

# Vedanta

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396 JULY - AUGUST 2017

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**Aging and Evolution**

*Swami Vidyatmananda*

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**Basava the founder of Veerashaivism**

Prof. K. S. Srikantan, M.A.

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## Divine Wisdom

### Spiritual Talks By Swami Premananda

*(Swami Premananda, one of the foremost disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, was in charge of the Belur Monastery. The Swami was a very attractive personality and seemed almost to exhale purity and love.)*

After the noonday meal, he began to speak enthusiastically of Sri Ramakrishna to the assembled monks and devotees.

Swami: "Seeing that the Master liked lemon much, Swami Yogananda used to bring him a lemon every day. One day the Master said to him, 'Wherefrom did you get the lemon yesterday? I could not take it.' Yogin knew that the Master could not take things brought from evil and impure persons. But he had brought the lemon from the same plant from which he had brought the other lemons.

Why was it, then, that the Master could not take it? Yogin felt much perturbed and began to look out for the cause. After a careful enquiry he came to know that the orchard from which he used to bring the fruits had changed hands on the day previous to the incident-the lease had expired. He received permission to get the fruits from the former lessee. On that particular day, therefore, that permission did not hold, and it was really a theft, though unconscious.

"The Master could see the very mind of the donor in the things given him. He could not take any food which was contaminated by the least sin. How wonderful was his purity! He could not tolerate the touch and approach of any impurity. Therefore, if you want to realize him, you must make your heart absolutely pure. All the passions will have to be conquered. Whoever will come here must become an ideal man. Meditate deeply on one of the many aspects of Sri Ramakrishna, understand its true significance, and try to reflect the same aspect in your life.

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## Editorial

# Worship of the Divine Mother -11

(Continued from the last issue)

In our last editorial we discussed the process known as Bhuta Shuddhi or a process whereby the worshipper purifies his inner personality in order to be fit to worship the Deity and meditate on Him in his heart. If done correctly the aspirant feels he acquired a new pure spiritual body.

### Pranayama.

Pranayama is breath control having many benefits. Practised correctly Pranayama helps calm the mind, improves concentration, and aids deep thinking. It also purifies blood, regulates metabolism, reduces stress, strengthens will-power, and improves the autonomic and other functions of the body. The most important benefit, of course, is mind-control. Revered Yatiswaranandaji used to advise devotees to practise simple pranayama for a few minutes before meditation.

### Nyasa

The next ritual is Nyasa. This is the technique of consecrating the body to the chosen deity. This ritual helps us purify and offer our body-mind to the divine. In this ritual, the worshipper touches various parts of his body with appropriate mantras and identifies all these parts now with the body of his chosen deity.

Thus the aspirant feels intensely that his body belongs to God. He thus cultivates the consciousness that all his actions belong only to God. The worshipper gradually feels: "I am verily the God whom I worship."

### Guru-puja or worship of one's spiritual teacher

In Hinduism Guru is considered as the human representative of God on earth. He is equated with God or God only comes to guide us in the form of the Guru. Hence he is to be meditated upon as follows (as dictated by the *Mahanirvana Tantra*):

“I meditate on my spiritual Teacher seated on the thousand-petalled white lotus in the Sahasrara chakra, clad in white robes, with a serene look on his benign face, ready to bestow the light of knowledge”.

The Guru-power, in the form of a seed (*Bija Mantra*) permeates the mind of the disciple and saves him. Surrender to the Guru signifies true dedication of body and mind to follow his instructions and realize God. So it is said *Guru, Mantra and Ishta* are one and the same.

### Guru Pranam or salutations to Guru

In order to facilitate spiritual progress, the worshipper needs to remember his spiritual lineage and salute his Guru, his Guru's Guru, and his Guru etc. This salutation ultimately leads us to God; for it is God who is the first and only Guru, who through the descending lineage of discipleship comes to us as our own Guru; this also reminds devotees of their spiritual lineage.

### Gayatri Upasana

Then follows the adoration of the goddess Gayatri through the japa of Gayatri mantra. It is an invocation of the sun-god. This is the Mantra.

*Om bhur-bhuvah-suvah tat-savitur varenyam bhargo devasya  
dhimahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat*

“Om, we meditate on the Spiritual Effulgence of that Adorable Supreme Divine Reality, the Source of the three worlds. May that Supreme Divine Being stimulate our intelligence so that we may realize the Supreme Truth.”

### Dhyana or Meditation on one's chosen deity

The form of the chosen deity is now imagined inside the lotus of one's heart. The mind is trained to concentrate on the form of God and made to flow continuously without a break. This ritual gives exercise to all the faculties of the mind, intellect, emotion, will, and imagination etc.

All the four Yogas are involved in this exercise. The intellect gets exercise in seeing God as the inner core of oneself indicating Jnana Yoga. Concentrating the mind and meditating on Soul or Atman is Raja Yoga. Imagining God for the purpose of cultivating love and devotion towards

Him is Bhakti Yoga. Worship and service of Him is an exercise in the service of God in man and hence represents the essence of Karma Yoga. This meditation is helped by certain mantras called meditational mantras. These give a description of the Deity to be worshipped, especially that special form which is dear to the devotee.

### Dhyana or meditation

In this ritual the worshipper takes a flower and meditates on the form of his chosen deity. There are special mantras called Dhyana mantras or verses describing the forms and qualities of various deities. The worshipper must choose the mantras appropriate to his chosen deity. “*One gradually becomes what one meditates upon*” is the philosophy of meditation.

Here is a small example of meditational verse on Sri Ramakrishna:

*Shining in the lotus of the heart,  
Beyond all changes real and unreal;  
One and compact, untouched by prakriti or her evolutes;  
the eternal image of Bliss,  
The spotless Swan Supreme,  
Ramakrishna we adore.*

After the meditation is over the worshipper places the flower on the head, thinking that the effulgent form of the chosen Deity is sitting on the lotus of his heart and accepting his devoted worship.

### Manasika puja or mental worship

Here comes the most important part of the entire worship called manasika puja or mental worship. The scriptures say outward worship is inferior and is only the stepping stone to mental worship.

Mental worship is important because any one can mentally worship God at any place, time and under all circumstances; well or ill, while travelling, at any time or place, while sitting, standing, waiting — no external constraints apply. Formal worship is costly, requires time, energy, ingredients, a clean place, etc. But in mental worship there are no conditions. Hence anyone can do this worship to his/her heart's content!

In mental worship all the offerings are made mentally. For the beginners the offerings consist of all the usual offerings of external Puja which are imagined and offered mentally to the image in the heart. But to an advanced devotee the offerings consist of *moral and spiritual virtues* to be cultivated.

### Process

Placing a beautiful flower on his head the worshipper offers water, seat, flowers, cloth, and food etc., all the items normally offered in the external worship. In mental worship one can offer the very best to his beloved Lord, one's imagination alone is the limit! There are beautiful and symbolic Sanskrit verses guiding us how one could adore one's beloved.

The lotus of the heart should be offered as the seat of the Deity. The nectar that flows from the thousand-petalled lotus should be offered for washing the feet. The mind is a noble offering. The principle of ether should be offered as clothing and that of smell as sandal paste.

The heart should be offered as flower, the life breath as incense, the principle of fire as light, the ocean of nectar as food offerings, and the principle of sound as the bell and that of the air as the fan, the actions of the sense organs as also the vagaries of the mind as delightful dance.

*(Notice how the flowers are compared to spiritual virtues (Yama & Niyama) one needs to cultivate if one wishes to progress in spiritual life!)*

Flowers of various species, fragrant and beautiful should be offered to please one's beloved. The absence of deceit, egotism, desire, haughtiness, delusion, vanity, hate, excitement, jealousy and avarice— these are the ten flowers loved by the Lord.

Non-violence is the best flower; control of the senses is another. Then there are the flowers of compassion, forgiveness and knowledge. One should worship one's beloved with these fifteen flowers consisting of the highest spiritual qualities.

After the mental worship is over begins the external worship. We will deal with this in our next editorial.

(To be continued)

## Aging and Evolution

Swami Vidyatmananda

**N**one of us likes the idea of aging. We view the passing years with alarm. We see the changes that come despite anything we can do: the tendency to walk up flights of stairs we used to run up, the need to rest after the midday meal, an increasing dislike to participate in active pastimes.

Ours is a moment in history when youth is honoured above all else. There are organizations which ban those over twenty-one as too aged to qualify as members. Employment opportunities decline radically for those approaching thirty-five. Recently one of our young devotees at the Centre Vedantique Ramakrichna at Gretz (France) replied with real anguish, when I congratulated him on his birthday, 'I don't want to be old.' He had just turned twenty.

We tend to feel today, as we reach forty or fifty, completely out of things—disgraced, humiliated, almost good for nothing. And the increasing numbers of retired people sixty or sixty-five and older are regarded as a major problem by society.

These oldsters do not know what to do with themselves, either. They are a problem to themselves. The celebrated French moralist and writer of maxims, La Rochefoucauld, said: 'Oldsters are fond of giving good advice in order to console themselves for not *being in a condition to furnish bad examples.*' Mme Simone de Beauvoir's latest book concerns the subject of aging. Its English edition is titled *The Coming of Age*. Mme de Beauvoir finds that aging is nothing but a slow process of deterioration, with very little to compensate for the decline in physical and mental vigour. A picture of unalloyed gloom.

It certainly appears that God made a mistake in creating the world as he did. The drama is written the wrong way around, with all the dull passages at the end instead of at the beginning, and the climax at the beginning instead of at the end where, according to the canons of good composition, it ought to be. It would be much better to have been old first and gotten that phase over with, and young later when we know how to enjoy the remarkable blessings of youth. 'Youth', said George Bernard Shaw, *is a wonderful thing. What a crime to waste it on children!*

But things have been designed in this awkward manner, and there is no getting around it. It is therefore prudent to seek a means of adapting ourselves to the design as it exists. This applies to those who are aging, who have a need for consolation, a *raison d'être* for the condition in which they find themselves. It applies equally to the young, since in spite of anything they can do—their disdain of their elders and their hard judgements of them—they are sure to find themselves in the same situation one day, having to deal with the problem of growing old.

Let us then try to see whether there is some advantage to be gained from growing old, some evolutionary benefit to be derived from aging.

Various formulas are offered to help us cope with this problem. From standing on our head to eating naturalist foods, from doing positive thinking to imbibing massive doses of carrot juice, from having our face lifted to submitting to injections of hormones—remedies are offered supposedly capable of preserving our youth or bringing rejuvenation. Or we are told simply to ignore the passing years; you are as young as you feel. But the true state of affairs cannot really be disguised. We look with shame and pity upon those who follow this advice —oldsters trying to act like

youngsters. Hilarity on the part of what the Americans call our senior citizens (in an effort to avoid at all costs using the term 'old persons') is not very hilarious.

But we who have faith have to believe that the Maker of the universe has built a purpose into His design. The process of aging, difficult as it is to accept, must have been introduced to serve some end. I venture to say that the object of the phenomenon of aging is to remind us undeniably and constantly of our limitedness, our mortality, and to launch us on the process of being reduced, of being broken, of becoming dispassionate. Such dispassion, all the saints and sages have told us, is the condition necessary before the ultimate solution .to the human condition can be found.

The British writer, Gerald Heard, once contributed an article to the review *Vedanta and the West* entitled '*Is Old Age Worth While?*'<sup>1</sup> What he said is that the declining years are useful to us because the physical processes slow down, giving the mental processes a better opportunity to function undistracted by drives and emotions. Being less active, one is more contemplative. And with increased contemplation there comes a certain quiet joy, a certain inner harmony. '*Old age*', said Heard, '*is worthwhile because those who know how to use it rightly can thus profit from it in becoming sage, wise, at peace with themselves, all passion spent*'.

But surely there is nothing automatic about this, no guarantee that it will work out in this way. Plato remarked in *The Republic* that '*Solon was under a delusion when he said that a man when he grows old may learn many things, for he can no more learn much than he can run much*.' Youth is the time for any extraordinary toil. We have all of us encountered far more old persons dissatisfied than sage. Frustration is far more common among the old than is peace of mind.

For most people the answer to Gerald Heard's question is negative. No, in these terms, old age is surely not worthwhile.

Here, then, is where Vedanta's emphasis on the falsity of the individual ego comes to our aid and furnishes a useful point of view for contemplating the phenomenon of our decline. Vedanta insists that my belief in my separate existence is a lie. This illusion of separate individuality is the surest evidence of the deluding power of Maya. Shankara says:

*Man is in bondage because he mistakes what is non-Atman for his real Self. This is caused by ignorance. Hence follows the misery of birth and death. Through ignorance, man identifies the Atman with the body, taking the perishable for the real. Therefore he nourishes this body, and anoints it, and guards it carefully. He becomes enmeshed in the things of the senses like a caterpillar in the threads of its cocoon.<sup>2</sup>*

The rhythm of the universe—its rises and declines—should disabuse us of this delusion. The purpose of aging is to force us to see God's pattern—if we are intelligent enough to accept it in that way.

In youth ego is very strong. '*I am all,*' is its motto. There is a blind confidence, an utter self-assurance, a perfect selfishness that to older people is simply astonishing. One remembers the story of the American humourist Mark Twain who recounted that when he was twenty he found his father terribly ignorant; however, by the time Twain had reached forty he was amazed to see how much his father had learned in the meantime.

Or as Oscar Wilde said, '*Children start out by loving their parents; when they are grown up they judge them; sometimes they pardon them.*' '*I can do anything, I can have anything, no one can best me*'—this is what the ignorant ego says. And it follows this thought, and it does do and it does get. It does prevail for a time. All is swept away

before the magic power of youth, before what Shakespeare called blissful ignorance.

I suspect that this is really why business firms today tend more and more to hire younger and younger people. It is not simply a question of physical force or attractiveness. To believe in the nonsense that many firms fabricate and peddle, a good supply of blissful ignorance is mandatory. The disillusionment of the older worker keeps him from toiling ardently enough.

Then troubles begin. Slowly the blissful ignorance is shattered. Difficulties in the family, difficulties of a professional nature. Health problems, money problems, problems with the wife or husband, problems with the children; problems with one's own mind and will and nerve. One begins to falter. One senses the competition of others, particularly those who are younger. One tries to hold on, to tighten one's grip, to stem the tide. And suddenly one is old and frustrated. How could it have happened? Life has passed one by, and one is now nothing but just one more unhappy oldster. When it is too late to do anything about it, one discovers that the so-called world-denying view has much to recommend it. As generally led, life is a swindle.

Maya promises much and delivers little. Maya is a cheat which not only furnishes shoddy merchandise, but has the effrontery to charge exorbitant prices for the stuff.

Vedanta's point of view is what one may call enlightened dispassion. This is meant to keep this from happening. And as such it is a very pragmatic position. Renunciation, instead of being a painful sacrifice, becomes a behavioural pattern working ultimately to one's advantage. One perceives that the law of the universe is set to reduce us. One accepts this fact and co-operates with the law. Oh, it is not easy. All one's instincts are averse. Vedantists are often

accused of being irrational idealists. On the contrary, I see them as being the most astute realists. They know that, as usually played, life is a game in which no one can be winner.

Of course the Vedantist usually does his austerities as spiritual practice, to make himself pleasing to God. But he need not. He may take the very rational position of *neti, neti* (not this, not this),<sup>3</sup> denying all appearance, holding out for nothing less than the changeless.

But we must not begin this process without being aware of its hazards. Whether we are householder devotees or monastic members, the same curious law applies. Once begun, there is no turning back. The Promethean bid is taken seriously. One's audacity in daring to try to become de-hypnotized is registered in heaven. A magic circle is thrown around one, so to say, outside of which one can never again step. The Indian calls it being bit by a cobra. *'You have been bitten by the cobra and you must surely die.'*

As I open myself up to this process of reduction, I begin to see, first of all, *that other people are better than I had thought they were*, and I myself am less estimable than I had all along believed myself to be.

We are normally so concentrated on proving how able we are that we have no chance to see the good in others. *'Look at me,'* each cries. *'See what I have done. Appreciate me. Praise me.'* And since everybody is similarly engaged, no one sees anything. Having lived for a long time in Hollywood, I have often heard actors talking to each other. It is really amusing. Each is engaged in recounting to the other his latest success on the screen. Of course, these are not conversations, for each is deaf while the other speaks. It is two monologues going on at the same time. Only he who is talking is listening—to himself.

Certainly we cannot appreciate others when we are completely occupied in appreciating ourselves. And our relations with others will never be anything but commercial. However we may consider it naive, the method of Dale Carnegie contained a basic truth.

This author of the phenomenally best-selling book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* insisted on a very fundamental formula: '*Be interested in other people; learn to be sincerely interested in other people. To do this will win their confidence and affection, and you will benefit thereby.*' This may be a mechanical process and at base self-seeking. Nevertheless it proves the basic truth of what I am saying. Don't speak. Listen. It is amazing what one hears. It is amazing how interesting and admirable and heroic one finds other people to be.

John Updike is a modern American writer. One of his best books is *The Centaur*, about a high school teacher named George Caldwell. We see him through the eyes of his teen-age son: a droll, clumsy man for whom everything seems to go wrong. We are convinced that Caldwell is a fool. Only as we reach the end of the book does the revelation come that in George Caldwell we are dealing with a genuine hero, who is simply so modest that he does not assert himself as other people do, and consequently is consistently underrated.

After the death of Swami Madhavananda, ninth President of the Ramakrishna Mission, one of the younger Swamis of the Order wrote an appreciation of the late President entitled '*A Gentleman Passes Away*'. At first this title seemed inappropriate to me, because we do not associate sadhus with questions of social standing or good breeding. But as I read the article I could see what the author was trying to convey: the modesty, the good manners, the

consideration that Swami Madhavananda habitually manifested toward others.

Here was this Swami, one of the most senior monks of our Order, with a distinguished career as editor, author and administrator. He had every right to assert himself, to command. Yet he never did this. He acted as servant of all; he opened himself up to the needs of everyone. As one who asked much of him I can testify that this is true. As President, Swami Madhavananda was obliged to initiate on the average of ten to fifteen people a day, day in and day out. Although his health was poor at this time, he never treated his duty as chief guru in any mechanical way. He insisted on talking personally at least briefly with all candidates for initiation, listening sympathetically to the accounts of the joys and sorrows of their lives.

Swami Madhavananda's supreme act of consideration occurred at the time of his fatal illness in 1965. He had fallen sick at the Durga Puja time, the three-day autumnal festival in Bengal which is traditionally a period of light-heartedness and rejoicing. The Swami was in the hospital in a critical condition. He knew that his death would upset the festivities at Belur Math and inconvenience many people. Somehow he held off death by the force of his will till the moment when the celebration was over. When the news was brought to him that the worship had been terminated, he smiled and in a few minutes passed away.

That is to say, as we co-operate with this tendency of life to reduce us, to break us, we become modest. Thank God that this is so. We find our joy in the joys of others, our success in the success of others; and finding sorrow in the sorrows of others, we become genuinely sympathetic and compassionate.

An expression often repeated is the following : *'To understand is to forgive.'* I would change that and say, *'To understand is to admire.'* Then life becomes full of juice for us, rich to the extent that we are able to live in others. Someone we always thought unsympathetic proves to be wonderfully attracting. Mr. X reveals astonishing gifts we never knew he had. Mme Y, known as a holy terror, is seen to be what she really is, an insecure and frightened person, only trying to establish her worth, and seen in that light, very, very lovable.

Jean-Pierre Camus was the bishop of Belley in France, and a biographer of the famous spiritual director, St. Francis de Sales. Camus reported a conversation which he had with de Sales. *'Mon Pere,*<sup>4</sup> he said one day, *'how is it possible for those who are themselves high in office to practice the virtue of obedience?'*

Francis de Sales replied, *'They have greater and more excellent ways of doing so than their inferiors.'*

As Camus did not comprehend the other's meaning, de Sales went on: *'Those who are bound by obedience are usually subject to one superior only. But those who are themselves superiors have a wider field for obedience. For if they bear in mind that it is God who has placed them over other men, and gives them the rule that they have, they will exercise it out of obedience to God, and thus, even while commanding, they will obey. There is a yet higher point of obedience to which all superiors may aspire, even that to which St. Paul alludes, when he says, "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all." It is by such universal obedience to everyone that we become "all things to all men"; and serving everyone for our Lord's sake, we esteem all to be our superiors.'*

*'In accordance with this rule: concluded Camus, 'I have often observed how Francis de Sales treated everyone, even the most insignificant persons who approached him, as though he were the inferior, never repulsing anyone, never refusing to enter into conversation, to speak or*

to listen, never betraying the slightest sign of weariness, impatience, or annoyance, however importune or ill-timed the interruption. To those who asked him why he thus wasted his time, his constant reply was : "It is God's will; it is what he requires of me. What more need I ask? While I am doing this, I am not required to do anything else. God's holy will is the centre from which all we do must radiate; all else is mere weariness and excitement." ' "

Indeed, secondly, I would even go so far as to say that as we open ourselves up to life's effort to break us down, *we become willing to accept humiliation*. We see that to absorb the frustrations, resentments, and hurts of others harms us not at all and perhaps renders them a service.

Stated in less extreme terms, I would say that as we age we learn that on the whole an attitude of acceptance is preferable to an attitude of opposition.

I recently read a book about China entitled *The Chinese Looking Glass*, written by an American reporter named Denis Bloodworth. He has lived in China for many years and is married to a Chinese woman. So I think we may have confidence in what he says. I was struck by the following passage : The occidental sees the universe as not made to his liking, and he busies himself continually in trying to remould it to his taste. The Chinese accepts the universe as it is and tries to change himself so as to get along with it comfortably as it is.

Whether this is a good attitude to follow in dealing with material things or not, I cannot say. But I do believe it is the right policy to adopt in dealing with others, and as we become less assertive we learn the wisdom of this approach.

There is at Gretz a new station which we refer to as the *poubelle* factory. 'Poubelle' is French for 'garbage'. It is a long sort of

construction with an entrance for trucks at one end and an opening at the other end where the finished product comes out. Trucks go about the village of Gretz accepting every sort of worthless stuff—the useless and the broken and the dirty. They back up to the entrance of this factory and thrust in their load. Certain processes occur, and after a time out the other end comes compost—beneficial and useful for fertilizing the garden. This little factory furnishes a leaflet prepared by a biochemical laboratory showing the beneficial qualities of the compost. We have used tons of material from the poubelle factory to soften and enrich the soil of our vegetable garden and the beds of roses in front of the house.

In the *Bhagavata Purana* one reads about the *Avadhuta* who had, as we know, twenty-four gurus. That is to say, he took examples for the better conduct of his life from the actions of birds, beasts, nature and man, who acted in some particularly sage manner. I think we could add as a twenty-fifth guru the Gretz poubelle factory! What better example than this—to accept all the disagreeable stuff the world is trying to get rid of, and remake it into something worthwhile.

As we grow older we see that making and keeping the peace is more useful than getting one's own way. We have had our way so often before, and how did that benefit us, really? It just isolated others. And so we accept slights of every kind, lack of consideration on the part of our neighbour, points of view quite disagreeable, the anger and resentments and thoughtlessness of people. To do this is as much of a service as the operation of the poubelle factory. Somehow we ingest it and turn it out as reconciliation and peace.

Thirdly, as we open up ourselves to this process of reduction, as we co-operate with life's effort to break us down, *we see that no one is indispensable.*

I often think that religious organizations were conceived by God only to teach that truth to their members. In joining a religious organization, whether as a devotee or as a monastic, we naturally feel that we have something to contribute toward its success, and we try our best to make that contribution. We will make it efficient where it was not efficient before; we will develop and carry out certain needed programmes. We will support the organization with our work or our money. What we are really trying to do, often enough, is to express our ego, to get things under our control, to become important. The Lord will even let us succeed for a time, because in a certain measure the Lord uses His followers' ignorance to get certain gross aspects of His work done.

But this can go on only up to a point. The magic is implacable. Our name has been written in the hospital's register—as Sri Ramakrishna used to say—and the patient cannot be released until he has been cured; he cannot run away before the operation has been performed. The moment the idea enters our head that we are indispensable, the Lord will send along someone more gifted than we are, to upset us, to make us miserable, to make us jealous, and eventually to break our hold. Either we shall be forced to leave, or we shall be forced to submit. The reducing process we have subscribed to cannot be circumvented. One of our monks has the habit of saying that the real purpose of joining a religious organization is to find out that our membership in that organization is of no particular use to it.

In recent years there was an incident in a certain monastic order which illustrates my point. A certain monk, extremely capable and efficient, and at heart very good, had risen to the position of leadership in the order and was generally regarded as destined to hold a very high place in the future. He held a strong opinion on a certain subject, which he began to foster with all his might.

Convinced that he was right, he argued with passion and attempted to build up organized support for his point of view. The ruling body loved this monk and recognized his capacities. Maybe his position was even right, but as a holy man he was not acting rightly. He had become deluded. The very thing he had joined the order to get rid of—the certainty of his right to prevail—was exactly what he was manifesting. So the council members relieved this monk of his work, sending him to live in a remote hermitage.

He was there for many years, in a position of relatively minor importance. Everything went on quite well without him. Other monks got their chance to try their hands at things, and like him to have an opportunity to participate in this terrible schooling. But the monk learned his lesson. He is once again in a key position in the order. But how different he is now. Having learned that he is not indispensable, he can now be trusted to do the Lord's work well. Everyone knows the story of his so-called disgrace and loves him for what he suffered, how he changed, and for what he has become.

And this is the fourth point that I wish to make, that *God does his own work*. He does not need me at all. Work in a religious organization carries with it a very real danger. It is so easy to become deluded. It would seem that with ends so noble, surely the means must be ennobled also. But we know very well how this idea has worked out throughout the ages. The horrors of the Inquisition give the lie to this claim. The wickedness of the wars of religion—which continue even to this day—show what can happen when conscientious but unbroken people delegate themselves to working for so-called noble ends.

As we co-operate with life's design to break us down, the heat and the fury of our activity diminish. Less identification, less anxiety; less anxiety, more fun. Ramakrishna spoke of the onlooker

as seeing the play more clearly and enjoying it more than any player. The onlooker is not personally involved. As spectator only, he is free to enjoy the total prospect and the fun.

Sri Ramakrishna became acquainted with a number of people whose scholarship or wealth entitled them everywhere to respect. One of these was Krishnadas Pal, editor, social reformer, and patriot.

Of Krishnadas Pal, Sri Ramakrishna said: *'Krishnadas Pal came here. I found him full of Rajas. After a little conversation I discovered that he had no stuff inside. I asked him about man's duty. He said, "To do good to the world." I said: "My dear Sir, who are you? What good will you do to the world? Is the world such a small thing that you can help it? I know what you mean by helping. To feed a number of persons, to treat them when they are sick, to construct a road or dig a well. God alone looks after the world. Let a man first realize Him. Let a man get the authority from God and be endowed with His power; then, and then alone, may he think of doing good to others.'*

The secret is that only when we see that God does His own work can we begin to work well. Because—what has our attitude become? One of thankfulness to Him that He gives me the privilege of feeling that I am doing something for Him. *'Let the giver bow down to the receiver and give thanks,'* said Swami Vivekananda, *'for it is the existence of the receiver that permits the giver to practise devotion.'*

In the truest sense, work thus becomes adoration. We work well then because there is no idea of accomplishing, of helping, or even doing good. God in His kindness lets me adore Him with this inadequate worship. There is no danger to anyone when work is done in that way.

The Spanish Jesuit, Baltasar Gracian, advised: *'It is best to leave things before things leave you.'* This is what I have tried to say in these reflections, although not in quite so brutal a fashion. We cannot

triumph over the disagreeable fact of aging. Then why not turn our decline into a benefit? Co-operate with aging which, like an exacting teacher, will force and cajole us into doing what it is to our own best interest to do. In acting thus we are fostering our own evolution.

Sri Ramakrishna put it in a very psychological way : 'In his last birth a man is endowed with Sattva. His mind is directed to God. He longs for God. He withdraws his mind from worldly things.'<sup>5</sup>

We pass from the ignorance of Tamas through the activity of Rajas to the dispassion of Sattva. These three stages make up the course of man's evolution. Seeing and heeding the implications of aging develop Sattva in us. As we co-operate with life's effort to break us down we develop, among other Sattvic attributes, an understanding that others are more estimable than we thought; a willingness to accept humiliation; a realization that we are not indispensable; and a comprehension that God does His own work.

The calamity we were prepared to weep over we have refashioned into a handsome benefit.

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## Basava the founder of Veerashaivism

Prof. K. S. Srikantan, M.A.

Life on earth is far happier than life in heaven, said Basava when a secure place in heaven was offered to him by the gods. Basava is, perhaps, the only prophet in the entire gamut of world history who had the courage to prefer earthly troubles to heavenly ease. To Basava this world was the testing house of the Creator. "Whoever passed here, passed there.

*"He who did not pass here could not pass there."*

Thus, his attitude towards earthly existence was intensely human and realistic. He did not refuse to live—on the other hand, he demonstrated the 'liveableness of life'.

To have come after so many prophets about eight centuries ago was itself a great disadvantage, for apparently there was nothing that the other prophets had not said which Basava could say and thus carve out a place for himself in the galaxy of prophets. However, it was the peculiar glory of Basava to have included in his teachings all that was best in the messages of his predecessors and to have anticipated the ideas of many a modern thinker. His message appeals to the modern mind so intensely and applies to modern conditions so vividly that one is almost tempted to forget the wide gulf of eight centuries that yawns between the age of Basava and the modern age. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that the message of Basava is like a reservoir into which all previous thoughts flowed in and all later thoughts flowed out.

Kind like Buddha, simple like Mahavira, gentle like Jesus, and bold like Mohammed, Basava strikes us almost as a wonder of creation; but what attracts us to him are those teachings of him in which he anticipated the greatest of modern thinkers—Karl Marx and Mahatma Gandhi.

The early life of Basava, like the early lives of all prophets, is shrouded in mystery. According to Basava Purana, Basava was the son

of Madiraja and his wife Madalambika, both belonging to the Brahmin caste and residing at Bagewadi, identified with the town of that name in the present Bijapur District. To recompense the piety of this couple and to resuscitate the decaying faith in Shiva, Nandi, the bull of Shiva, we are told, was born on earth as their son at the command of Shiva.

Whether one believes in this legend or not, no one can deny the fact that Basava struck his parents and his relatives as a boy of extraordinary intelligence. He was not even eight when he raised his standard of revolt against the established traditions and rituals. He refused to wear the sacred thread, considered so necessary for a Brahmin even to-day, saying that for a true devotee such external symbols were unnecessary. Like Buddha, he left his home in search of happiness. After wandering aimlessly for some time, he settled down in the holy shrine of Sangameshwara at the confluence of the Krishna and Malapahari. In the beautiful and picturesque surroundings of that holy place, he spent his time in divine joy and learnt his lessons of freedom at the very feet of Nature.

To Basava, Nature was pervaded by a divine spirit and was the vesture of the Supreme Being. *"If Nature flirts",* says he, *"with the soul and lures it to the false path, it is only for a short time, and that too with the idea of giving greater strength and energy in its onward march, Nature is appointed as a material instrument of the soul's salvation."*

Basava was essentially a man of action and had a positive aversion to mere scholarship and book learning. Says he, *"Real faith and service are greater than mere learning; service of God is the only thing worthwhile. Life in the world is of real value, as it fits us for a higher life."*

Again, *"Shall I say, the Shastra is great? It praises ritual. Shall I say, the Veda is great? It preaches the taking of life. Shall I say that law is great? It is still searching. You are not in any of these, my God, and are not to be seen except in the threefold service of Your servants."* He was, in short, a realist among idealists and an idealist among realists.

It is no wonder, therefore, that when the call came, he came out of his self-imposed seclusion and agreed to serve as the Prime Minister of the then ruling emperor Bijjala of the Kalachurya, Dynasty. Biographers of Basava unfortunately have not given us an adequate account of his career as a Prime Minister. In fact, Basava has every claim to be included among the best finance ministers of the world. So long as he was Prime Minister, his thoughts were entirely on the poor and he did his best to make the people feel that the State was primarily theirs.

He abolished almost all those taxes, imposed on the poor people, and imposed several new taxes on the idle rich. He anticipated those principles of taxation, which made many a financier famous in the nineteenth century. It is no wonder that Basava did so for he was not a believer in private property. To him wealth was for the welfare of humanity and nobody had any right to live more decently than his sisters and brothers. One may acquire wealth by the sweat of his brow, but he must not hoard it up. He must utilize it in the service of humanity.

Says he, *"Give unto the servants of God that which you possess. The house of the man who makes parade and worships and says he is worshipping continuously, is like the house of the public woman."*

Again, *"Endurance in whatever happens is discipline; not to conceal what one possesses is discipline; to do without erring is discipline; to speak without uttering falsehood is discipline; when the servants of our God Kudala Sangama come, to give them what one hath as to the owners, that is the discipline of disciplines."*

Like Karl Marx, he hated the capitalists; he saw no justification for interest. In his own words: *"The wealth you earn give to God's servants and lend not at interest. If it comes back, well; if it does not, doubly well. Whether it is there or it is here, it is employed in service of God. That which is God's goes to God and there is no thought of its having come to you nor pain for its going. Therefore, oh my God, except to Your servants, money should not be lent out."*

His own salary he distributed among his followers: *"If of my gold a single streak or of my clothing a single thread I want for to-day and*

to-morrow, I sin before You and Your ancient servants; except for the use of Your servants I desire nothing, my God."

Sometimes Basava was generous to a fault. A follower of his, we are told, kept a mistress, who having heard of the magnificence of the attire of Basava's wife, desired it for herself. Hearing of this, Basava directed his wife to strip herself of it and give it to his follower's mistress. When some cows were removed from his house by the thieves, he directed his servants to take the calves and hand them over to the thieves wherever they might be.

During his short regime as minister, he put an end to corruption among officers completely and made every subordinate feel that he had also a soul not in any way inferior to those of his superiors. Like Karl Marx, again, he was a believer in the supreme value of labour. To do one's work and thus serve humanity was far more important than to aspire for heaven.

What strikes us most in the teachings of Basava is the fact that he always spoke with his feet on earth. He never believed in attracting people by creating illusions. He did not ignore the problem of bread. On the other hand, he realized the dignity of labour and raised it to the rank of religious worship.

Among his followers were men who followed the meanest of professions. One of them was Nuliya Chandayya who earned his livelihood by making ropes; Madara Channayya was a tanner by profession; still another was Medara Ketayya who lived by making and selling baskets. Moliga Marayya was a dealer in fuel.

Basava did not stop with making them his followers—but promoted matrimonial alliances between men and women of high and low castes; in short, he did things which people are afraid of doing even to-day. He sowed the seeds of a social revolution through which we are still passing. He did not like those who would employ others to do things, which they could do for themselves.

Says he, *"Is it right to get done by another the duty to one's wife, or the feeding of one's body? A man should perform the worship of his God himself. How can he get it done by another? They do for show, they do not know You, my God Kudala Sangama."*

Basava's ministry was short-lived. He was himself more anxious to improve society than to overhaul the administrative machinery. Society at the time of Basava was caste-ridden and required a good deal of overhauling. People were clamouring for a living and human religion—a religion of the heart and not of the head. Basaveshwara, who was the embodiment of this new spirit, gave such a strong and dynamic impetus to this new movement that ere long he was able to bring about a renaissance. He breathed new life into the chaos of human heart and brought it to symmetry and order. He infused an undying hope in the minds of the lowly and the downtrodden by scoffing at the idea that God-consciousness could be achieved only by the chosen few. He proclaimed that the gates of Heaven were open to all irrespective of caste and creed, provided one had the will and necessary discipline to achieve Godhead.

Under his banner rallied thousands and thousands of men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified by the eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to courage by their sympathy for the poor, the fallen, and the downtrodden. These noble heroes of the new order went over the length and breadth of the land preaching his gospel of divine love. Society discovered its soul and surrendered itself to its spontaneity as this new message and the consequent awakening spread to all strata of society. The old order brooked all this as it felt itself helpless against the surging wave of awakened consciousness.

He insisted upon his followers to have an unquestioning faith in God.

Says he: *"Dull of wit, I see not the way. Lead me as they lead the born-blind by staff placed in the hand. Oh God Kudala Sangama, teach me to trust, teach me to love the way of Your true servants."* Again, *"When I have*

*said that this body is Yours, I have no other body; when I have said that this mind is Yours, I have no other mind; when I have said that my wealth is Yours, there is no other wealth for me. If I have known that all these three possessions of mine are Yours, what further thought need I to take, O God Kudala Sangama?"*

In short, there is no greater exponent of the cult of Bhakti than Basava. To him Bhakti or real devotion to the Lord was more powerful than the Lord Himself.

Says he: *"Thine illusion surroundeth the creation. But my mind surroundeth Thee. Thou art stronger than all the worlds, but I am stronger than Thee. Even as an elephant is contained in a mirror, so art Thou contained in me, my Lord! Hearken Ye, unto me: there are but two words resounding in the universe. Sayeth the Lord to the devotee, 'I shall conquer thee'. The devotee draweth and flourisheth the sharp sword of truth and marcheth victorious."*

Basava considered human body as the living temple of the Lord to be kept pure and undefiled. To him a truly moral, disciplined, and orderly life was the first step in the realization of God. His compassion for all beings was unbounded. He asks: *"Is it a religion that knoweth not compassion? Kindness should there be in all alike. Kindness is the root of all righteousness. Lord Kudala Sangamadeva has naught of aught else."*

He vehemently condemned animal sacrifice perpetrated in the name of religion. He pathetically addressed thus the poor animal brought to the altar:

*"Weep, weep, thou innocent goat,  
Weep unceasingly that they would kill thee;  
Weep before those learned in the Vedas,  
Weep before those knowing the Shastras,  
Thine wail shall be heard by the Lord and  
He will do the needful."*

To him true worship meant service to humanity. He scorns those doing ostentatious worship without bestowing any thought on the poor

and the needy: "What a folly thou shouldst worship the image inside the house when the Lord is at your very doors with all His insignia!"

He is amused at the incongruous ways of men who profess one thing and practice quite the opposite.

*'Pour milk', they say, seeing a lifeless snake of stone,*

*'Kill, kill', they cry, when they behold a live snake.*

*'Go away' they cry hoarse when the hungry being prayeth for food,*

*'Take food', they beseech the image that hungereth not.*

Courtesy and sweetness are virtues indispensable to those who strive for salvation.

In fact, he goes so far as to say:

*"He is a devotee who folds his hands to another devotee. Sweet words are equal to all the holy prayers. Sweet words are equal to all the penances. Good behaviour is what pleases the God of eternal good. Kudala Sangama will have naught of aught else."*

Like other prophets, he was never weary of telling people about the importance of practicing the virtue of truth. *"To speak truth",* says he *"is the world of the gods. To speak untruth is the world of the mortals. Next only in importance to this is purity of heart."*

Like Buddha, he maintained that the value of service depended upon the motive with which it was done. Says Basava, *"You may put an iron ring around a pumpkin, it gets no strength from it; it rots all the same. God Kudala Sangama, if a man whose mind is not reformed is given the baptism of Your servants, how will he get devotion?"*

Thus to Basava, man is the architect of his own fortune. His salvation is in his own hands.

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# The Bhakti Yoga of Saint Therese

By Marcel Sauton

[Mon. Sauton is closely associated with the work of the Ramakrishna-Vedanta Society in France. We are indebted to Swami Siddheswarananda for the translation from the original French.—Ed.]

"May the Divine Master be pleased that this immense liberality he has shown towards this miserable sinner be of some utility to those who will read me, give them force and the courage to renounce all, through LOVE of HIM".

**S**aint Therese of Jesus, the illustrious saint of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, is known universally. The legend that has grown around her does not always represent her in a proper light. To study and estimate her, one should go back to the narration the saint herself has given, at the age of fifty, under the order of her own confessor. That account of herself is a book full of noble counsels, and information; there the saint recounts to us her life from childhood down to the time she attained perfection.

There we can see her painful struggles, we can analyse the methods she employed to surmount them and we can appreciate their values. The saint is not a professional author. Her work is not a book of imaginations. It is a narrative of observations, the history of inner experiences. She writes in haste, in a manner concealed, amidst the numerous responsibilities and preoccupations of life,—very often by night. To understand these and the proper state of her soul we must turn to the account, given by the saint herself. She wrote under inspiration. Everything passed before her eyes as if they were models. She had only to copy them; her pen ran on the paper with unimaginable speed.

She did not even re-read her writings. Yet Spain does not consider her less than her best writers.

She admits to have painfully seen her Own portraiture through these narrations, for she brings here what she calls "*her innumerable disloyalties.*" She suffered much more in describing the '*graces*' she received from the Lord.

They that love spiritual things cannot but be interested in reading this unbelievable adventure—the history of a young nun who heard also the call from the 'Unknown'—in that age of discoveries. Alone and without experiences she wanted to cross her ocean. Her voyage took more than twenty

years. She must have faced many a danger—but she surmounted all the storms and tempests, thanks to her power of will and her heroism. She at last arrived at the haven of realisation.

The message of Saint Therese can be understood in different ways. She had a rich treasure and one can draw from it according to one's own preferences. May this short sketch of her life stimulate the reader to search for the real source, the text, the saint herself has left behind. We have followed her own narration and we have attempted to reconstruct the frame-work of her life, studying it in relation to her race, her country and the period she lived in. By this means we can understand the influences she came under and also the complete transformation of her character—the end and aim of a true spiritual quest. Saint Therese has been, in fact, in perpetual conflict with her environment, nay she was in rebellion against it.

Those amongst us who are familiar with oriental thought and mysticism may see how a Spanish saint of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, by realising in an eminent manner the true Christian ideal, arrived at the same conception as that of the Vedanta. For, Saint Therese employed the experimental method. In arriving at Truth her method was an inner research through meditation. She prayed to the Lord in silence. She discovered in herself the eternal truths.

### The Life of Saint Therese

She was born in Avila on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, 1515. Her parents belonged to the old nobility of Spain. Her father, widowed early in life, remarried. Born of the second connection, she had altogether three sisters and eight or nine brothers.

Her youth was passed in the town of Avila, the capital of the province of the same name, which formed part of the old Castille. The Spanish towns kept up the feudal character of the middle ages. Commonly, the towns were built on some elevation, with walls and fortifications surrounding them. They had the appearance of real fortresses, the roads being narrow and tortuous. The buildings had one or two stories. The houses of the nobility were decorated with one balcony of cast iron or sculptured stone. The strong wooden doors were equipped with locks and nails. Each home was a sort of fortress where one received one's relations or very intimate friends. Ladies usually remained indoors. Each town had a number of churches, chapels, convents and monasteries. Avila was, in fact, an eagle's nest that dominated the arid country that surrounded it.

The influence of territory plays an important part in moulding life, consequently the Spanish character has changed very little, in spite of invasions and the mixing of the races. The Spaniard without ceasing to be a man of the world held on to a code of honour that anterior generations transmitted to him; this he obeys, whatever may be his social standing. His vitality is exceptional; and after all, the individual remains loyal to a certain ideal that gives to his existence a profound significance. From this comes the high relief of character—that curious mixture of idealism and realism, the eternal dialogue of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. From this also is derived the wealth of the Spanish genius, its natural gestures and its dignified bearing.

Let us add to the above description that a sterile intellectualism is contrary to the spirit of the country. One cannot distinguish, in fact, an idea from an act. Once the Spaniard admits a principle, his work is its natural sequence. Personal interest is never the dominating factor. The individual gets his inner strength from elevated sentiments: honour, generosity, fidelity, and heroism.

In the midst of outbursts of temper he conserves his taste for logic; he remains sensible to certain practical considerations and will be the first to laugh at himself.

Spain at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century had chased the Arabs out of the kingdom of Granada; she had expelled the Jews from her territory and she had just discovered America. The Spanish domination attained its climax in Europe under Charles V and Phillip II. That was also the moment of the great colonial expansion. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Inquisition was again powerful. Turquemada died only in 1498. This was the century of authority for the spiritual powers as well as for the temporal, for both employed fear and violence.

In narrating the account of the early years of her life, the saint gives us only very few details. We do not find here the usual memoirs of childhood. She was interested in reading some books that seemed to have exercised a great influence on her. The books that absorbed her attention were those concerning chivalry and those that treated about the lives of Catholic saints. These studies influenced her to such an extent that she decided to run away with one of her brothers from her paternal home to fight the Arabs and become a martyr. This flight did not proceed further than the walls of the town. The

idea of a hell reserved to the wicked tormented her very much. She repeated for a long time the two words that terrified her--"*for ever.*"

In her twelfth year she lost her mother. The suffering she experienced made her take shelter under the Mother of Christ the protection that she just lost. Her father sent her to a convent of the Augustine Sisters for her education. She was admitted there in 1531 at the age of sixteen. In the beginning it appeared as if she showed a marked aversion for the religious life. According to contemporary opinion, she was a young girl, gay, playful, amiable, obliging and desirous to please. She loved fine attire and perfumes.

After a grave illness, she returned to the home of her father and from there went to the house of a married sister who lived in an adjacent locality. On the way she stopped in the house of her uncle who asked her to read out to him aloud at night some of the religious books. It is then that the negation of all values of this life—the vanities of the world and the brevity of human life—commenced to appear before her. The suffering and pain of this world appeared to her less than those of purgatory. This inner conflict remained for three months.

After that period she opened herself to her father, telling him of her spiritual intentions; her father asked her to wait till his death. Nothing made her retrace her steps. Her determination was made. Once more she went away from her paternal home. She entered the Convent of Incarnation and submitted herself to an inner torture. Before everything else, she placed the good of her soul. All other things were of no account. She was 21 years old. In the following year she took her vows. Saint Therese suffered bad health; all her life she experienced physical pain. She suffered so much during the early period of her novitiate. She was almost deprived of her senses. She was sent to a well-known town to take a cure. On the way she passed the home of the uncle about whom we have already spoken. He gave her one book treating about meditation, "*The Third Abicidaire.*" She admits that she did not know how to meditate. But she had already the taste for solitude and for inner examination. She took the book as a guide; but she had to wait for twenty years to find a spiritual master who could really understand her.

The treatment she followed only contributed to aggravate her condition and her father brought her back to Avila. She then remembered the words of Job, "Since we have received the '*goods*' of the Lord, why should we not receive also the '*ills*' likewise. She never feared any malady so long as she

was resolved to gain eternal happiness. She was on the point of death. Her tomb was already made. But she came back to life. The following words are attributed to her: *'Why was I called back? I saw hell. I saw that my father would owe me his salvation. I saw the monastery that I was to establish. I saw the souls that I had to save there. I saw that I should die holy.'*

In 1539 she came back to her convent ill, and all suffering. For about three years she remained paralysed. In the course of this suffering she showed a marvellous patience. Her only desire was to regain health so that she could recommence her meditations. Saint Therese strived during the course of many years to follow the path of perfection. Already people had begun to speak of her in the town of Avila. Gossip attracted a certain amount of attention.

*"Were her visions the work of God or demon?"* Opinions were ranged for and against her as the people in the town attempted to answer them. Her confessor hesitated to give a verdict. Here was the Calvary Saint Therese had to mount. And during this long period, she had only to sustain herself by her own inner consolations and with the aid of a few rare people who knew the truth concerning her.

We see her next near one aristocratic Spanish lady whose husband had just died. Saint Therese is charged by the order of her superior to give her spiritual consolation. This gave her an opportunity to study the world, its customs and usages. She got much profit out of it. When she came back to Avila, a new suffering awaited her. During her meditation she received a divine commission to found a new convent where all the rules of the Carmelites were to be applied in all their original purity. Her divine Master urged that she should not talk any more with men. She was asked to fly from all mundane influence and consecrate herself entirely to God. One should read in the text of the saint all the sorrows that the creation of this new convent cost her. Her superiors and even the whole town were ranged against her. But she executed the orders received from on high; she followed all the counsels that were given to her during her meditations. Little by little she surmounted all the resistance and installed herself in the end in the convent dedicated to St. Joseph, where she could, without making any compromise, follow the example of her Divine Master and like Him practise poverty.

Her period of preparation was over. Saint Therese received one divine mission—that of saving souls. Without abandoning the path of Love she had to accept that work. She created a considerable number of convents and

monasteries of the same order—that of the Carmel. In spite of her precarious health she was seen exercising her untiring activity at Medina del Campo, at Valladolid, at Toledo, at Segovia, at Valence, and at Burgos.

Saint Therese passed away on 5th October, 1582, at the age of sixty-eight years. She is said to have pronounced on her death-bed the following words : "*O My God and my Beloved, there has come at last, that hour which I so ardently desired . . . I shall soon be released . . . May thy will be done.*"

#### The Transformation of Saint Therese—Her conversion

Saint Therese manifested in herself the ideal type of Spanish womanhood of the noble class. From her social position she inherited the cult of honour and of service. She was born in the caste of warriors. From that race she imbibed her taste for purity, generosity and a contempt for death. We can see in her, the type of a real heroine. According to her confession not even the shadow of sexuality stained her life. She remained completely foreign to every sentiment of maternity. For her the cult of the *Infant Jesus of the Infant God* had never an attraction. The ardent passion she had for Jesus began from her childhood. "*I ever had for Jesus an extraordinary devotion.*" She wanted to possess her ideal 'entirely' and in 'full'. Nothing could repulse her from the efforts she made in this direction. She realised in herself the Christian ideal in all its purity. True she had great moral qualities: frankness and an innate horror of falsehood. She had still some human associations that frittered away her powers. Her sportive character attracted numerous persons, who became very sensible to her charms and entertained her with mundane conversations. Then Jesus Himself appeared to her and charged her to speak only with angels. She could not bear reproach and contempt. She was happy when the world esteemed her. She was very sensitive on the side of upholding the cult of honour, that second religion of Spain. She loved ornaments and the vanities of the world; later she had to practise poverty like her Master. When saint Therese had to leave the convent of Incarnation for that of St. Joseph, her entire outfit consisted only of a torn habit and a broken comb. She even had the desire to go out in the streets and beg her food as a mendicant. She could not support the idea of possessing anything whatsoever. She threw away all before going to meditate.

The servile fear she had in the beginning was later replaced by a filial fear. Jesus appeared to her now like a very powerful King, like a good Master.

But Saint Therese tamed herself; the purification did its work; and finally divine Love was born and it began to grow. "*He is one good friend—Jesus.*" On her death-bed Saint Therese, who in her ecstasy came to identify herself with Jesus, said, "*I am yours and you are mine.*" She was finally united with her celestial husband for whom she had for so many years waited patiently behind the bars of her prison.

Saint Therese had been irresistibly attracted by the personality of Jesus, who represented for her the type of the Chivalrous King. It is towards this ideal that all her thoughts and efforts converged. In the beginning she created in herself, artificially as it were the Divine Presence. This was only one of the stages. which she had to pass through. A period soon arrived when that Presence, first in an intermittent manner and then in a continuous fashion, enabled her to see Jesus and hear Him. In fact she lived in Him. Her personality completely disappeared. The divine appeared in the same measure as the "Old Man" died; and then came the final absorption, the union with God.

Thus by her own proper efforts the young nun became a soul disciplined, a Chosen soul, "*a captain to lead a whole team.*"

Yet we shall witness in reading her life one melancholy inner drama. It is necessary that the ardent pride of her race, which was in direct opposition to her ideal, should be sublimated and made to change its course, as it were, instead of contradicting her inner efforts. Then only she could fulfil the mission which Jesus had charged her with.

#### Meditation—The Method of Saint Therese

*"It is no more I that lives. It is you my Creator that lives in me."* St. Paul.

We have seen the manner in which Saint Therese took to meditation as the way to realise God. The book her uncle presented her opened up new vistas she had not known before and she engaged herself with great zeal to discover the ideal she was searching.

Looking back she discovered two periods in her life : her life in the world, and her life in God. It was to the life of meditation that she owed her profound conversion and change in life.

According to her, meditation is a state of '*very high dignity*', to which man is elevated by special grace alone. For the saint there are only two categories of human beings—those that practise meditation and those that do

not. It is already one promise of the Grace of God when one gets the inclination to meditate, although in the beginning one may not have all the required disposition. To her meditation is one '*commerce of friendship*', where one entertains face to face Him for whom one feels Love.

In order that the Lord may visit the soul, it is necessary that she be '*alone, pure and desirous to receive Him.*' Later on to those that are already advanced, meditation does not insist on solitude. It remains with us continuously even in the midst of daily occupations. Illness will no more interrupt it; meditation continues even in sleep. To approach God it is necessary to have fortitude and bear with all sufferings; it is necessary to surmount all difficulties. The road to perfection, for Saint Therese, are the footsteps of Jesus, the pathway of the Cross. Certainly she recognises that the way is different to each person; but to her it is always the painful Calvary that she has to endure.

We have to remember that, for twenty years, Saint Therese's only guide was her book of meditation. The experience that one can gather from such a book is very different from that which one receives from a spiritual teacher. Saint Therese had to wait for a great period of her life to have such a spiritual teacher. She had to make her way almost alone till the end of her life, often falling and again rising unceasingly, to realise her ideal. At times she herself wonders how she had the capacity to support all that suffering. But she admits that as an exceptional favour she was instructed and guided by her divine Master Himself. "*He did not desire that my gratitude should go to some other person than He*" and she adds, "*when His Majesty desires it, He can teach everything in one moment.*"

And to permit us to follow her footsteps what the saint demands of us is precious little.

*"Sacrifice every day some moments to God. Consecrate to Him one or two hours. Retire yourself into solitude. Have you not done it already? You have everything to gain by it. The moment you have commenced, whatever may come, you must never abandon the route."*

We all live under the eyes of God, particularly those that live in meditation. By meditation you shall deliver yourselves from all agitations and obsessions of the world. Discrimination will come to you. You would cease to be a slave and come out as a master. The divine presence will make itself felt each day in you. Whenever there is the need, you will receive new

forces to continue your way and to conquer yourself. Your conception of things will widen and new moral demands will begin to appear in you. And spiritual union with the Beloved will be effected when the inner purification will be complete.

According to Saint Therese there are five principal phases of the spiritual life, five stages of meditation. She employs the following comparison: *God gives to each one of us an uncultivated plot, invaded by bad herbs, un-fertile and dry. Our duty is to transform that land into a garden.*

To a Spanish mind the idea of a garden almost evokes the presence of an oasis. This garden does not belong to us. It is the garden of the Master which we must put into a proper state, not for our use, but for Him. You must work under His eyes with a feeling of generosity and without any hope of recompense, through pure Love of Him. Our duty consists in weeding out the bad herbs, in cultivating the good plants and watering them.

#### The First State in meditation

*"Serve me and do not occupy yourself with other things."* It is necessary for us to go and search for water and bring it pail by pail from the bottom of the well. And by water we must understand here, inner devotion. This work demands from us great activity and to fulfil it properly three things are necessary.

It is necessary to create in us the capacity to retire completely into ourselves. We have to become deaf to all appeals of the senses and the solicitations of the world. Our eyes should not feast on external pleasures; our ears should not find joy in hearing anything else than His praises. All external tension should be directed inside.

It is necessary to examine our lives, to constantly interrogate ourselves and recapitulate all that we have done.

By these means we shall arrive at a true comprehension of ourselves. An examination of our own defects which leads to a true understanding of our own real condition—that is the *'bread'* according to Saint Therese that shall nourish our lives all through. If that examination is made in all sincerity—and it will cost us much to arrive at it in a proper manner—we shall have acquired the real taste for liberty and thus we shall force ourselves

to gain back our independence. *"The soul suffers when it loses its liberty, which alone can make it a true sovereign."*

This introspection will help us to recognise in our mind all its different qualities. The will rests easily fixed on the chosen ideal. Reason, imagination and memory give fight in the beginning. We need not be troubled by them. With patience we should seek help according to our preferences. Paintings, pictures and some readings will prove helpful. We may choose in the life of the ideal one episode which is in agreement with our nature. For her part, Saint Therese chose that representation of Jesus depicting the moment when the Divine Master was abandoned by the whole world.

It is necessary to create in us the presence of God. Therefore converse with Him. Recommend to Him your needs. Complain to Him. Rejoice with Him and particularly do not forget Him in the moment of your prosperity. Hold a familiar dialogue with Him without any other personal motive. If we lose devotion in the early periods we need not be tormented by that, *"but thank God that He Has given us the blessing to be blessed with the desire to please Him and to seek Him."*

This period, when He is sought inside in moments of retirement, demands of us some great effort. It is the active period in spiritual life when all responsibility rests on us. Saint Therese recommends to us at this period to cultivate the faculty of reason and imagination in order to facilitate the work of the will. She admits that she had no aptitude of representing things to her imagination. She tells us for example that she had to seek a picture to be presented to her mind during the hours of meditation. *"It is in vain that I contemplate, it is only lost time."* However she does not, from this endeavour, derive less benefit. One day she felt in her a Presence Invisible.

If the well is dry, it is because the Lord has permitted it and if He sees us working with diligence, He will tend the flowers with water.

If having worked long, one meets with aridity, disgust, ennui, and repugnance, one may be tempted to abandon all spiritual practice. Here is the critical moment to surmount all these obstacles. One must rejoice in these trials. *"Think that by working the garden plot you give Him joy."* You have not to search after your personal satisfaction, but that of your Master who desires to test you before confining to you one great treasure.

We have to remember here that Saint Therese experienced during these long years a powerful repulsion for meditation, she waited with impatience

for the clock to strike to gain her liberty. This cathartic period is well-known in the life of all saints. It is so painful. When all attention is being forced inside, violent reaction is a natural consequence. Saint Therese tells that at this period the demon so much possessed and enraged her that she desired to devour the whole world; such was the bad humour she was in. It often happens that reason is fettered by doubt and fear. At other moments it becomes mad and furious; one does not even remember the favours so far received. They become so many faint memories, drowsy faiths, and love becomes very lukewarm. It is the hour of agony and inner pain. Search your consolations in readings. You will not understand anything. You talk with another person, it is worse.

One can also pass through moments of indifference and stupidity. All functions of the intelligence become atrophied. Do not at all preoccupy yourself with these things, for all these will pass away. Take advantage of the opportunity to develop your will power during this period of dryness, for the spiritual progress accomplishes itself without one being actively conscious of it. One traverses a large tract of land without being actively conscious of it. The boat looks as if it is not advancing when it is pushed by a moderate wind.

Our task during this period is to analyse ourselves with much sincerity. Let us search the bonds that tie us to the world. Let us train ourselves to renounce each day some small thing that was dear to us. You may say "*I have nothing which I can cede, I have no portion of rights.*" But be assured the Lord will so arrange the circumstances for you to exercise the virtues that you have not. We have arrived at the point where we have to wait; for our own proper efforts are insufficient. To go further one has to obtain the Grace of the Lord.

### The Second Stage in Meditation

*"Lord, what shall I do here? What relationship can exist between the Master and the servant?"*

The water we have been seeking was at the bottom of the well. Now it flows naturally, and easily. We shall serve it by a chain-pump. The soul arrives at the point of concentration, very near to things that are supernatural. But she cannot arrive at it by herself. The will is occupied, without knowing how, to make of itself a prisoner of Him whom the soul loves. Sometimes imagination comes to the help of the will and reason works in a peaceful

manner. If reason and memory trouble you, do not preoccupy yourself with them. You must always remain in peace.

God commences to communicate with the soul and He wills that the soul should feel that communication. One Pure Happiness appears and everything in the world becomes powerless to procure it for us. We cannot get it by our own diligence, if the Lord does not Himself elevate us to that state. God makes the soul understand that henceforward He is very near and that there is no further need of communication. For fear of losing this attitude, this treasure, the soul dares not move from her place. As she does not know the more elevated states, she may even be tempted to believe that they do not exist, That is why many do not advance beyond that state of peace and quietude. Whose is the fault? If God has made us taste that favour, it is because He has the intention to give us a, large quantity of it, and it is an infidelity on our part to make ourselves deprived of it.

What then should be our duty now? There is nothing to argue about. Taste that peace, that quietude, that repose. Accept with candour that we are nothing and that we hold ourselves with simplicity before God. The soul has received the pledge that she has been chosen for great deeds. She has now to prepare for it with joy, without ceasing to be humble; for humility is the base of all spiritual edifices. We must never entertain a high opinion about ourselves.

The soul in this period is only half active. The love Divine now appears. God reposes in us his confidence and makes us humble, and this humility is very different from the one to which we were habituated. It is love shorn of all personal interests. The flowers of the garden are about to open. Very little effort remains for them to blossom forth.

### The Third Stage in Meditation

*"Here is my life, here is my honour, here is my will : Dispose me off according to your will."*

From this time onwards there is no more necessity to draw water. The source is very near us. The softness, the sweetness, the delectation one feels in meditation surpasses in an incomparable manner all the precedent stages. The soul rejoices in the immense joy wherein she finds herself plunged. She does not know whether she should laugh or weep, speak or be silent. It is one glorious delirium, one celestial madness, when the soul waits for her wisdom.

Again it is not complete union with God; the faculties of the soul are already imprisoned. They do not trouble her any more. Even if you want to disturb yourself, you cannot do it. The soul gets a violent disgust for the world. She wants to reclaim her liberty. She can no more support the slavery to the senses. Eating and drinking trouble and torment her. Time flies uselessly. Outside of God, nothing can satisfy the soul. It appears to her that she leads an abnormal life. *"O Lord, my soul does not like to live in myself, but in yourself."*

She accepts generously all that the Lord desires to work in her. She abandons now everything totally in the hands of God. *"Does He desire to take the soul to heaven, well and good, to hell, I consent. I have no more pain, for I am always in the company of the Lord, I am accompanied by my Sovereign Lord. Die or live for a thousand years, it is all equal to me. I do not belong to myself. I am only of the Lord's."*

Here is the moment when virtue grows in us without effort on our part. Saint Therese is surprised at that which she discovers in her. All these achievements have come without her being informed. However all this work is accomplished without reason taking any part in it. The soul is stupefied to see that the Lord knows everything. The Lord Himself becomes the Gardener. The soul can live on the fruits of the garden; but under pain of dying of hunger she cannot yet make a distribution of the fruits.

#### The Fourth Stage in Meditation

We have arrived at a stage when we need not at all be anxious in watering the garden. The clouds in the heavens themselves will take care of it. The soul has no more work to do. She becomes completely passive and enjoys its experiences which are far superior to the preceding ones. There does not exist in her the least attachment to the world. The purification is achieved and we are very near perfection. At this hour of the progress of the soul, two sentiments manifest themselves with intensity—extreme tenderness with regard to God and an ardour heroic.

Since the soul seeks her God, she feels in the midst of pleasures and delights a profundity and sweetness which almost make her faint. It is a swoon that takes away little by little the power of respiration and the force of the body.

Let nothing disturb thee,  
Let nothing afright thee—  
All passeth away;  
God only shall stay.  
Patience wins all;  
Who hath God needeth nothing,  
For God is his all.

—St. Teresa

One cannot move the body anymore. Eyes are closed; if they are open, nothing is seen: The gateways of the senses are closed. The body is, as it were, bound. The soul enjoys in all its glory. It has a certitude that it is united with God. "*There is one point*" says Saint Therese, "*which I ignored in the beginning. I did not know that God was really in all the creatures; but God was really present there, Himself.*" What the soul feels in that divine union is "*that two things that were divided were no more than one.*" At the commencement this favour is short-lived; afterwards it is prolonged and remains for a longer period. One understands nevertheless, the overabundance of Grace in which the soul finds herself overwhelmed. The charity that shone in her must have been very living, for the soul feels as if she is "*liquefied.*"

The moment of the harvest arrives,—the hour of vintage, the time for fruit-gathering. One can commence to distribute now the products of the garden. Rather, it is now the Master of the garden that distributes them. For the soul knows well that she does not possess anything worth mentioning to call her own. In effect one falls into possession of the spiritual goods, of the neighbour unknowingly and without oneself in any way exerting for them. The flowers blossom and the perfume spreads so mysteriously that people desire to approach them.

(Reprinted from Prabuddha Bharata, September, 1940)

## Illuminating dialogues from Indian lore

### Desirelessness: The way to true happiness

**S**ri Rama: Tell me, Sir, what is meant by craving for worldly objects? What desire leads to liberation, what to bondage? How to liberate oneself from this bondage?

Vasistha: Belief in the body, without discrimination between the body and self, and constant dwelling on the body alone is craving. This leads to bondage. The conviction that the Atman pervades every- thing and there is nothing for one to love or hate in this world is non-craving. Such detachment arises in the mind of those liberated persons who neither foster worldly desires nor hanker after lesser things. There is neither 'I' nor 'you' for the detached mind. At its will it enjoys pleasures of the world or turns away from them. This is known as the path leading to Moksha, liberation.

Detached persons neither court action nor inaction: renouncing all fruits of action, they do not care which of the two courses they adopt. The wise say that these are persons devoid of cravings. Know also that there is no craving in one, if he willingly renounces the fruit of actions and not if he merely renounces actions. Through it the stains of ever-growing action will cease and liberation is attained. It is because of craving that one goes through a long chain of births, disappearing at every stage like bubbles in the ocean.

Craving is twofold. One is called fruitless and the other is called fruitful. The former pertains to the ignorant while the latter is an ornament of those who have realized the self. Fruitful craving generates knowledge of the self and discrimination, and thereby rebirth is arrested. Fruitless actions bring recurring cycles of existence in this world through nescience and attachment to worldly objects.

O Rama, know clearly the true nature of the two kinds of attraction. The mind, mistaking evil things for good and attracted by enjoyments, revels in them, like a vulture preying upon carrion. Those who are

immersed in the evils of fruitless actions fall to the lower levels of existence. But when discrimination grows, one is diverted from the visible things of Maya. Then the mind is divested of its cravings for material life and freedom-in-life is attained.

Now hear of the true nature of the mind of the living-free who is always in different moods, whose consciousness pervades all creatures, and who performs all actions. The living-free soul is quiescent in Knowledge. Though associated with visible things, he enjoys supreme Bliss. Having no material cravings, the liberated ones liberated do not associate with the distorted consciousness of the world. They are not affected by the results of actions and always enjoy bliss. They are great, intelligent, and full of knowledge and bliss. Their minds are stable like a mountain.

The liberated ones liberated always transact their duties. They neither long for future things nor ruminate upon things past. Their minds are neither attracted towards men bound by the worldly pleasures nor affected by misery. They appear as devotees amongst devotees; conduct themselves tactfully amongst men of duplicity, as children amongst children, strong among the strong, young among the young. They appear as grief-stricken while in sympathy with the aggrieved. Virtuous acts are their glory. This world appears diversified because of the fluctuations of the mind, like innumerable eddies in a swift stream of water.

Sri Rama: Why does the mind fluctuate? Through what will it be steady? What are the means to control it?

Vasistha: The fluctuations of the mind are associated with the mind itself like oil in sesame or whiteness in snow. There are two paths to destroy this fluctuation: Yoga and Knowledge. Yoga is that which makes the activities of the mind integrated. But Knowledge is that which enables one to enjoy happiness in all objects. Persons who have as their ornament the supreme Vedas hold that the mind is nothing but fluctuation of Prana (vital force). With the control of Prana, the mind is also controlled. With the control of mind's fluctuation, rebirth will also cease.

—Sanjaya

Source: The Yoga-Vasistha, Upasana Prakarana, chapters 67-77

(Reprinted from Prabuddha Bharata, September 1971)

## Eckhartian Dialogue

*Phillip L. Griggs*

**Q**. Sir, it is a very ticklish question, whether God is also the material cause of the universe. What do you say?

A. God is not only the father, but he is the mother of all things, to boot. He is the father, for he is the efficient cause of all things as creator. He is the mother of all things as well, for when creatures have got their being from him he still stays with them to keep them in being. When a house is in being its builder can depart because it is not the builder alone that makes the house; the materials of it he draws from nature. But God provides a creature with the whole of what it is, with form as well as matter, so he is bound to stay with it or it will promptly drop out of existence.

Q. What about Adam being the first man, and so on?

A. Well, I will give you a puzzle: I say Christ was the first man. How so? Because what is first in intention is last in execution, just as the roof is the completion of the house. And God made the soul intending her to bear with her his one-begotten Son. Christ is being born in us eternally, and this birth within the God-loving soul delights the Lord more than his creation of the heavens and earth.

Q. And what of hell, Meister Eckhart?

A. Theologians speak of hell; I will tell you what hell is.

It is merely a state. What you have here is what you have there. This is hell, if you do not see God and his friends. And it is much the same with heaven, for you should know that many a man who goes to heaven no more enjoys the light of God's countenance than sunshine in forest gloom.

Q. Can what we do in this life give joy to the saints who are living in eternity?

A. Yes, surely. Marvellous, incredible to tell, every saint rejoices in each virtuous deed, each good desire or intention; their joy no tongue is able to express nor any heart conceive. So how much greater must God's joy be!

Q. Some weeks ago your sermon was on the *will* and whether it is free or not; but I confess I was unable to understand it. Will you elucidate this point?

A. I can put it more simply. Teachers declare that the will is free in the sense that none can bind it excepting only God. God does not bind the will, he sets it free—free to choose nothing but God himself, and this is real freedom. Some people say, if I have God and the love of God then I am at liberty to follow my own will. They are mistaken. So long as you are capable of anything against the will of God and his law, you have no love of God, though you try to make the world think that you do. No one loves virtue without being virtue.

Q. How do sorrow and depression arise, and how can I overcome them?

A. All sorrow comes from love of something of which I am deprived. If I mind the loss of external things it is a sure sign that I am fond of them, and really love sorrow and discomfort. Is it any wonder that I am unhappy when I like discomfort and unhappiness? I turn toward creatures, whence there comes naturally all discomfort, and turn my back on that which is the natural source of happiness; no wonder I am woebegone and wretched! The fact is, it is quite impossible for God or anyone to bring true solace to a man who looks for it in creatures. But he who loves only God in all beings and all beings in God only, that man finds real and true and equal comfort everywhere. We ought to love things not a whit more than just as much as we love God in them.

People often say to me: "*Pray for me.*" And I think to myself, Why ever do you go out? Why not stop at home and mine your own treasure? For indeed the whole truth is native in you.

Q. Many of the brothers vow that by suffering they attain faster progress; is suffering, in itself, of any value to a man?

A. Not all suffering is rewarded; only what is cheerfully consented to. A man who hangs on the gallows unwillingly rather wishes it had been somebody else. There is no reward in that. To him who does not suffer for love's sake, suffering is indeed suffering, and hard to bear. But one who suffers for love suffers not, and his suffering is fruitful in God's sight.

Perhaps you will say, How do we know if we are suffering for God's sake or our own? Tell by these signs. Suffering for yourself, it hurts you and is hard to bear; suffering for God alone it hurts you not, nor burdens you, for God bears the load. Nor does external suffering make a man patient. It merely tries one's patience, as fire will try a penny. The patient man is patient still, though outward suffering never comes.

Q. The saints suffered all manner of horrible things. When I read of them I cannot help feeling that their suffering was somehow different, as you have implied.

A. Very true. Our Lord's friends do not suffer at all. The least suspicion of God-consciousness and sufferings are all forgot. This may happen while the soul is still in this body; while yet in the body a soul may reach oblivion of all its travail, not to remember it again.

Q. Sir, I have read nearly all the books in our library on prayer, but they seem to give me only hints. What IS prayer?

A. Prayer is the practice of pure Being and glorying therein. Never pray for any mortal thing, my children; if you must pray for anything at all, pray for God's will and nothing else, for in that you

have found everything. God is one, and anything extra that is sought for, or found, is not God but a mere fraction.

Q. What, then, is the prayer of the heart that has found this true detachment?

A. Detachment and emptiness cannot pray at all. The heart detached has no desire for anything, nor has it anything to be saved from. Its only prayer consists in being of one with God. At the height of its detachment the soul is ignorant with knowing, loveless with loving, dark with enlightenment.

Q. You do not lay any great value on penances, then, in the spiritual life?

A. As I have said, it is not by fasting and good works that we can gauge our progress in the virtuous life. Penitential practices were instituted for a special object. Fasting, watching, praying, kneeling, scourging, hair-shirts, hard beds, or whatever it may be, were all invented because body and flesh stand ever opposed to spirit. The spirit is not at home here, where the body is. So to help the spirit in its distress and put a bridle upon the flesh, these practices are resorted to. But to conquer and curb the flesh it is a thousand times better to put on the bridle of love. Love is like the fisherman's hook. Once the fish takes it, it is done for—the fisherman is certain of his catch. God lies in wait for us with this hook above all. He who has found the way of love will seek no other. He who hangs on this hook is so fast caught that foot and hand, mouth, eyes and heart, and all that is man's is bound to be God's.

Whoever is caught in this net, whoever walks in this way, whatever he does is done through love. Such a person's most trivial action is more profitable to himself and to others than the cumulative works of other men. He rests more usefully than others labour. Therefore, await this hook, so you may be happily caught—and the more surely caught so much the more surely freed.

That we may be thus caught and freed, help us, O Thou who art love itself.

(Concluded)

## **Programme for July - August 2017**

Sunday discourses begin at the  
Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Bourne End at 4:30 p.m.  
Tel: 01628 526464 [www.vedantauk.com](http://www.vedantauk.com)

**There will be no discourses  
During the months of July and August.**

### **Sri Krishna Puja**

**13<sup>th</sup> August 2017  
At Bourne End at 10:30 a.m**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**Talks at 4:00 p.m on  
Sister Nivedita**

To respect Sri Ramakrishna  
means to work in accordance with the example he set.  
No one can become spiritually great by just offering a  
few flowers to the Lord and showing a little emotion.  
Have intense devotion and be immersed in the thought  
of Sri Ramakrishna.

Swami Premananda

Swami Brahmananda says that sometimes he feels as if he is not of this world. The Master also used to say, '*With whom shall I speak if Naren and Rakhai are not by me? They are of very pure mind, they are Narayana Himself; I feel my lips burning if I talk with worldly persons.*' What purity! You must be all as pure as he."

At night, after the service in the shrine, the Swami sat downstairs in the main building.

The disciple asked him, "Kindly tell me how can realize the Master."

Swami: "You have seen the Holy Mother and have received her blessings. Why should you worry?"

Disciple: "But, Maharaj, I cannot at all make my mind calm. Please tell me how I can make it calm."

Swami: "'This is not a sweet in the hand of a child that you can coax it out of him.' But don't worry. The Master used to say, 'I see an ocean in a drop.' If we proceed towards him a single step, he will approach us by a thousand steps. Take refuge in him and repeat his name. Gradually you will realize him."

(Swami Premananda)

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"One night I was sleeping in the Master's room. At dead of night I woke up and found the Master going from one end of his room to the other, saying, 'Mother', I do not want this.

Do not bring me honour from men. Don't, Mother, don't. I spit on it.' He said this and ran like a madman in the room. I was filled with great wonder. I thought, 'How strange!' People are so eager for fame, and he is entreating the Mother not to give it to him! Why is this happening before me? Is it for my personal edification?"

Swami Premananda



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