his personal view of him. He paused for a while and then, pointing to Sri Ramakrishna, he told the devotees: 'Now he is as you see him - again, he is God himself. You are not able to recognize him. I have seen him before, in visions, though I see him now directly with my eyes. I saw a garden where he was seated on a raised seat. Another person was seated on the ground, but he was not so far advanced.'

To have a clear understanding of the difference between Sri Ramakrishna's message and Mishra's belief at that time, we may quote from a Christian book: 'The Christian makes a decisive choice in faith, acknowledging Christ as the only Saviour. Christian experience is communion with God in Christ. Sri Ramakrishna took Christ into the Hindu experience of seeing all beings as manifestations of Brahman, receiving direct experience of Brahman through devotion to an avatara, where divinity is clearly and graciously expressed.' He saw Christ from his own point of view, with the attitude of a devotee

steeped in Indian tradition. Though Mishra's experience is definitely a deviation from the traditional concept of the theologians and the Church, it nonetheless did not match with Sri Ramakrishna's monumental conception of the harmony of religions.

Mishra was full of glowing ardour and expressed his devotion for Sri Ramakrishna in many ways. He gave expression to his honest belief: 'There are four door-keepers of God in this country: Tukaram Tantia, a merchant in Bombay, Robert Michael in Kashmir, himself (meaning Sri Ramakrishna) in this part of the country, and another person in eastern Bengal.'

Sri Ramakrishna asked : 'Do you see visions?'

Mishra: 'Sir, even when I lived at home I used to see light. Then I had a vision of Jesus. How can I describe that beauty? How insignificant is the beauty of a woman compared with that beauty!' Wonder-struck at such words from the lips of a lay devotee the onlookers waited for further elucidation. Mishra gave out other glimpses of his religious life. Renouncing his family he was practising yoga in a lonely cave. One day he was blessed with a vision. He saw a beautiful garden by the side of a rivulet. There he saw seated a yogi merged in deep samadhi. The shining countenance of the yogi dazzled him. All this happened but once, and however hard he tried, he could not experience it again. Since then he had been moving about in expectation of meeting that yogi. Today he recognized in Sri Ramakrishna the blessed figure of the yogi of his vision. Evidently Mishra's earnest efforts and determination had helped him develop the sense of surrender to the will of God, and he was blessed with some spiritual experiences. Firm in his convictions he narrated his experiences and to convince the listeners Mishra soon afterwards took off his trousers and showed those present the gerua loin cloth he was wearing.

Sri Ramakrishna went out to answer the call of nature. On his return he disclosed to the devotees the vision he had seen a few minutes earlier. He said: 'I saw him (meaning Mishra) standing in a heroic posture.' As he uttered these words he went into samadhi: he was standing facing the west. Standing transfixed he looked like a picture on canvas, with the twitch of a smile lingering on his lips. After a while Sri Ramakrishna slowly regained partial consciousness. He gazed at Mishra and began to laugh. Sri Ramakrishna muttered 'Are you keeping well?' as if Mishra was an old acquaintance. His ecstatic mood lingered on. After a while he took hold of Mishra's hands. He shook hands with Mishra and said, 'You will get what you are striving for.' Sri Ramakrishna was still standing. His mind was swinging between semi-consciousness and bhava-samadhi, and his face was reflecting the joy of the God-consciousness he was experiencing. The captivating smile on his lips stole Mishra's heart.

Struck with wonder and awe Mishra, with folded hands, said: 'Since that day (the day on which he had seen Sri Ramakrishna in a vision) I have surrendered to you my mind, soul and body.' All through, Sri Ramakrishna continued laughing, still in ecstasy.

It seems Mishra saw in Sri Ramakrishna in *samadhi* his chosen ideal Lord Jesus Christ. Overwhelmed he began to utter words of praise and offered a sincere prayer. Then addressing the devotees he said, 'You do not recognize who he is. He and Jesus Christ are one. Jesus Christ used to be in such a state of ecstasy as you have seen in him today. I have already seen both Jesus Christ and Paramahamsadeva in a vision. He is the present Jesus Christ.' The devotees were charmed to hear of such revelations from a Christian devotee.

In the meantime Sri Ramakrishna had regained his normal consciousness and taken his seat. The devotees in the room now knew that Mishra was a Christian belonging to the Quaker sect, and one of them asked why he, being a Christian, had put on a gerua loin

cloth. Mishra said: 'I was born in a Brahmin family; should I give up the customs and practices that have come down to me from my forefathers just because I had the good fortune to have faith in sweet Jesus and accept him as my chosen Ideal? I believe in the Yoga scriptures, and with Jesus as my chosen Ideal, practise yoga exercises daily. I have, of course, no faith in distinctions recognized by the caste system, but I do believe that it is prejudicial to the practice of yoga to take food out of the hand of anybody and everybody. So I take *Havishyanna* cooked by myself every day. Consequently, though a Christian, I have been obtaining the results, one after another, of yogic practices, such as seeing light etc. The yogis of India, the lovers of God, have been wearing ochre cloth from time immemorial; what dress other than this can be dearer to me?"

In response to other queries he spoke about his past family life. He related how two of his brothers had died on the day fixed for the marriage of one of them. The shamiana over the place of festivity gave way and those two died. This incident was enough to rekindle the wick of renunciation that had been burning feebly in the lamp of his heart even from his early days. He renounced worldly life that very day.

Sri Ramakrishna asked the devotees to attend to Mishra. Impressed by what Mishra had said, Narendra (later Swami Vivekananda), the leader of the young devotees who had rallied round Sri Ramakrishna, put searching questions to get all he could out of the yogi that Mishra was. Profoundly moved by his sincerity and achievements, Narendra paid his homage to Mishra by saluting him. The other young devotees present in the room followed suit.

Sri Ramakrishna presented pomegranate and other fruits to Mishra who was highly pleased and distributed Sri Ramakrishna's prasada among the devotees. Swami Saradananda has recorded that the devotees and Mishra took sweets and fruits, the

prasada of Sri Ramakrishna together in one and the same plate.

This significant meeting fulfils Sri Ramakrishna's prophetic statement that sincere aspirants, whoever they might be, would come to him for guidance in their pilgrimage to the Universal God. Sri Ramakrishna's rich mystical experiences in different religious faiths easily enabled him to lay the foundation of a universality among divergent sects and religions with seemingly contradictory views of the universe, God, man, salvation etc. With the help of his highly scientific experimentation, Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master that he was, confidently guided aspirants of all faiths towards the goal supreme, in accordance with their own attitudes and viewpoints.

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### **The Blessed Theoktista Mikhailovna Voronezh Fool for Christ**

**John Phillips**

Among the Voronezh saints there are many who are not known to the world, unnoticed by those who are ever hastening to live, hurry on and die. But in the conscience of the Church one must not forget those sincere benefactors of the people, who lived on earth for the sake of Christ, did good deeds in a Christian manner and after passing away received the power from the Lord to act and pray for those who called on them by name. Of such was the Blessed Theoktista Mikhailovna, to whom we have dedicated this collection of snippets.



The following was told by Father Mitrophan of Paris: "No one knew who she was or whence she came. They said she was the widow of a high-ranking Russian naval officer, who died in the Japanese war, and that after his death she took upon herself the ascetic feat of being a fool for Christ.

She was below average height, slim, emaciated, with well-born facial features. At one and the same time she stayed in Voronezh and Novochoerkassk: in Voronezh she lived in the Alekseev convent, and in Novochoerkassk she was also respected by all. They said that there she was accepted by the Ataman of the Don Army and had many friends.

After the death of her husband Theoktista Mikhailovna became disillusioned about the stability of earthly life. Her heart was preoccupied with her grief. She lived in Voronezh in the convent until the nuns turned her out, and then she took shelter with various people. She did not have a place to lay her head. She had a circle of friends she called on, but then she went to Novochoerkassk. The ataman always had a guard around him, but she always went through freely, everything was open to her, she went right into the bedroom. Not without purpose did she bring consolation to Novochoerkassk, because there were terrible disasters there - an almost complete purge was carried out (arresting, exiling and killing people), because the Cossacks were a great support for the State.

I have known her since my childhood. Once my mother took me to the convent to visit her. Theoktista Mikhailovna herself looked after me and poured out the tea. In Voronezh there was an outstanding pastor, Archpriest Father Mitrophan; he always revered her and received her with great respect. Theoktista Mikhailovna had the gift of intuition, which in her last years appeared with special clarity. The following are examples that I personally experienced.

It was the terrible Soviet era. My father was a priest and I was afraid for him. I did not see him for a long time. After a long period of separation I came on one occasion and was at my father's house at night. I was very glad to see my parents. In the morning Theoktista Mikhailovna sent one of the girls who were serving her, to tell me to leave my father quickly and come to her. I did not want to do this at all, as the times were dangerous and I had come for only a short time. The girl went away and some time later came from Theoktista Mikhailovna with the same request. And so it went on three times, until I went there. I arrived at her house, wondering why the matter was so urgent. She was very calmly sitting by the samovar. She poured tea, served me food and conducted a very calm conversation about the weather and asked about my life and circumstances. I had to humbly submit to this. An hour later mother came weeping. It had happened that as soon as I had obeyed the request and gone to Theoktista Mikhailovna, they came with a search warrant to my father and arrested him. If I had been in the house, they would certainly have taken me away as well. Then Theoktista Mikhailovna took on a quite different appearance and advised me to hurry up and leave the town.

I loved my mother very much. When she passed away, I was living in Tula. My sister informed me by telegram and I suffered a great deal. Although I always had an aversion against strong drink and was never attracted to it, when I learned of the death of my mother, I became so embittered with the inescapable Soviet reality, the daily mockery surrounding me, that out of grief and vexation and indignation I could not stand it, and went and got drunk to such an extent that I hardly got back to the flat where I lived. With Theoktista Mikhailovna there lived a highly educated girl, who devoted her life to her. I wrote to her about mother's death and asked her to pass the message on to Theoktista Mikhailovna. I received a letter from her, in which she said: Theoktista Mikhailovna asks me to tell you that she cannot stand drunkards.

I worked in Orel, was accepted on a job. When they learned that I was the son of a priest, I did not receive any money. For several months the retention of my pay lasted. There was no money. I got very worried as to what would happen. I wrote a letter to the Blessed One. In a couple of days I received a reply: "Theoktista Mikhailovna asked me to tell you that she has made 'an order' to pay you the money". My hope revived, I went to the telephone office to ring the Trust in Orel, to find out what the position was with my pay. I got the reply: "Where are you? We are looking for you to pay you". So dear Theoktista Mikhailovna had given the "order".

Her appearance was special. She wore the largest size of soldier's boots and never laced them up. She deliberately walked through puddles. She had a walking-stick - a stick with a point, just a bough of a tree. She always carried this stick. Nevertheless her noble origin and her aristocratic appearance were obvious. She walked and forcefully swore. But she looked with kindly eyes. On the way she closed the house ventilation panels with her walking-stick. She was tempestuous. She loved me very much, often came to see me. I was once walking in the street with Theoktista Mikhailovna, and coming towards us was a blossoming young lady. Obviously something was revealed to Theoktista Mikhailovna about her, as suddenly without any warning she struck her on the back with all her force. That woman was almost rooted to the spot, but she went on, as she no doubt knew why she had got into trouble.

Her girl attendant said that at night Theoktista Mikhailovna did not sleep, but spent the night in prayer and vigil. When she came on a visit, she gave the impression that she was extracting and killing insects and combed her hair thoroughly. This, of course, called forth condemnation from people. With strangers she began to talk all kinds of nonsense, sometimes mixing in swearwords. As soon as the strangers went away, she began to talk as a wise eldress. She had an exceptional mind, a special precision of expression!

In Voronezh there was a big square; on one side was the Party Regional Committee and the Regional Executive Committee, and there were monuments to Lenin and Stalin. Everywhere uniformed Chekas were standing. Once she went up to those monuments and passed water in front of all the people. A puddle was formed. They took her at once to the Cheka headquarters, but there she soiled the table to a greater extent. They took her and released her as not normal.

She had a friend named Aniska who once fell ill and prepared to die, as no one could help her. Theoktista Mikhailovna came to her. Aniska told her that she was dying. "She is pretending", Theoktista Mikhailovna replied. Going up to her, she took the hand of the woman who was really dying and said: "Aniska, arise!" Aniska at once got up and began to prepare dinner for them, and with that her whole illness came to an end. That was in Voronezh.

A search was carried out in one woman's flat. She had a little money, which she took out of her handbag and hid in the cupboard. They suddenly appeared to make a search. They looked through everything. She silently begged for help: "Theoktista Mikhailovna, save me!" Those carrying out the search came across the handbag and saw nothing. They moved the sideboard, but did not find the money.

Theoktista Mikhailovna was very taciturn in order to push people away and kill pride. Human nature cannot stand exposure and will always try to defend itself, deny guilt, even if this is not true. But the path of the holy fools is a special path, the most direct path to God. She attracted persecution to herself: they made fun of her, hated her and even beat her.

She died in Voronezh. Blood poured from her throat. She died on 21 February (6 March according to the new style civil calendar) 1936 and was buried in the cemetery outside

the city

. . . . .

At our request the nun Kselia (Novikova) from the San Francisco Monastery in honour of the Vladimir icon of the Mother of God sent us the following:

It seems such a long time ago that it is difficult to remember ... the Blessed Theoktista Mikhailovna of Voronezh ... I see her - small in stature, dressed in a long skirt and some unprepossessing coat, something was wound around her head, either some head-scarf or, perhaps, something thick like flannelette. Most of the time she walked along the roadway, someone accompanied her, possibly a nun or novice from the Convent of the Veil, as she lived there among those remaining sisters who had not been driven out, in the long since ruined convent, transformed into a so-called workers estate.

The convent was fee-paying and occupied a large area, on which little houses of varying size were built, divided into two or four cells. Theoktista Mikhailovna lived in one of these cells.

A band of children often accompanied Theoktista Mikhailovna. Sometimes she would stop and, turning to them, would say something. People mostly came to see her from afar, approaching her with some caution. There were families she visited and sometimes stayed with them.

From 1926 when he became Archbishop of Voronezh, Bishop Peter began to live in a small house not far from the Alexeevski monastery. Here Theoktista Mikhailovna regularly visited him (obviously he was a friend of the Blessed One), and in doing so she went straight to his cell and sat on his bed, where she waited for him until the bishop dismissed those who were not regular visitors. The bishop always called her by her

Christian name and patronymic.

I also remember that in the upper Resurrection church of the Alexeevski monastery there were two miraculous icons of the Mother of God: "Life-giving Spring", located on the right and on the left, the "Three-Handed Mother of God". Once all those praying in the church were completely confused by the sight of Theoktista Mikhailovna: she went up on the extension to the icon of the "Three-Handed Mother of God", stood with her back to the icon and began to call out loudly using quite ugly expressions.

After some time thieves climbed up into the vestry, sawed through the iron lattice and stole something valuable. Then the people understood that this manifestation of hers related to those evil acts.

They said that if she gave bread it was for a good purpose. They narrated that once she was drinking tea with one of the sisters in the Devichi Monastery, when she suddenly got up and threw out water from the dish into the yard, and at that time there was a fire in the chimney of someone nearby. Theoktista Mikhailovna in this way "extinguished" the fire with her symbolic action.

She refused to accept a loaf of bread from one pious lady, saying: "You need it yourself, you will survive with it (you will not eat any more than that)", and this also happened.

They say that before her death she dressed completely in white and died somewhere in the Alexeevski monastery.

Voronezh was plunged into the darkness of the renovation church. Only one church, outside the town, was Orthodox. It was not easy to get there - it was a long way off, but spiritual life did not die, thanks to two lamps, the Voronezh saints Theoktista Mikhailovna and Maxim Pavlovich. In the town they had some havens: "white house" and

"red house". The red house was in the centre of town and the white house was on the outskirts.

Theoktista Mikhailovna was very old. The old women of Voronezh could not remember when she was young. They remembered her from when they themselves were younger, and then Theoktista Mikhailovna was already old and loved to take round and distribute loaves of bread to the prisons and hospitals. She moved with frequent tiny steps, accompanied by some girl without fail.

Even before our arrival the local priest, Archpriest Father Mitrophan, assembled a group of girls who watched over Theoktista Mikhailovna. But this group of ours was dispersed, we were partly in the town, partly on farms, but the connection was maintained. Some girls were with Theoktista Mikhailovna. They looked after her very well. She was always cleanly dressed and well wrapped up in a large warm white shawl.

Once at Easter Eugene and I got ready for matins. In order to get to the church, it was necessary to go across the whole town and then go further through a deserted place outside the town. We took Easter cake and eggs, and set out in trepidation. Theoktista Mikhailovna had spent the night with us (she always without fail slept on my bed).

Noticing our hesitation, she said very affectionately to us: "Do not be afraid, you will have escorts", and accompanied us. As soon as we went out of the house, we saw that women were also going to church for matins ... (they also soon closed that last church outside the town. Once people gathered on some major feast day, but there was a lock on the church door. So with that everything came to an end).

Theoktista Mikhailovna often scolded people, and she might even throw at you whatever came into her hand. She could expose people in an extraordinary manner, hitting straight at the mark, almost without words, with gestures and mimicry. But through her

sternness shone a wonderful tenderness. Thus once I met her in the centre of town. I was only about 22 years of age and I had a lot of nonsense in my head. Then she began to blow me up: she tapped the ground with her staff and with such expressive gestures exposed my nonsense that passers-by stopped. I was glued to the spot, blushing and felt she was looking through me - then I ran away.

Another time, later, when I had to stay alone in Voronezh in connection with a protracted change of accommodation, and all my family went away to Kostroma, I was very sad and sorrowful, my mood was often dark. Once in that mood I came for consolation to the house where Theoktista Mikhailovna often stayed. She was just sitting there at the table having dinner. The hostess lay on the couch at the back of the room. Suddenly, before I had time to greet her, I noticed that Theoktista Mikhailovna was aiming a fork at me, with a stern face. The hostess on the couch indicated to me by signs that I had to go away, or it would be worse ... I went out on to the veranda, quite upset. So that is consolation, I thought! I sat in the armchair and at once went to sleep. When I woke up, I did not remember where I was and what was the matter with me, but I felt so bright and light in my heart ... The hostess explained that Theoktista Mikhailovna saw me surrounded by devils and that as a result of her prayer I obtained relief.

Theoktista Mikhailovna also knew how to make you laugh. One night (she was staying with us) a drunken neighbour made a row at the window, and it looked as if the window would come in. The landlord was not at home, the landlady was in no state to order anything. We did not know what to do. Theoktista Mikhailovna was sleeping, but at once woke up and said: "What, did you push your lover under the bed and he is making a row? But he will not do anything, and he will not be here." Then at the window everything came near to breaking point - it seemed terrible and at the same time funny to us.



Finally he calmed down and soon he disappeared somewhere without a trace.

Theoktista Mikhailovna, already being weakened with age, could hardly move her legs, but often walked to Zadonsk accompanied by a girl. For this she chose the most terrible weather, with wind, wet snow and smarting face.

Sometimes she deliberately exposed those accompanying her to various tests. For example, they were strict about identity cards, and she went to the police officer and said: "Officer, this girl does not have an identity card." The girl got frightened, but nothing happened. Or in summer, walking in a meadow, they met a herd of cows and the bull was fierce. She sat down nearby, as though nothing was wrong. They also tell how Theoktista Mikhailovna was often with a family, in which there were many children, but the father had been sent into exile. When she came, she sometimes gave money and sent someone to buy a chicken, asked for it to be cooked and then went away, not staying for dinner. She left the money, and when they tried to give it back, she said that she did not leave it, that the money was not hers.

Theoktista Mikhailovna always wore the right boot on the left foot, and the left boot on the right foot. They said that once Father Mitrophan bought her new boots. She put them on in her usual way and asked for them to be cut, which Father Mitrophan uncomplainingly did. He revered Theoktista Mikhailovna as a truly blessed one in Christ, valued her spiritual wisdom, and was her devoted servant.

## Who is Wise?

*(From the Mahabharata)*

He who by the aid of self-knowledge, exertion, forbearance, and steadiness in virtue does not swerve from the high ends of life, he is called wise. Faith and reverence, adherence to acts worthy of praise, and rejection of what is blameworthy, these again are the marks of a wise man. He whom neither anger nor joy, pride nor false modesty, stupefaction nor vanity can draw away from the high ends of life is considered as wise. He whose... acts become known only after they have been done... whose proposed actions are never obstructed by heat or cold, fear or attachment, prosperity or adversity, is considered wise. He whose judgment, dissociated from desire, followeth both virtue and profit, and who, disregarding pleasure, chooseth such ends as are serviceable in both worlds is considered wise. He that exerts to his utmost, and acts to the best of his powers, disregarding nothing as insignificant, is also called wise.

He that understandeth quickly, listeneth patiently, pursueth his object with judgment and not from desire, and spendeth not his breath on the affairs of others without being asked, is said to possess the foremost mark of wisdom. They that do not strive for objects that are unattainable, that do not grieve for what is lost and gone, that do not suffer their minds to be clouded amid calamities, their intellects are said to be endued with wisdom.

He who, having commenced anything, striveth till it is completed, who never wasteth his time, and who hath his soul under control, is regarded as wise. They that are wise, O bull of the Bharata race, always delight in honest deeds, do what tendeth to their happiness and prosperity, and never sneer at that which is good. He who exulteth not at

honours, and grieveth not at slights, and who remaineth cool and unagitated, like a lake in the course of the Ganges, is reckoned as wise.

He, on the other hand, who is ignorant of Scripture yet vain, poor yet proud, and who resorteth to unfair means for the acquisition of his objects, is a fool. He who, forsaking his own affairs, concerneth himself with the affairs of others, and who practiseth deceitful means for serving his friends, is called a fool. He who wisheth for those things that should not be desired, and forsaketh those that may legitimately be longed for, and who beareth malice towards those that are powerful, is regarded as a foolish soul..., O bull of the Bharata race, he who divulgeth his projects, doubteth in all things, and spendeth a long time in doing what requireth a short time, is a fool...

When a bowman shooteth an arrow, he may or may not succeed in slaying even a single person, but when an intelligent individual applieth his intelligence viciously, it may destroy an entire kingdom with the king...

There is but one defect in persons who forgive: that people take a forgiving person to be weak. That defect, however, should not be given any consideration, for forgiveness is a great power. Forgiveness is a virtue of the weak, and an ornament of the strong.

Forgiveness subdueth all in this world; what is there that forgiveness cannot achieve?

What can a wicked person do unto him who carrieth the sabre of forgiveness in his hand?

Fire falling on a grassless ground is extinguished of itself. An unforgiving individual defileth himself with many enormities. Righteousness is the one highest good, and forgiveness is the one supreme peace; knowledge is the one supreme contentment; and benevolence one sole happiness.

Reprinted from [Message of the East](#)

## The Philosophy of Ernst Mach (1838-1916 ) (continued)

### Hans Heimer

Mach's last book was entitled 'Erkenntnis und Irrtum: Skizzen zur Psychologie der Forschung' (Realization and Error; Sketches on the Psychology of Science). The book was first published in 1905, reaching its 5th edition in 1926. It is a summary of Mach's philosophical views, based both on extracts from some of his previous publications and on his lectures as professor of the philosophy of science at the University of Vienna. In that capacity Mach became the first professor of epistemology (the theory of knowledge) in a German-speaking university. The style of the book represents the style of the lectures very accurately, which at the time captivated the intelligentsia of Vienna. The lectures were not dry but full of interesting and personal anecdotes of the experiences of Mach and his children, of Mach's immense learning and the relevant views of his contemporaries in the fields of physics, psychology, physiology and philosophy. Mach strongly believed that scientists had a responsibility to present their findings and ideas to the general public; so in addition to his university lectures, he gave a series of popular scientific lectures which were also published. As a reflection of the emphasis he orally gave to certain key concepts in his lectures, these concepts are printed in italics in his book, though unfortunately not in the English translation. These italicised terms also serve as in-context definitions, and the same policy has been adopted in this article.

## The influences of our childhood

Mach gave a great deal of attention to the processes in childhood, from infancy to adulthood, whereby we develop our views of ourselves and of the world, our self-world view. He did this because of the influences of his own childhood (discussed in the previous article\*) and because of the great difficulty in overcoming the erroneous concepts of mind-matter duality and the notion of an independent self, which we unconsciously pick up from our culture. Mach had five children and carefully observed and noted the developments of their concepts and behaviour. Here are some extracts from his writings:

"The simplest questions and remarks of my children, proved to be amongst the most inspirational which I had experienced. My eldest boy at the age of 4, asked me where the light goes when the candle is extinguished and the light is no longer in the room. I have quoted some of these questions in my *The Analysis of Sensations*, when they appeared instructive and their motivation deserved investigation. By having contact with children whose adult knowledge has not yet been awakened by school learning, the researcher into cognition can gain a lot. My little daughter, two years old when she first came into the countryside, remarked: "We are in a blue ball, the world is a blue ball!" When there was a wind-free snowfall viewed through a window, she thought of herself and the house as moving upwards. There is no need to emphasize to the specialist, how instructive is the start of children's language learning." (*Annals of Science* 35 (1978), p134)

"If we observe how a child in the first stages of independence examines the sensitivity of his own limbs, how he is surprised by his mirror image or by his shadow in sunlight, and

tries out how they behave by making bodily movements, how he practises hitting a target, we are driven to conclude that man has an innate tendency towards experiment, and that without much looking about, he finds within himself the basic experimental method of variation. If the adult temporarily loses these treasures, so that he must discover them afresh, the explanation is that his social upbringing narrows the circle of his interest and confines him to it, while at the same time he acquires a large number of ready opinions, not to say prejudices, that he supposes not to be in need of examination". (*Erkenntnis und Irrtum*, p183)

### **Realisation of the elements leads to a new self-world view**

The reception given to the novel algebraic way Mach presented his views in his book *The Analysis of Sensations* (discussed in the previous article), caused him to use an alternative format in his last book. Mach used three key concepts to explain his philosophy, they are: (i) the limited I, (ii) the unlimited I, and (iii) BB, which is a symbol for Bodily Boundary, the spatial boundary of our body, the interface as it were, between what we consider internal space and the external space of the world.

Every one of us, as we grow up to adulthood and start to think about ourselves and the world, inherits from our culture a self-world view, to which we have not contributed, but imbibed it, as it were, from the learning of language, the influences of our surroundings and our experiences. We find ourselves in space, surrounded by inert and living, stationary and moving objects. Our own body is one of these objects, perceived with the same senses as all other objects. However because of the location of the sensory organs, our own body gives rise in us to different viewpoints and sensations than when we perceive other human bodies. Also we have learned the ability to effect changes in our body, which we cannot effect in other human bodies. These different sensations and volitional abilities cause us to define and distinguish 'my body' from those

of other human beings, those we classify as 'their bodies'. As adults we have long since forgotten the experiences which started in infancy, which led us to these conclusions. By mental analogy, we indirectly attribute similar sensations and abilities as ours to other bodies.

We believe that the majority of our sensations come to us from external to Bodily Boundary, but some, such as feelings of pain, hunger or fullness, are sourced internal to BB. In addition to sensations, we directly experience memories, anticipations, fears, joys, desires, aversions and volitions; these for the sake of brevity we can call 'our thoughts'. In the same manner as sensations, we indirectly, by mental analogy, attribute similar thoughts in other human bodies.

Conventionally we describe as physical all the sensorily directly experienced objects. Conventionally we describe as mental all directly experienced thoughts, which of course includes our analogically attributed sensations and thoughts to other human beings. The limited I is defined by Mach, as the totality of directly experienced thoughts and sensations internal to BB. This limited I is intimately tied to BB, with the concepts of my independent body and my independent mind.

Now all my physical sensations can be examined, analysed and broken down into elements which at the present time (when the book was written at the beginning of the 20th century) permit no further break-down. These elements are colours, sounds, pressures, warmths, smells, tastes, feelings etc. These elements are dependent on circumstances both inside BB and outside BB.

Furthermore, investigation into what we have summarised as thoughts, reveals that they are the outcome of the experience of sensations; they are the result of growth from the infant to the adult, as part of the process of human maturation, including the

development of the limited I, which does not exist initially at conception or birth. It is therefore permissible to say that the same elements which are the basis of our physical sensations, are also the basis of our mental thoughts. In addition, insofar as we ascribe indirectly and therefore mentally, physical sensations to other living beings, and they ascribe the same to us, we can say that the distinction or duality between physical and mental is merely one of a different viewpoint and not fundamental. The fundamental and unbridgeable duality of mind and matter, taught by Rene Descartes and which is the basis of materialist philosophy, is therefore incorrect and constricting to our self-world view.

From the foregoing considerations, Mach concludes that the totality of our directly and indirectly felt physical and mental experiences is the unlimited I, consisting of our sensations and thoughts, including our body and the external world, the inside and outside of BB. To the limited I, Mach has added those of our sensations which we believe to be sourced from external to BB. This unlimited I concept shows therefore the total interdependence of the limited I and the world; the centre of the I has moved from BB to the source of awareness or consciousness, which manifests itself in the elements of sensations and thoughts as the contents of consciousness. BB and what is believed to be internal and external to BB, are all manifestations or forms of consciousness.

In the book, Mach examines many of the aspects of this self-world view and expresses the hope that it will bring science and philosophy closer together, for the benefit of mankind. Mach emphasises that at the practical level, the limited I has an essential function and that both I concepts have a role to play in our lives.

### **Philosophical perspectives**

Although Mach said that he was not concerned about giving a name to his philosophy, he



did describe himself as a Monist. Indeed two chapters of *Erkenntnis und Irrtum* had previously been published in 1902 and 1903 in the American philosophical magazine *The Monist*. He was opposed to the Cartesian irreconcilable division into mind and matter. He viewed all, including ourselves as founded on one Nature, which meant that the aforementioned division was simply a convenient aspect of scientific investigation. He considered that the elements, the various sensations and thoughts, combining to form complexes, (of which the I was one very important one), was the furthest the science of his time had penetrated the detailed examination of Nature. He expressed the hope that as science developed, a greater understanding would come about of the relationship between all these different aspects. He rejected the view that there was an external power outside Nature that was in control, believing that whatever power was acting, was immanent in Nature. He rejected the view of an independent external world from which we can stand aside and which exists independently of the elements; but rather that both we and the external world are made of elements and complexes.

Mach's definition of the unlimited I removes the duality of the observer and the observed. His definition of BB as a concept, is intensely valuable as an investigative tool to go beyond the limited I or conventional self-view. If we look at a part of our body, say our hand, we can only perceive it as a coloured shape against a coloured background. Both the view of the hand and its background is of coloured surfaces. Neither the shape nor the background can exist independently of the other, so it is purely conventional to label the hand as I and the background as not-I. The same applies to the whole of our visible body. The sense of touch can be viewed similarly, our skin surface and the object it touches are totally interdependent; neither can exist without the other. Furthermore, if we say I is the body or is inside the body, where does BB start ? Does it start in the lips, or the windpipe, or the oesophagus ? Surely all these are completely interrelated with the external air and space? When food is eaten, does it become I in the mouth or

the stomach? Again, is what we call mind inside the head in the brain? Surely it is quite clear that thoughts are not spatially limited, that by definition space and its contents are concepts; therefore mind contains space, contains the body and the brain, not vice versa!

The Indian philosophy of Non-Dualism (Sanskrit; Advaita Vedanta) is a much more ancient form of Monism than Mach's philosophy. To a considerable extent the two philosophies are in agreement, but Non-Dualism goes further by saying that what we call Nature, including ourselves, is a manifestation of an eternal power called Brahman, which creates, sustains and dissolves all Nature. This power is immanent in Nature, and when viewed as immanent in ourselves is called Atman, the real Self. Mach's limited I is named in Non-Dualism as the individual (Sanskrit: Jiva). Mach's unlimited I is confined to the waking state; Non-Dualism includes the sleeping states of dreaming and non-dreaming and therefore transcends all states. Mach himself mentions this transcendence as areas for fruitful future investigation by science, thereby potentially including it in his philosophy.

In conclusion it must be pointed out that we do not know whether Mach inwardly went beyond the limits of his publicly proclaimed philosophy. He was on the defensive from the attacks of his detractors and may have felt that to go too far in his public expressions would have only caused more dissension, which as an invalid, was beyond his ability to deal with.

## Leaves of an Ashrama: 4

### The Law of Karma as Punisher and Rewarder

#### Swami Vidyatmananda

Sri Ramakrishna said, "Wrongdoing, like mercury, cannot be kept hidden. If you use, even in the greatest secrecy, a medicine compounded with mercury, you may be sure that one day or another a skin rash will appear. Likewise, if you do something wrong, rest assured that sooner or later you will suffer the consequences."

This is a statement concerning the operation of the law of karma, although it sounds a bit like the fire-and-brimstone preaching of an earlier epoch, when evangelists thundered, "Be sure your sins will find you out." Nowadays this sort of viewpoint is generally rejected in favour of a modern morality in which it is appearance only which counts. Truth is what appears to be true, or at least plausible, and consequently can be manufactured. Packaging and presentation make a product, slant and angle make the news, and what is called his image, carefully fashioned and steadily nurtured, makes the public man.

Believing in the law of karma, the Vedantist will not be fooled by any of this. He knows that all accounts must be balanced one day, even if several lifetimes are required in which to do it. Hence the fascination of the events, known as Watergate2, which took place several years ago in the American capital. How astonishing it was, the complex scenario playing itself out so relentlessly, furnishing new revelations with every passing day! It was as though the Director of Things had decided for once to play out in the open, to put on a demonstration of how the law of karma works, with causes and results clearly visible, with very little time lag between act and consequence. In a matter of months, as though purposely arranged by an unrelenting Nemesis, the attacker found

himself attacked, the spy spied upon, the denouncer denounced. That new armament, the sophisticated eavesdropping contrivance, so useful in today's style of warfare, was seen to turn upon its master. With wonder and appreciation one found oneself updating Jesus's saying to read: "Those who live by the electronic device will die by the electronic device."

It is rarely that the public has been treated to such a clear and immediate display of the working of the law of karma. Perhaps a few individuals will profit from it. Those in positions of influence throughout the world may for a time read a lesson in such a conspicuous exhibition of crimes and punishments. Devotees will see in these events a confirmation of their faith. They will be wary and reassured: wary of those acts which will give as consequence a telltale rash; reassured, that worthy behaviour and thought, on the other hand, must surely produce their desirable result.

## **Religion and Life (continued)**

**Swami Bhuteshananda**

*Maharaj, how should we follow the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna in our lives?*

If you can love a human being, you can love God too. You must superimpose on God your

love for the world. It's like playing with dolls. Children buy dolls for a few pennies; and these dolls become their children, parents, and so on. Suppose the dolls break, they weep for a long time. It has so happened, rarely though, that children indeed have died by the sorrow of separation from their dear 'children'. Similarly if we can superimpose on God our love for the world, we can attain God. When Sri Ramakrishna prayed, it wasn't superimposition but actuality. He would say, for example, 'Can you love God in this way?' So saying, he would fall on the ground and rub his face on the earth and weep like a helpless child. Seeing this everyone would be stunned. Holy company and the study of holy scriptures are imperative needs for spiritual progress. Just sitting with eyes closed for a few moments will not help: you will only see darkness there.

*Sri Ramakrishna said that we should practise at least one part. What did he mean?*

Sri Ramakrishna said that he had done sixteen parts (a rupee in those days comprised 16 annas). He wanted us to do at least one part. Can you do all that Sri Ramakrishna or Holy Mother did? You cannot. But you may try to follow one or two ideas. Do you know what it is like? When the mother bird teaches flying to her chicks, she teaches step by step. The little chick jumps once, jumps again, and thus it learns to fly. Even so we should practise, and progress gradually.

Swami Vivekananda was singing before Ramakrishna once: 'Call on Him always...' Sri Ramakrishna said, of course out of fun: 'You fool. Do not say what you do not practise. Instead, say "Call on Him twice a day."' You must struggle. In the midst of all your work you must remember God. Sri Ramakrishna said: 'One can meditate with eyes open. One can meditate even while talking. Take the case of a man with toothache... even when his teeth ache he does all his duties, but his mind is on the pain. Likewise one can meditate with eyes open and while talking to others as well.' (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p.605). So when attraction for God increases, the mind naturally goes to

God always. The mother is engaged in her household work but her mind is fixed on her child. In the midst of her work she repeatedly peeps in to see what her child is doing. In the kirtan, the poet puts these words into Radha's mouth: 'Your Shyam is only a verbal jugglery for you; but for me He is a pain within my heart.' When there is pain within the heart, the mind will be engrossed in Him alone. We must strive for that.

*By saying that we must renounce 'kamini and kancana, woman and gold', did not Sri Ramakrishna belittle women?*

You see, Sri Ramakrishna never belittled anyone. He saw Rati's mother, that fallen woman, as the manifestation of the Divine Mother. To him, never, never was anyone low or to be despised. Hearing his words, others became alert and conscious that there is divinity in everyone. Sri Ramakrishna saw a drunkard and there was an awakening of the bliss of Brahman in him. There is the idea of difference in the human mind, but in spite of that one should keep one's vision pure.

*Why is the word kalpataru not mentioned quite often in Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master?*

Whatever you wish you will get from the *kalpataru*, the wish-fulfilling tree. But not always are our desires in the right direction. As spiritual aspirants, we should be firm about what we desire. In the well-known song, it's said: 'God, the philosopher's stone, is the greatest treasure; He can give you whatever you wish.' The author of *The Great Master* therefore did not like the idea of kalpataru much. He has instead preferred the phrase '*abhaya-dane atmaprakas*, manifesting Himself in order to bestow the boon of fearlessness.'

*Sri Ramakrishna says that everyone will be liberated - some soon, some later. Do we*

*have any hope, Maharaj?*

We should have faith that it's true in our case also. One day or other we shall be liberated, to be sure. Where will everything go during pralaya? If we accept the words of the Puranas, we must know that we shall all go back to Him.

*When Narendra expresses doubt about Sri Ramakrishna's visions, the latter approaches the Divine Mother. Was Sri Ramakrishna doubting his own visions then?*

You see, Sri Ramakrishna would have so many visions. But Narendra would remark that they were all owing to delirium. Sri Ramakrishna asked the Divine Mother if he was really suffering from delusions. Mother said, 'What does Narendra know?' Sri Ramakrishna then told Naren, 'You fool!' Sri Ramakrishna was very simple and had deep faith in Narendra, so he referred Naren's doubt to the Divine Mother. the doubt was not his, you must remember. He was like a simple child and so referred others' doubts to the Divine Mother.

*Sri Ramakrishna says that we should be like a cast-off leaf before a wind. Elsewhere he asks us to unfurl our sails. Why two different types of instructions?*

You 'unfurl you sail' during your sadhana. But you become like a cast-off leaf before a gale when you depend on Him completely. This dependence on Him comes after experiencing His grace. We must first of all unfurl our sails, and then think of becoming like cast-off leaves.

*Who is an atmarama?*

He who does not need any outer instrument to enjoy supreme bliss is called atmarama.

He revels in the bliss of his Atman.

*Maharaj, what is mukti?*

*Mukti* means liberation from bondage. The bird is imprisoned in a cage. If it is let out, it becomes free. We are imprisoned in the cage of maya. If let out of this imprisonment, we become free. A cow tied to a stump with a rope becomes free if the rope is released. It is not that you do not desire liberation. You all want it, but the intensity is lacking. That is the main problem.

It is not wrong if you love your child. But the problem comes when you say 'he or she is mine.' My own mother once told me, 'My love is selfless.' I replied, 'Not fully, but quite selfless.' I asked her, 'Do you love other people's children just as you love me?' She replied with a smile, 'Not fully; but quite.'

*To the disciple the guru is none other than God himself. So if we love the guru it is as good as loving the Lord. Isn't it?*

In human beings there is both human nature and divine nature. If you consider only the divine aspect, there will be no attachment; On the other hand, considering only the human aspect will result in attachment. Let not attachments grow. The relation between the guru and the disciple is never one of attachment. It is a spiritual relationship.

*The Divine Mother is present in all forms. But why do we wish to see Her in her blissful, benevolent posture only?*

Yes, we superimpose our feelings on the form. In the Durgasaptasati, there are two verses. In one there is mention of the terrible form of the Mother, while in the other, it



is the gentle form. This is the speciality of the Divine Mother.

All are afraid of the tiger. But the cub is not afraid of its mother. He who does not have fear is not afraid of any form of the Mother. We see different forms of the Divine Mother according to our feelings and temperaments. The tigress tenderly cares for her cub and the cub looks upon her as a loving mother. But for others, she is a terrible beast. When I was at Kankurgachi, some kittens lived under my cot for a few days. When they saw me, they would hide, but if their mother came and called, they would instantly come out. The mother-cat would just make a gurgling sound, and the little ones would run to her. Someone showed me lions on television. The lioness is seen playing with her children; she caresses them, cajoles them, feeds them and teases them. The cubs are not afraid of their mother, but the rest of the world is. So it's like that.

*Which form of Holy Mother should we meditate on?*

Whatever we feel drawn to; the word 'Mother' brings love and solace to our mind. The loving mother, the all-suffering mother, the all-forgiving mother is Holy Mother. We must meditate on her thus.

*During his terminal illness, Turiyanandaji said that he suffered because he did not do Sri Ramakrishna's work. But he did such a lot of tapasya and sadhana all his life. Were they not Sri Ramakrishna's work? What did he mean by his statement?*

By 'Sri Ramakrishna's work' he meant Swamiji's work; that is to say, the work which Swami Vivekananda had initiated. Turiyanandaji did not do all that Swamiji wanted him to. He was contemplative by nature and did not have the urge to work. He went to the United States at Swamiji's command and stayed at the Shanti Ashrama there for some time. There too he led a life of intense austerities. Swami Vivekananda's ideal is: do this as well as that. You must not confine yourself to japa and meditation. At the same time,

you must not restrict yourself only to work. As an ideal, both need to be harmonized.

*Are you impressed by any particular teaching of Mahapurush Maharaj (Swami Shivanandaji)?*

There are many teachings and we must understand them with reference to the context. I remember an incident. One day, while walking on the Math courtyard in an indrawn mood, he suddenly stood still. Just then a monk came and saluted him by touching his feet. Unfortunately, at that very moment Mahapurush Maharaj also started walking. So he tripped and fell, hurting his hand. He scolded the monk. I was with Mahapurush Maharaj then, along with his attendant. Later, when he returned to his room, he said: 'Ah! I scolded that monk. But how will he know what was my state then? My eyes were open, but I did not see anything.' Hearing his words, I was stunned. Is there a state when the eyes are open but you don't see anything? I was greatly impressed by that statement.

*Please tell us something about Swami Trigunatitanandaji Maharaj?*

Regarding Trigunatitanandaji you have read in the books. I too came to know about him from books. What new thing can I say about him? I have heard that he could eat a lot if he so desired. But at the same time he could also fast for days at a stretch. One day, Trigunatitanandaji was going somewhere on foot. One the way, he felt hungry. He went to a hotel. He told the owner of the hotel that he ate a little more than others, and wanted to know how much it would cost him. The hotelier said courteously: 'Eat however much you like, Swamiji; you don't have to pay extra.' Now, Trigunatitanandaji began to gulp down instantly whatever was given to him. The hotelier was surprised! At last, he said, 'Eat however much you want, whatever you want. You don't have to pay anything at all. I shall think I have done some *sadhu-seva*.'

When Trigunatitanandaji was Udbodhan House, he would eat in the morning but didn't at

night. He would spend his nights without meals, by managing with two-pice-worth of puffed rice. This continued for days at a stretch. Swami Premanandaji knew about this. One morning, Trigunatitanan-daji went to Belur Math. That day, halua had been prepared. Both Premanandaji and Trigunatitanandaji began conversing, and Premanandaji went on serving more and more halua to Trigunatitanandaji. Gradually, the entire vessel containing the sweet became empty!

*Is someone who has no faith in himself an atheist?*

Swami Vivekananda says that, generally, not many have faith in themselves. How many do you find with faith in themselves? Technically, one who does not believe in the Vedas is an atheist and one who believes in the Vedas is a believer.

*How to have faith in oneself?*

We should follow this stream of thought: 'I can achieve everything; I can do it,' etc. We should not give up just because we have failed a few times.

*Because of numerous obstacles, the mind becomes restless. What shall I do?* Everything belongs to Him. Your house, wealth, family, job, relatives and friends, everything belongs to Him alone. Think thus deeply. Your mind will then remain unperturbed under all circumstances.

*Will my mental power increase by performing japa?*

By performing japa, gradually your dependence on God will grow. That will bring courage and confidence.

*Does the guru himself fix our ista or chosen Deity? Is it he who gives us strength?*

In a way, yes. You see, the real guru is not outside you. He is always inside, giving you

strength. To believe or not is up to you, but it is the inner guru who provides you with strength. While you meditate, do you think of your guru as sitting in a playground? No, you don't. You think he is within. Because the field is not ready, we don't understand it even when the guru gives us strength.

*Compiled by Smt Manju Nandi Mazumdar Due acknowledgments to Prabuddha Bharata*

## **Discrimination**

### **Swami Dayatmananda**

#### **Self-expansion**

The next logical step in the practice of discrimination is self-expansion. An integrated personality has become a fit instrument; his body and mind are finely tuned and ready to move towards his goal, and the goal is realization of the Self. From now on he has to move both upward and outward. Through prayer, meditation, worship etc he moves inward and upward. Through selfless service, harmony and right relationship with the world he moves outward. Here comes the need for self-expansion.

What is self-expansion? It is to discover the truth that the world we live in is in reality God. Everything in what we call the 'world' is connected and related. No man is an island; we live, move and have our being in a world of relationships; we are all strands

of a huge web, part of one single living, conscious organism. This organism is God.

Because of our ignorance we do not see God, we see Him as the world and the One as many. Swami Vivekananda used to say that this world is a reading of God through our minds. Self-expansion is to discover this truth and modify our conduct accordingly. In other words what we see in front of us is a reflection of our own Self, *Brahman*. This truth is expressed in the Upanishadic dictum, *sarvam khalvidam brahma*, i.e., All this that is seen is Brahman.

It is said that spiritual progress takes place in three stages. In the first stage called dualism everything is perceived as separate and totally unrelated. In the second stage of qualified non-dualism all things are perceived as parts of the whole which is God. In the final stage, the many and the One are perceived as the obverse and reverse of the same coin.

When we study the lives of mystics we get a glimpse of the way they see the world.

Sri Ramakrishna once said: "I began to perceive God in all beings. Formal worship dropped away. You see that bel-tree. I used to go there to pluck its leaves. One day, as I plucked a leaf, a bit of the bark came off. I found the tree full of Consciousness. I felt grieved because I had hurt the tree. One day I tried to pluck some durva grass, but I found I couldn't do it very well. Then I forced myself to pluck it.

"I cannot cut a lemon. The other day I managed to cut one only with great difficulty; I chanted the name of Kali and cut the fruit as they slaughter an animal before the Goddess.

"One day I was about to gather some flowers. They were everywhere on the trees. At once I had a vision of Virat; it appeared that His worship was just over. The flowers

looked like a bouquet placed on the head of the Deity. I could not pluck them."

We can observe the same experience in the life of St Francis. For him the whole of creation is alive with God; the sun, the moon, the stars, the birds, plants and animals - all are brothers and sisters.

Here is a poem by Swami Vivekananda:

From highest Brahman to the yonder worm,

And to the very minutest atom,

Everywhere is the same God, the All-Love;

Friend, offer mind, soul, body, at their feet.

These are His manifold forms before thee,

Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?

Who loves all beings without distinction,

He indeed is worshipping best his God.

Why do we not perceive God in this world. Because of 'ignorance', says Vedanta. It is not enough to pray and meditate. We must also slowly be able to see the God we perceive in the depths of our heart in the outer world.

Part of the process of discrimination is to find this God peeping through this visible universe. How does one do that? How does one get rid of this ignorance?

This process takes place in three stages. The first stage is purification of our body and mind. The second stage is to perform duties appropriate to our station in life. A proper

discharge of our duties (called Dharma in Vedanta) has the twofold result of conferring merit and purifying the heart of evil impressions. But merit only confers happiness in this world, it does not lead us to God. This is why aspiration to heaven is not commended in our scriptures.

The next stage is selfless service called Karma Yoga. Karma Yoga is serving the world looking upon it as a manifestation of God; it is to serve with love and reverence. In Karma Yoga every work is transformed into an act of worship. Needless to say only advanced spiritual aspirants can perform Karma Yoga. Swami Vivekananda says: "That man will have seen the real motive of doing good to others, because there is only one; it cannot be called egoistic, because that would be differentiation. It is the only selflessness. It is the perception of the universal, not of the individual. Every case of love and sympathy is an assertion of this universal. 'Not I, but Thou.' Help another because you are in him and he is in you - is the philosophical way of putting it. The real Vedantist alone will give up his life for a man without any compunction, because he knows he will not die. As long as there is even an insect left in this world, he is living; as long as one mouth eats, he eats. So he goes on doing good to others, and is never hindered by the modern ideas of caring for the body."

There are two ways of performing Karma Yoga in a detached manner. The first method is described by Swami Vivekananda as work for work's sake. "I am only the witness, unaffected, untouched. All work is done only for work's sake, not out of any other consideration or hope."

The second method is suited to those with a devotional temperament. Here all actions are done for pleasing God. The results of all actions are offered to God. In fact the devotee feels that every work is God's work; that he is only an instrument of God carrying out His orders.

In his lectures on Karma Yoga, Swami Vivekananda says that both these methods help

