

## Sri Sri Ma's Utterances

Ma : "Don't do anything in secret, so that you have no secrets to guard."

Question : "What about one's *Ista Mantra*?"

Ma replied : "Only that one thing you have to carefully preserve in secret, so that it is not dissipated. After sowing the seed, if you don't keep it hidden inside the soil, if you take it out everyday to have a look at it, then there is no hope of ever getting a tree. Hence, keep the seed hidden in the soil with great care, water it and look after it ; you'll see that in due time the seed has sprouted into a sapling and is gradually growing."

Question : "Ma, if there is a strong blast of wind, then the plant may get destroyed ; how to protect it in that situation ?"

Ma replied : "In that case, the plant should be protected under cover ; you see, when there is a hail-storm, people cover small plants so very carefully ! Then a fence has to be erected all around the young plant to protect it from the cattle. Thus protected and reared, the same tree becomes one day a protector to so many people."

In response to people's comments, such as, "We would do such and such things only if He makes us do" ; "Everything depends on him" ; "Only He knows" (if we are to act in a particular way), etc., Ma said the following words :

“First of all, try to understand who He is ; try to explore in what relationship you stand to Him — only then you’ll have the right to say, ‘I am doing what He makes me do’ — isn’t it so ? At present you have got no acquaintance with Him ; although even by repeating ‘He, He,’ you may develop a desire to explore more about Him.”

A dialogue was going on, when Ma addressed the following words to the gathering : “Do you know, why people discuss so much ? They do *ālochanā* (discussion) in order to become *alocana* (eyeless) — isn’t it so ? For while there is *dristi* (seeing) there is *srusti* (creating).” Saying this, Ma began to laugh.

A Sikh gentleman who had come to have Ma’s *darshan* said, “Ma, since I have come to you, since I have had the luck to be in the company of the Holy, why should I remain in wretchedness any longer ?”

Ma : If you can really live in the company of the Holy, no such question arises. But do people really live in *satsang* ?”

An engineer from U.P. who happened to be present there asked, “Then, is it that nothing happens ?”

Ma said, “One cannot say that nothing happens. On a sunny day, if you stand in the shade of a tree, you will be protected from the sun by its shade ; while you keep standing under the tree, it will produce its cooling effect on you, there is no doubt about it. But if, after resting for a while in the shade, you come away and run about in the sun, then you will surely get tired.”

Again, the engineer asked, "Ma, we hear everybody say that God's Name alone is sufficient remedy for people in *Kaliyuga*. Yet I have seen so many people repeating God's Name for years in so many places, and yet not making any notable progress. Why is it so? To me it seems that there is a special method even of taking God's Name, and only those who do it in the right way get the benefit, otherwise it is of no use."

Ma: "Look, the Name and He who is indicated by the Name are one and the same; as for example, if I call you by your name, you'll appear before me. Hence, there is no doubt that the taking of name is effective. Yet, as you know how sometimes children just go on reading aloud mechanically without understanding anything — it is like that! Again, you see, even such people do gain some purity by taking the Name constantly, whereas otherwise they could have been so much worse."

The Sikh gentleman again queried, "Ma, do the *jivanmuktas* dream?"

Ma (smiling): "How can dreams occur to those who are ever awake? But if you talk of dreaming, then all that we see around us is also a dream."

"Well, Ma, do the *jivanmuktas* ever suffer from any disease?" This was another inquiry from the same questioner.

Ma: "Those who are free from jivahood, where is the question of their falling ill?"

Ma continued, "Look, I once caught malaria in Dehradun; I was shivering with fever; and then

there came a *sannyasi*. He said to me, "Ma, you have long been suffering from illness ; may I give you a medicine ?" I said with a smile, "Baba, it is said that according to the *Vedanta*, one should treat and regard all equally without any discrimination : you being a *sannyasi* believer in the *Vedanta*, why do you hate illness ? Baba, I am not turning you out, am I ? Then why must I turn out the disease ? All must accomplish their respective tasks. What if the disease takes away this body ? All things are verily forms of the one Bliss. I haven't invited anyone in, nor do I turn anyone out — and whom shall I turn out ? There is just the One without a second. Then, again, you see, Baba, the courting of *sannyasa* is not just for being spectacularly dressed and roaming about in good health on a sight-seeing spree, nor is it the fundamental principle of your *Vedanta*. Impartiality in behaviour, equal regard for all, being established in the self, that is, regaining one's true self — this is verily the objective of *sannyasa*. Then why this repulsion towards disease only ? If all these feelings of attraction and repulsion, friendship and enmity linger, then what will happen to the real objective ?" Saying this, Ma started to smile sweetly. The engineer and the Sikh sardar were very impressed and delighted to hear Ma's words, and said, "Ma, this is really a very extra-ordinary state ; such a state is extremely rare to come across."

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# In Association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee

Sri Amulya Datta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali)

*(Continued from previous issue)*

Gopal Dada explained the Gita from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. The exposition was very beautiful. He is not only a good speaker, but his power of explanation is also extraordinary. Many people listened to him with wrapt attention. And during the days he read from the Gita, the number of his audience kept on increasing.

**The worship of images and the caste system.  
Saturday, 27th May, 1945.**

I arrived at the Ashram at 8 a.m. to find Ma still in her room. She was listening to the private sorrows of each and every lady present. Before the talks were to start she came out to the kirtan hall. Birenda and several others were already present. Last night some soldiers had come to visit Ma. Ma spoke to Birenda about them. She said, "One of them stated, 'Why do you worship images? This is quite wrong.' This body replied, 'What you say is true. But see how water and ice are identical. Water has no image, but ice does assume a shape. Similarly God is both without a

form and with a form. This is merely two sides of the same coin’.”

Another soldier repeated forcefully “No — worship of images is a sin —” This body replied, “Baba, what you say is quite true. But if somebody is of the view that not worshipping images is a sin, then what can you reply to him? So I say that in whatever way you worship God that is true for him.”

In the meantime they themselves fell into a quandary. Finally they came to the conclusion that in whatever way God is worshipped is right for the person concerned.

Another person said, “Why the caste-system? All are equal, so why differentiate in your attitudes towards different people?”

This body said, “All of you are in service, but not all of you are doing the same work. The status of all of you is not the same. Of course this division has been created for ease of operation and you yourself have of your own free will done so. On top of this, there is a material difference in ability. One’s own nature leads to differences in creation.”

Birenda : The big fault with the caste system is not that men have been separated in to Brahmin, Khatriyas etc — why was this division made? The main objection is why has this been extended to become hereditary.”

“For one who observes all the qualities of a Brahmin, nobody is afraid to look upon him as a Brahmin. But if his son happens to have the dis-

position of a despicable sect, why should he assume the role of a Brahmin chiefly because he has been born into a Brahmin family? This is the main objection raised by modern minded people.

Ma: What you say is true from one point of view. But you should also consider the fact that when several castes are there, and somebody is born into a Brahmin family, then you will realise he must have had some exceptional previous qualifications to qualify him to be born into such a superior caste, and moreover if he is kept being reminded of the high ideals of his caste, then his low caste qualities may be radically affected.

Birenda: So you wish to point out that because he has been born into a Brahmin caste, he has sufficient means in him to let him step aside from evil paths with very little effort? But if the good instincts for which he has merited birth in a Brahmin family be comparatively less in value, and the baser instincts preponderate, then what will happen if he reverts to behave like a base born being? There is another point, you said that if a Brahmin takes the wrong path, he must be constantly reminded that he is a Brahmin, and that his ways and habits must conform to a Brahmin's. But if a Kshatriya continues to behave like a Brahmin, then must he be reminded that he should follow the ways of his ancestral heredity and not those of a Brahmin? And moreover, even if a Kshatriya behaves like a Brahmin, people automatically will not do reverence to him.

Ma : If his Brahmin instincts are true, then it is not necessary to attract other men's faith by beat of drum. His worth will be such that men's heads will automatically be prostrated before him.

It was now 11 a.m. Swami Swarupananda started his lecture. Thus the discussion on various aspects of the caste system remained unfinished.

**Is there any result from donating without having sufficient faith ?**

The reading of Kathopanishad started. Rishi Rajasharas' son Uddalok was desirous of realising the benefit of performing a Viswajit Yagna, but what was he donating as part of the Yagna ? He was giving away cows that were milkless, or blind, or nearly dead, i.e., he was expecting to reap the benefits of a Yagna by donating nothing of value. Observing this irreligious attitude on the part of his parent, Nachiketa was disturbed. He had studied the scriptures only under his father. So he was so well read that the results of such a donation were poisonous to him. The ultimate destination of such a donation was a visit to a region of unhappiness. He was of the opinion that with Yagnas like Viswajit Yagna one must give away everything. "I am among the total assets of my father, I am the leader among his disciples, and not second or lower. So my father should give me away." In this way the evil results of his father's valueless gifts would be somewhat mitigated. Thinking thus, he kept on asking his father, "Father, to whom are you donating me ?"



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After hearing this question repeated several times, his father got extremely annoyed, and exclaimed, "I have given you away to the lord of death."

The lecture stopped here.

At the end of the lecture Ma asked, "Well, how angry could the father have been that willy nilly he gave his own son away to Yamaraj? Was there any beneficial result from such a gift?"

The lecturer and others present replied, "What do we know of all this, you know the answer."

Ma : No, I am asking if your scriptures lay down anything on this subject.

Swami Saswatananda : When Nachiketa asked his first boon from Yamaraj, he was thinking only of the good of his father. He prayed that his father should not suffer from any anxiety on his behalf, that he should not suffer any hardship on his account, and finally that when he returned to his father, the latter should recognize him and take him back.

Ma : This is exactly what I was enquiring about. Your Shastras do lay down that even if I give away something without having faith in the deed, there is some beneficial results accruing therefrom. Similarly, if you donate unwillingly, or in anger, there is some benefit to be obtained.

Swami Saswatananda : I do not wish to look upon it as any kind of gift at all ! The son made his father do all those things for his father's own good, otherwise there is nothing good to be said about the father.

Ma : I knew beforehand that you would construe this kind of meaning and this is but natural in your case. Because this supports the life you have adopted in becoming a Sannyasin (Everybody laughs). But one can look at it from another view point. You had said that Nachiketa had studied the Shastras under his father. So the father was indeed his Guru. His father himself taught him in what way one should donate in such kind of Yagnas. So, under the circumstances, by donating himself away, he was merely following his father i.e. his Guru's orders.

Birenda : Consider the events that have been narrated in the Upanishads, in reality nobody has any jurisdiction over them. Whatever Nachiketa or his father did, was done under the influence of an Almighty force. Furthermore, I think these stories in the Upanishads have no value or truth in them, they are merely meant to illustrate some basic truth contained in the Upanishads.

Gopalda : That everything is done under the influence of an over-riding power, is not to be doubted. But then, we cannot maintain that the stories in the Upanishads have no truth in them, or that they are not real. This only serves to insult the Upanishads. That the stories in the Upanishads are true and as valid as the Tatwas they represent, is as correct as the reality they represent.

Ma : Yes, these stories are quite true.

During the course of conversation, Gopalda enquired about the pain in the toe of Ma's foot.

Ma said, "No, the pain still persists equally."

Gopalda : This is not to be driven away so easily. Ma does not allow us to touch her feet, but she has had mercy on the pain and given it shelter in her feet. So why should it now forsake her feet ? Until Ma drives it away it will safely remain there. (Everybody laughs)

Ma (Smiling) : I am a little girl, so Baba is instructing me. Do you not see in the scriptures that the Guru repeatedly teaches his disciples the Mahabakya, "You are He, you are He."

"Similarly in order to increase my knowledge, you are incessantly teaching me in many ways, "You are He, you are He, you are indeed He". Even if I hide myself in the hills or jungles, you pull me out of these, and for the sake of my education, you keep on saying, "You are He, you are only He". (Everybody laughs)

The girls were singing Kirtan in the Panchabati after the path. Ma went there, and after staying there for a while, she came away.

I also returned home. At about 5-30 p.m. I returned to the Ashram. By that time Gopalda's path had commenced. Ma was sitting in the Namghar. Before the path was completed, Ma obtained the reader's permission to come out. We came out at the end of the lecture.

When we came out, we learnt Ma had gone out somewhere by car. We continued to wait. By this time, our friends Manmohan and Manoranjan Babu joined us. Ma returned to the Ashram after 11-30 p.m. Today was full moon so Kali puja was being carried out in the Annapurna temple.

Ma told Birenda, "Today is Purnima, so this is the night for waking all through it". I understood from this that previously whenever Kali puja was performed at Shahbag on Purnima or Amabasya, Birenda and others used to keep awake the whole night.

### **The hindrances before Satsang**

After a while Ma came and sat down in the Kirtan hall. We were with her. Soon after arriving, Ma started the conversation herself.

Ma asked, "How did you like the reading of the Gita today?"

Birenda : The reading was beautiful. The speaker has an extraordinary knack for explaining. Everybody wholeheartedly supported this statement. I had learnt from Birenda that Gopalda had been a colleague of his in his class.

Ma : Once we staged a Gita Jayanti at Vindhya-chal. The Gita used to be read in the morning, its meaning explained in the afternoon, and at night there was a further discussion on the text. Gopal Baba used to conduct the lot. It was just an effort to be occupied with the one subject — the Gita. Baba does the same thing during the Pujas. Once he starts the puja, he continues doing it the whole day. He never bothers whether or not others join in.

Manoranjan Babu : Ma, I did not quite understand what has been said in the Gita about the mystery of birth and death. I did not feel as if we were the sons of Immortality, that there was no

death for us. Because all of us have to die. Even when Mahatmas suffer from the pains of illness, so seeing their state how can we believe we are beyond illness or death ?

Ma : Do you not understand even a little bit ?

Manoranjan Babu : I do understand a little, but do not believe it. (Everybody laughs)

Ma : Do you not believe even a little bit ?

Manoranjan Babu : Yes, I do believe a little, but it is of no use. (Everybody again laughs)

Ma : But why do you harp only on the illnesses described in the lives of the Mahatmas ? Why take no notice of the fact that they do eat, sleep etc. ? Because he who is versed in the worship of the Brahman, he who has drunk of the nectar of Immortality, what need is there for him to eat ? Well what do you understand of the one who is fully conversant with his self, or with the Brahman ? What are their outward symptoms ?

Ma enquired further about these symptoms from each and everyone of us, but nobody could furnish a satisfactory reply. At this juncture, a youth exclaimed from behind us, "I can give a correct reply, but in that case you will have to let me come near Ma." We all allowed him to sit near Ma. He sat down and asked Ma, "What is meant by one who is fully conversant with the Brahman ?"

Ma started laughing at the question. We also followed suit, because he who had prided himself in being able to specify the symptoms possessed by a person fully conversant with the Brahman, was

himself asking about the qualities exhibited by such a person. Our laughter probably disturbed the mental balance of the mind of the youth. He started speaking at random, and appeared to be mentally unbalanced. There was no relationship between what he said and a person conversant with the Brahman. It was merely an attempt to lower the dignity of Ma through meaningless questions, springing out of pride and wickedness. After hearing his uncivil question, Kedar Babu and Birenda became incensed and strongly objected. Thus there was a disturbance. It was evident that there were other youths behind the youth in question, whose behaviour and conversation proved that they had not come here as honest seekers of Truth. They had come merely to create a disturbance.

To prevent any incipient quarrel, Ma restrained Kedar Babu and purposely spoke a few words to pacify the youth. Ultimately one of them, in order to quell the disturbance, requested permission from Ma to sing a few songs.

Before these songs had concluded Ma was taken away for her meal. We got up at the same time. All of us were deeply grieved at the unsocial behaviour of the youths. They too now took their departure of Ma and departed to their respective destination.

At the end of Ma's meal, the topic of the youths came up again for discussion, but that distressful discussion did not appeal to anyone. From what we heard, we learnt that they were all disciples of a comparatively young man named Biren Brahma-

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chari. This very evening Ma had seen and spoken to Biren Brahmachari.

Ma said, the topic of conversation that I had with Babaji (i.e. Biren Brahmachari) was similar in tone to what these people said. We also learnt from Khukunididi that Bhaiji's wife had been seen in the company of these same youths. In any case all these topics were stopped and an entirely different discussion was started.

### **God's mercy at adverse times**

Sri Ma continued saying, "Many people during the course of their sadhana reach such a stage that they hardly believe in the existence of God. They think there is no such being as God. This also constitutes a stage in sadhana.

There are certain typical symptoms which denote if and when one has truly reached such a stage. It is difficult to forecast how and when God attracts people to His own self.

Once at Chandausi I heard the following story from a professor. He maintained that the story was true.

A Yogi approached a Sethji for alms. The Sethji asked one of his minions to spare a paisa for him. But the Yogi was unwilling to accept only one paisa. He wanted Sethji to take God's name. But Sethji had no time to spare for this purpose. He was busy looking after his expanding business. So he did not listen to the Yogi's plea. But the Yogi remained adamant. Sethji then exhorted the Yogi, "You yourself better take God's name. I will give

you an extra paisa.” But the Yogi did not change his attitude and repeated, “You must take God’s name. I have no need of any paisa.” Sethji was so disgusted that he drove the Yogi away with the help of his servants.

It was the Sethji’s custom to take a walk each morning and evening. On the day after the above incident, when the Sethji went out for his walk, the Yogi entered the Sethji’s home in the guise of the Sethji. It was not all difficult for the Yogi to assume such an appearance. When his wife saw him return so soon, she asked him the reason. In reply the Sethji (Yogi) said, “I have heard that an imposter has arrived, he is assuming the appearance and dress of different people and is cheating them. So if somebody arrives here in my guise, do not let him enter the house.” Having said this he went upstairs.

After a short while the real Sethji arrived. When he tried to enter his own house his servants and sons prevented him from doing so. However much he tried to persuade them that he was the real owner of the house, the angrier did they become and threatened to beat him. When he felt helpless, he called out to his wife and said, “Please come and see how badly they are behaving towards me”. Even his wife believed him to be an imposter, and hearing him address her as his wife, in anger she struck him with her shoes. Sethji was now thoroughly disheartened and took refuge with the local Police officer, who was acquainted with the Sethji. After listening to his story,



the Police Inspector called all the sons to the thana. The sons arrived and informed the Police Inspector that the man who had complained to him was not their father — he was merely a well known imposter with many appearances, because their father was really at home. The Inspector then asked them to bring their so-called father to the thana. They went and brought back the Yogiraj dressed as Sethji. The Policeman got completely bamboozled. Of the two it seemed impossible for him to spot out who was the real Sethji. The Yogiraj then asked the Sethji, "You wish to declare yourself as the real Sethji. Well tell us exactly how much it cost you to build your house." The Sethji said, "What do I know of such things? My servants have kept the books of accounts, if you consult them you will know the exact cost." The Yogiraj then asked him once more, "Well, tell us how much you spent on the wedding of your eldest son." — The Sethji could not reply even to this question. He said without looking up the account books he could not furnish a reply. But the Yogiraj divulged both the exact expenditures incurred in building the house and in performing the wedding to the last pie. Because due to his Yoga he could come to know of everything. After listening to all these evidences the Police Inspector confirmed Yogiraj to be the lawful Sethji, and drove away the Sethji himself.

Sethji on losing everything, wandered anywhere his eyes could take him. During the course of his wanderings, he came to a place where several sadhus and sannyasis were continuously engaged in

Tapasya. Among the saints he spotted the Yogiraj. On seeing him he realised the extent of his previous folly, and falling at the Yogiraj's feet, he apprised him of the causes of his downfall. And also in much humility he continued to pray and beg for forgiveness for his past misbehaviour towards the Yogiraj. The Yogiraj, on seeing his repentance forgave him and said, "You have only to take God's name. This was my only request. You have suffered so much by not listening to me. I am arranging to return all your property to you, but you must consider yourself as my representative in spending your wealth, and always take the name of the Lord."

The Sethji agreed to do all this. The Yogiraj asked him to return home. Sethji followed suit.

This time no one prevented him, because in the absence of the Yogiraj in the house, nobody had any doubts about him. But Sethji did not go back to his old life. He built a new temple in the house and spent his time in doing dhyan, puja etc., in it.

Sri Ma then went on to recite another story.

"Once some of us were travelling through the jungles of Sawai Madhopur (Rajasthan) in a horse-carriage. We had a lawyer with us. Because the local Raja was going to engage in a shikar in the jungle, his men were cleaning the jungle to make new pathways. On seeing us approach, these men forbade us to come any further. But in spite of their order, we listened to the lawyer's advice and kept on proceeding in the carriage. At this Raja's men became enraged and attacked us with their

shovels. We had by then advanced well into the interior of the jungle and it was difficult for us to retreat from there, but those men would not allow us to move forward even one foot with our carriage. Under these circumstances, this body looked at the men and asked, "Then shall we descend from the carriage?" On hearing this body speak, the men suddenly calmed down and asked us to proceed in our carriage. So you see, in the hearts of each man there is a soft spot, where if you strike properly, his nature changes instantly." It was now after 2-30 a.m. So Ma went to lie down. Today it was Ma's wish that we should keep awake all night. So we spent the rest of the night discussing Ma's inscrutable ways, sometimes in the Ashram, sometimes out in the open airs.

*(To be continued)*

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### NEW PUBLICATIONS

- 1) Matri-Lila Darshan (2nd Edition)  
in Bengali — Dr. Debaprasad  
Mukhopadhyaya — Pages 284 — Price Rs. 25/-
  - 2) Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi  
Vol. IV in English — Gurupriya  
Devi — Pages 288 — Price Rs. 22/-  
or \$ 4.00  
or £ 2.00
  - 3) Matri-Lila Darshan in English  
—Dr. Debaprasad Mukhopadhyaya  
— Under Print
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## **IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT**

As already announced earlier, the administrative Head-Office of the Charitable Society will be shifted from its present location at Varanasi and start functioning from the Calcutta Zonal Office, here of Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society at Matri-Mandir, 57/1, Ballygunge Circular Road, Calcutta-700 019 — right from the commencement of the new financial year 1988-89 i.e. from the month of April next. All urgent and important correspondences with the Charitable Society should therefore be addressed accordingly — to avoid unnecessary delays.

Annual members of the Charitable Society should also, hereafter, remit their subscriptions to this office and not to Varanasi Office as herebefore. It is also notified for the information of the members that the Regd. Office of the Charitable Society will continue to function from Varanasi as before.

Dated : The 30th March, 1988

Calcutta Zonal Office

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# Bradley, Vedanta, and Ramakrishna : A Comparative Study

J. C. Mazumdar, M.A., I.A.S. (Retd.)

*(Continued from previous issue)*

## **The Nature of Reality and the Phenomenal World**

Having said this much by way of preface, I will now make a brief analysis of Bradley's conception of absolute reality. While bringing out the essential elements of his thoughts on this issue, it will also be my endeavour to compare and assimilate them to the thoughts of Sankara and Ramakrishna.

Bradley has stated somewhat mockingly that 'metaphysics is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct, but to find these reasons is no less an instinct'. But metaphysics in the end must be so, because, as I have stated earlier, the human mind functions as an integral whole; and all our thoughts are based on and are articulations of certain basic perceptions or feelings which we are compelled to accept as authentic. In various manners, we find and come across something higher in the universe which, as Bradley has stated, 'both supports and humbles, both chastens and transports us'. The intellectual effort to understand the universe is one of the principal ways in which

we come into touch with this higher and uplifting influence.

The world, as it appears to us, is, in the ultimate analysis, 'a maze of relations, relations that lead to illusory terms, and terms disappearing into endless relations' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 104); but though these appearances may be 'a beggarly show', that the appearances *exist* can never be doubted. Appearances have therefore two characters. They are infected with contradictions; but at the same time, they are most doubtlessly felt to exist. It is not possible for us to deny the existence of appearances because they are inconsistent with themselves. In other words, even though the appearances cannot be true of the real, 'to divorce' them 'from reality is out of the question'. That is why, Bradley has said that appearance 'has a positive character which is indubitable fact, and, however much this fact may be pronounced appearance, it can have no place in which to live except reality. And reality, set on one side and apart from all appearance, would assuredly be nothing' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 114). In other words, (a) appearances *belong* to the reality, (b) though it cannot be said that they are true of the real.

In this connection, what Sankara has told about *maya* comes to our mind. According to Sankara, the phenomenal world is a product of *maya*, and he has characterized the phenomenal world as an *adhyasa*. *Adhyasa* is both existent and non-existent, according to Sankara. In equating *adhyasa* with

*avidya* (*adhyasam pandita avidya iti manyante*), he has emphasized that the world of appearances is a world of error or falsehood (*avidya*); but by defining *adhyasa* as *purvadrstavabhasah*, he has emphasized on the other aspect of appearances, viz. that, after all, they are felt to *exist* in some form or other (*avabhasa*); thus Sankara also lays bare the two sides of appearance, viz. those of falsity and existence.

'To think is to judge, and to judge is to criticize, and to criticize is to use a criterion of reality' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 120). With two apparently unreconcilable characters of the phenomenal world before us, it becomes necessary for us to judge as to how these two characters stand in relation to the absolute reality. In metaphysics, judging implies application of an ultimate standard. As we have briefly described earlier, the ultimate reality, according to Bradley and Sankara, is such that it does not contradict itself. By applying this criterion of truth, Bradley concludes that the world of appearances being full of contradictions cannot be the reality; because reality excludes contradictions. At the same time, the appearances must have to fall within the reality, because outside the reality there is or there can be nothing. Bradley accepts these two results and concludes that 'everything which appears is *somehow* real in such a way as to be self-consistent. The character of the real is to possess everything phenomenal in harmonious form'. In other words, 'the real is individual' (*ibid.*, p. 123).

The underlying logic of Bradley seems to be that, as the appearances must *belong* to the reality, they must somehow be self-consistent in order to find a place within it. But appearances *as they are apprehended* by us are nowhere free from inconsistencies. This means that appearances as they are true of the reality are different from appearances as they are apprehended by us. That is why Bradley often talks of transformation, transmutation, blending, and supplementation of appearances in his philosophy. Sankara's attitude towards the two conflicting characters of appearances (viz. characters of unreality and existence) is different from that of Bradley. Sankara does not accept that the being element of appearances has two aspects, viz. (a) an intrinsic aspect and (b) an extrinsic or apparent aspect, as Bradley seems to do. Sankara's appearances are products of *avidya*, and they are totally false, though they seem to *exist*; and they cannot be said to *belong* to the absolute. They are, in the language of Sankara, mere *aropa* or *adhyaropita* or *projections on the absolute reality*.

In a way and up to a point, Sankara's principle of *maya* (*avarana* and *vikēspa*) is just the opposite of Bradley's principle of transmutation and supplementation. Sankara's *maya* is a principle of degradation and limitation, whereas Bradley's principle of transmutation and supplementation is like a process of recovery or regeneration. When Sankara says that the world is an *adhyāsa* or the product of *maya* or *avidya*, he seems to imply that the world of phenomena *somehow* comes into existence, because



the intellect is so constituted that it takes an utterly false or distorted view of the absolute reality, which, according to Sankara, is the indeterminate or abstract Saccidananda (consciousness-cum-existence-cum-bliss). This falsity of the world of phenomena is not such as can be *corrected* without totally destroying the appearances themselves. The world of appearances seems, in Sankara's view, like a world of wicked or wanton dreams, which *vanishes* on waking up from sleep. Sankara has characterized *maya* as *anirvacaniya*, because it cannot be explained why the absolute reality takes this degraded shape, why it appears as *other* than itself (*atasmin tadbuddhih*).

Sankara differs from Bradley in so far as he seems to hold that the world of phenomena does not make any difference to the absolute, and does not *qualify* it in *any way*. The phenomenal world is inherently unreal, and nothing in it is recoverable. In the absolute being-consciousness-bliss, there is, as it were, nothing corresponding to the phenomenal world. Bradley's view is that the appearances *as they appear to us* are totally false and unreal. Up to this point, he agrees with Sankara. But the absolute is also nothing but the transmuted and rearranged appearances; reality apart from appearances and taken by itself is a mere nothing; there is always something in the absolute corresponding to the appearances; this constitutes, as it were, the *svarupa* or essence of appearances, and it is recovered after rearrangement and transformation; it *enriches* and *qualifies* the absolute.

Sankara judges the appearances to be occasional *projections* caused by the *maya-sakti* of Isvara or Brahman. If appearances are so, Bradley's view seems to be more reasonable. Because the principle of determination or *maya* being located in the absolute, the projections should also be regarded as belonging to the absolute reality. And perhaps, Sankara himself also did not judge the world of appearances to be *entirely illusory*. For, according to him, the absolute constitutes the basis (*aspada*) of the world or *samsara* ; and even a mirage needs a basis for its existence (*nahi mrigatrisnikadayo'pi niraspadah bhavanti*). And appearances as effects and Brahman as cause are, in his view, non-different (*atasca kritsmasya jagato Brahmakaryatvat tad ananyatvat*). In any event, Sankara's absolute (Brahman) is not an individuality which 'embraces every partial diversity in concord' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 129), or an indivisible system or experience as it is in Bradley's philosophy ; and appearances are, according to Sankara, beyond transmutation or supplementation ; and as such, they cannot be saved or recovered in any way.

Ramakrishna says : "The *nitya* and the *lila* belong to the same Reality. Therefore I accept everything, the relative as well as the absolute. I don't explain away the world as *maya*". (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 621). 'The Brahman of Vedanta and the *citsakti* are identical' (*ibid.*, p. 574). 'He who is indivisible Saccidananda has assumed different forms for the sake of His *lila*' (*ibid.*, p. 428). 'He is Brahman and He is Sakti'

(*ibid.*, p. 912). 'Brahman and Sakti are inseparable' (*ibid.*, p. 109). 'It is Brahman alone that appears as Isvara, *maya*, living beings, and the universe' (*ibid.*, p. 253).

A careful examination of these *sutra*-like utterances reveals that in his thoughts Ramakrishna is more akin to Bradley than to Sankara. As for Bradley so for Ramakrishna, the ultimate reality is the full, whole, and *undivided reality* (*akhandasaccidananda*), consisting of the indeterminate being, God, and the phenomenal world. Ramakrishna does not discard the phenomenal world, *lila*, as being *merely* illusory ; it is accepted together with and as part of the ultimate reality (*nitya*). It is a lower expression (*prakasa* or *rupadharana*) of the absolute reality ; just as God (Isvara or Saguna Brahman) is a higher expression of the absolute reality ; just as featureless and formless Brahman is also another aspect of the same integral reality ; and the limiting principle of *maya*, being the inherent *sakti* (power) of Isvara (God), is also an aspect of Brahman.

Ramakrishna's '*tini*' or absolute reality is a whole, which is greater than God, greater than indeterminate consciousness-being, and greater than the phenomenal world ; and the world, God, and *cinmatra* are but aspects of the whole reality ; and they are expressions of various grades or degrees. It is an all inclusive experience which contains them all in a state of non-difference (*abheda*). Bradley says almost similarly : 'The reality itself is nothing at all apart from appearances...Reality appears in its

appearances, and they are its revelation ; *otherwise* they also could be nothing whatever' (*Appearance and Reality*, pp. 488-89). And God, nature, and impersonal being are appearances of the absolute. Bradley's reality is one, that it essentially is experience, .. and every fragment of appearance qualifies the *whole* ; while so taken together, appearances, as such, cease. Nothing in the universe can be lost, nothing fails to contribute to the single reality... But appearances fail of reality in varying degrees' (*ibid.*, p. 453). The reality of Bradley is the whole (*purna*), which is *qualified non-relationally* by every fraction of experience. The absolute possesses personality, as it has everything ; but is not merely personal. 'It is not personal, because it is personal and more. It is, in a word, super-personal.' Bradley's concept comes close to Ramakrishna's on the question of absolute reality, in so far as both regard the world and God as aspects or expressions of the absolute whole. Both regard the reality as non-different from its expressions, and both believe that there are degrees of truth and reality.

In Bradley's view, 'the absolute is one system'. It is a single and all-inclusive experience, in which diverse partial experiences are reabsorbed in a rich concord. He is, however, prepared to accept that there may be in the absolute more than we know. In other words, there may be, in the absolute, elements to which there are, as it were, no corresponding formulations in the world of appearances. Here he concedes the truth of purely indeterminate reality. But 'if it is more than any feeling of

thought which we know, it must still remain more of the same nature'. The content of this indeterminate part of the absolute must also be of the nature of sentient experience. Sankara thinks that the indeterminate absolute reality is *saccidananda-svarupa* or pure *caitanya* ; so Bradley also agrees that there may be, in the absolute, aspects of featureless and formless thought-feeling.

Bradley says further : 'Pure spirit is not realized except in the absolute. It can never appear as such and with its full character in the scale of existence' (*ibid.*, p. 442). Ramakrishna concedes that there is transcendent experience beyond all *gunas* ; that experience or *caitanya* cannot be described in words. 'Only one thing has not been defiled in this way, and that is Brahman' (*Gospel*, p. 28). That experience beyond thought and speech is a part of *tini* or absolute whole. 'The personal is the embodiment of *Cit*, Consciousness ; and the Impersonal is the indivisible Saccidananda' (*ibid.* p. 433). Because a part of the whole reality is beyond form or quality or activity (*nirakara* or *nirguna* or *niskriya*), and a part is expressed in form or quality or activity (*sakara* or *saguna* or *sakti* or *Kali*), the whole reality in its entirety is more than either of the parts and both the parts. 'What is Brahman is the Bhagavan... He who is beyond the three *gunas* is the Bhagavan, with His six supernatural powers. Living beings, the universe, mind, intelligence, love, renunciation, knowledge — all those are the manifestations of His power' (*ibid.*, p. 30). 'Yes, God has form and He is formless, too. Further, He is

beyond both form and formless. No one can limit Him' (*ibid.*, p. 125).

### The Conception of God

Bradley's conception of God bears comparison with Ramakrishna's idea of God or Isvara. Ramakrishna says : 'God is a person who listens to our prayers, who creates, preserves, and destroys the universe and who is endowed with infinite power' (*ibid.*, p. 79). Bradley says : 'Religion naturally implies a relation between man and God. Man is ... a finite subject who is over against God and merely "standing in relation" ... He does not merely 'stand in relation', but is *moved only by his opposite* and indeed, apart from that inward working, could not stand at all. God, again, is a finite object, standing above and apart from man, and is something independent of all relation to his will and intelligence. Hence God, if taken as a thinking and feeling being, has a *private personality*' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 394).

Ramakrishna says also that Brahman and Bhagavan or Kali are non-different (*abheda*). What does Bradley say ? 'Short of the absolute, God cannot rest, and having reached that goal, he is lost and religion with him' (*ibid.*, pp. 395-96). Bradley says : 'God is not God till he has become all in all' (*ibid.*, p. 397). And what does Ramakrishna say ? 'As long as one has not realized God, one should renounce the world, following the process of "*neti, neti*". But he who has attained God knows that it is God who has become all this' (*Gospel*, p. 271).

Sankara's God will now engage us. In Sankara's view, there are three levels of experience, corresponding to which there are three types of being or reality : (1) first, there is the perception of illusion, corresponding to which we have the *pratibhasikasatta* (imaginary being) ; (2) secondly, there is the pragmatic consciousness, corresponding to which we have the *vyavaharika-satta* (conventional or symbolic being) ; things which are accepted as real for all practical purposes are the *vyavaharika* realities ; (3) thirdly, there is the *turiya* or transcendental perception (*anubhava*), which reveals itself as the *paramarthika-satta* (absolute reality). Absolute reality is changeless, eternal, and beyond all determinations. Everything short of the absolute reality is an appearance with Sankara and every appearance is false with him.

Sankara makes two points : (1) Our life is one long business in rootless lies ; (2) *vyavaharika* or conventional realities are good, sufficient, and adequate for all normal living or for all practical purposes ; obviously, the practical purposes stand for all human goods or *arthas* other than the supreme good (*parama artha*). In other words, it holds good in all pursuits in science, morality, religion, art, or other spheres of life. Combining these two points, a Sankarite concludes that God (Saguna Brahman) is real for certain practical purposes, though intrinsically God is unreal and a mere appearance ; God regarded as creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the world, and as a *vyakti* standing in relation to man, is unreal, but this unreality

does not stand in His way of being useful to man. God is thus a useful symbol or a *mantra* that yields desired results.

We are prepared to accept that our believing that certain things are *as if* real has a way of affecting our lives ; but a philosophy which places absolute reality on one side and absolute unreality on the other side, relegates, as Bradley has aptly said, 'the mass of our chief human interests to some unreal limbo of undistinguished degradation'. A lie which is only an *utter* lie can never be of any real use to man in any field of life. In other words, every appearance must be supposed to contribute something towards the absolute reality ; that is, it must be real in some degrees. 'Ugliness, error, and evil, all are owned by and all essentially contribute to the wealth of the absolute' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 433).

This particular emphasis is missed in Sankara. Though he speaks of higher and higher expressions, he does not emphasize, like Bradley, that 'the absolute ... has no assets beyond appearances' ; he only emphasizes that 'with appearances alone to its credit, the absolute would be bankrupt' (*ibid.*, p. 433). His absolute is the *nirguna, avisistha, para* Brahman that devours all and vomits all, because to devour or to vomit, it has really nothing. Sankara's Isvara, therefore, needs considerable interpretation before it gets a clearance. Sankara does not seem to hold, as Spinoza does, that all things follow from the necessity of the absolutely perfect nature of God.



### Other Aspects

I will now say a word or two about the other aspects of the absolute. Is the absolute good? Is the absolute beautiful? 'If metaphysics is to stand, it must, I think', says Bradley, 'take account of all sides of our being' (*ibid.*, p. 130). Applying the absolute criterion of truth, we conclude that the sentient consciousness or experience constituting the absolute reality is a self-consistent whole or a harmonious system. If *knowledge* is considered as the content of the absolute, there is theoretical consistency in the absolute. But is there a practical consistency also in the absolute? Is there also an excess of pleasure or joy in the absolute? Or, in other words, is the absolute a fully satisfied experience? These questions are answered in the affirmative.

Bradley's arguments are that, if there is a theoretical consistency in the absolute, ideas must not clash with sensations; and when there is no such clash, there cannot be in the absolute *any practical unrest* or *any unsatisfied desire*, because desire can arise only when there is a hiatus between an idea and a sensation. Given harmony in the absolute, a balance of pain is not possible in the absolute, because pain implies unrest or inconsistency in theoretical consciousness; pain 'must directly destroy the theoretical rest' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 139). There is therefore no pain on the whole in the absolute. 'We must not admit the possibility of an absolute perfect in *apprehension* — yet resting tranquilly in pain' (*ibid.*, p. 139).

Bradley's final conclusion is therefore that our main wants for truth, life, beauty, and goodness must all find satisfaction, and this consummation must somehow be experienced and be individual (*vide ibid.*, p. 140). This conclusion is not far from the Vedantic view. According to Sankara, Brahman, being *satya*, *jnana*, and *ananta*, must be *anandasvarupa*, i.e. pure *ananda* or joy ; there is no trace of pain in Sankara's absolute reality.

Bradley's view is, however, closer to Ramanuja's, inasmuch as Bradley's absolute is a concrete universal, like Ramanuja's *savisesa* and *saguna* Brahman ; and in Bradley's absolute, there is a balance of pleasure over pain, just as Ramanuja's Brahman is *anandamaya*, implying that there is an excess of pleasure over pain in Ramanuja's absolute. To Ramakrishna, the world is a mansion of pleasure ; this is so because the world is the abode of the absolute, which is both *saguna* and *nirguna* both *sakara* and *nirakara*.

And before I close, you will perhaps ask what is the essential element in Bradley's philosophy ? And how does it compare with Ramakrishna's basic message ? What is the fundamental truth in the Vedanta philosophy ? In the last sentence of *Appearance and Reality*, Bradley concludes : 'Outside of spirit there is not, and there cannot be, any reality, and the more than anything is spiritual, so much the more is it veritably real.' In this final sentence is summed up the essential truth of Bradley's philosophy. And Ramakrishna says : 'What do you mean by inert ? Everything is

*caitanya*, consciousness' (*Gospel*, p. 766). 'The manifold has come from the One alone, the relative from the absolute. ... Brahman is without comparison. ... It is between light and darkness. It is Light, but not the light that we perceive, not material light' (*ibid.*, p. 250). 'The soul through which God sports is endowed with His special power' (*ibid.*, p. 263). Ramakrishna's message looks very much like that of Bradley's. And does the Vedantin mean anything different when it is said; *Ekasyapi kutasthasya cittataratamyad jnanaisvaryanam parena parena bhuyasi bhavati*—'It is one and the same immutable Self that manifests itself in greater and greater degrees of knowledge and power through differences in mental organization'?

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"Learn to accept blame, criticism, and accusation silently, without retaliation, even though untrue and unjustified." What a wealth of wisdom in that counsel! What does it matter what people think? It is God's approval you want. Be filled with one wish, for God, God, God. Unless you are single-hearted, my dears, He is very hard to find...He cannot and will not accept less than 100 percent surrender on the part of His devotee.

—St. Francis of Assisi

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One who serves God can never be helpless.  
The more ardently one seeks communion by  
engaging in *japa*. His service and contempla-  
tion, the fuller will be His revelation.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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