

55. This was Gandhi's name for Rajchandra.
56. Quoted in J.F.T. Jordens, "Gandhi and Religious Pluralism", in *Modern Indian Responses to Religious Pluralism*, Harold G. Coward, ed. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 5-6.
57. Ibid.
58. Gandhi, op. cit.
59. Quoted in *The Self-Realization*, op. cit., p. 40.
60. Gandhi, op. cit., p. 182.
61. Ibid., p. 179.
62. Dundas, op. cit., 229.
63. Folkert, op. cit., p. 17.
64. Population figures for the Jains until 1951 are drawn from *Statistical Abstracts Relating to British India* and from *1951 Census of India* (Indian Administration Services) as follows:
1881: 12,21,896; 1891: 14,16,638; 1901: 13,34,148; 1911: 12,48,182; 1921: 11,78,596; 1931: 12,51,340; 1941: 14,00,000 (1941 statistic is rounded off and not from this source); 1951: 16,18,406; 1961: 20,27,267; 1971: 26,04,646; 1981: 32,20,300; 1991: 38,66,300.
65. *Jain Gazette*, May, 1911, pp. 74-5; quoted in J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967), p. 327.
66. The different castes among north Indian Jains is discussed in Kailash Chand Jain, "Jaina Castes and Their Gotras in Rajasthan", in *Contribution of Jainism to Indian Culture*, R.C. Dwivedi, ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), pp. 263-9. On Jains and caste Cort, 1989, op. cit., p. 89, n. 4 says: "References to caste are found at the earliest levels of evidence of Jainism, and it is unlikely that the Jains have ever been less caste-organized than the surrounding Indian/Hindu population."
67. Charlotte Krause, "The Social Atmosphere of Present Jainism," in *The Calcutta Review*, 3rd Series, June 1930, p. 279.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., pp. 281-2.
70. Vilas Sangave, "Reform Movements Among Jains in Modern India", in Michael Carrithers and Caroline Humphrey, eds., *The Assembly of Listeners: Jains in Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 234.
71. Cort, 1993, op. cit., p. 17.
72. Ibid.
73. *The Jaina Antiquary*, vol. 22, no. 1, December 1963, pp. 33-40.
74. Observations of the author while in India in May 1998.
75. Field notes from a visit with Mr. Jyotindra Doshi at the Bartlett (Illinois) Jain Centre.

RAMMOHUN ROY

James N. Pankratz

More has been written about Rammohun Roy than about any other Indian who lived during the first half of the nineteenth century. His contributions to Indian culture are so substantial that many of his contemporaries,¹ whose contributions are significant but much more limited, have been largely neglected in the study of nineteenth-century India.

Rammohun set precedents in many of his activities. He was one of the first Indians to establish his own press and publish pamphlets and books as well as regular newspapers.² He was the first, and always the most prominent Indian, to become involved in the campaign for the abolition of *sati* (the con cremation of widows).³ He was, in the early years of the nineteenth century, the most articulate Indian to protest against British administrative injustices.⁴ He was one of the most active proponents of a broadly based educational system which would incorporate both Indian and European knowledge.⁵ He was a leader in the translation and distribution of traditional religious texts,⁶ the focus of numerous religious controversies, and a spokesman for the defense of Indian religious thought against the criticisms of Christian missionaries.⁷

And yet, although Rammohun set many precedents which were later followed by political, social, and religious reformers, many of his contemporaries criticized and opposed him vehemently. They accused him alternately of being a Christian or an atheist.⁸ They accused him of attempting to destroy the Hindu tradition, and some accused him of attempting to undermine all religious traditions.

These controversies have attracted the attention of many historians of nineteenth-century India. Rammohun's religious thought

has been summarized in numerous books, articles, and public addresses.⁹ But there has been very little systematic analysis of his religious thought. During his own lifetime his translations of religious texts and his participation in theological debates generated substantial discussion; but that discussion was more polemical than analytical. Since his death in England in 1833 most discussions of his life and religious thought have been descriptive and adulatory. Only in recent years have a few analyses of his religious thought appeared.¹⁰

This lack of analysis is unfortunate, since it has obscured several significant issues in the development of religion in modern India.¹¹ Certainly it has made it very difficult to evaluate the role of Rammohun in the development of modern Indian religious thought. For example, even though it has been common to call him the "father" of modern India, it is not at all clear just who his "children" are. During centenary celebrations of his death in 1933 and bicentenary celebrations of his birth in 1972 it was common to assert that most Indians are spiritual descendants of Rammohun.¹² But this claim is belied, insists R.C. Majumdar, by "the illuminated gates of two thousand Durga Puja pandals in Calcutta whose loud-speakers and *Dhak* or trumpets proclaim in deafening noise, year after year, the failure of Rammohun to make the slightest impression from his point of view on 99.9 per cent of the vast Hindu Samaj either in the 19th or 20th century."¹³

The broad outlines of Rammohun's religious activities are well known. He opposed polytheism and image worship, arguing for an iconoclastic, ethical monotheism. He defended the Hindu tradition against criticisms of Christians and challenged the theological adequacy of trinitarian Christianity. Near the end of his life he established the Brahmo Samaj as a place of worship for those who shared his religious convictions. On closer analysis of these activities, however, several themes emerge which are not only central to his religious thought, but also significant in the modern development of Hindu religious thought.

Early in his public life Rammohun wrote a Persian pamphlet, *Tuhfatul Muwahhidin*,¹⁴ in which he criticised established religious traditions and castigated religious leaders. He concluded his introduction to that work by asserting that "falsehood is common to all religions without distinction."¹⁵ He argued that religious leaders benefited from the fragmentation of religious groups and from the

elaboration of religious ceremonies, and therefore they emphasized the importance of customs which distinguished traditions from each other, rather than reason which united them. In fact, reason was denigrated. As Rammohun put it, "When enquiries are made about the mysteries of these things which are so wonderful that *reason* hesitates to believe in their truth, the leaders of religion, sometimes explain for the satisfaction of their followers, that in affairs of religion and faith, reason and its arguments have nothing to do; and that the affairs of religion depend upon faith and Divine Help."¹⁶

But when the critical power of reason served their purpose, they used it gladly. The adherents of one religion would mock the claims of others, and would delight in showing how unreasonable others were. They disclaimed the sensational miraculous accounts of other religions, they presented elaborate theological refutations of the doctrines of other religions, and they pointed out the inadequacies of the social systems sanctioned by other religions. Each group pronounced judgment on the adherents of other groups and on those who belonged to no specific religious groups.¹⁷

They did all this without apparently recognizing the inconsistency of their position. For while the adherents of one religion disclaimed the miracles of other groups and mocked the gullibility of those who believed them, they advanced their own accounts of the miracles performed by the power of their gods and their leaders; while they demanded consistency and credibility in the theology of their opponents, they argued that their own theological position should be accepted on other grounds; while they criticized the social implications of other religions, they were unwilling to acknowledge the social injustices which their own religion fostered; and while they pronounced doom on those who rejected their special teachings, they refused to admit that everyone, regardless of religion, enjoyed the goodness and suffered from the discomfort of life equally.¹⁸

Implicit in Rammohun's criticisms of religious leaders in the *Tuhfatul* were two criteria which he applied throughout his writings. He maintained that the canons of reason demanded universality and freedom from contradiction of all religious statements. In the *Tuhfatul* he argued that all religious traditions failed to meet these criteria. In his later writings he was less skeptical and he used these criteria as hermeneutical tools in his attempt to refine and reconcile the doctrines of Hindus and Christians.

In 1818 he used these criteria in a debate about Vaiṣṇava theology with Gosvami.¹⁹ In the course of the debate Gosvami suggested that Kṛṣṇa was the embodiment *ākāra* of brahman, but that he was visible only to his disciples. Rammohun replied that this amounted to a plea for special perception for Vaisnavas, and because this contradicted the criterion of universality, it was an unreasonable and unacceptable position. Such a position was dangerous because it made it possible for others to make similar unverifiable claims. If the standards of perception and interpretation were different for various individuals and groups, it would be impossible to authenticate or disprove the various claims one encountered. In religious discussion it would be impossible to distinguish between genuine and spurious statements unless the universal standard of reason was applied uniformly.

Rammohun used similar arguments in his debates with Christians. When he published his summary of the life of Jesus he omitted any references to miracles.²⁰ Some Christians objected to this omission. Rammohun replied that he was prepared to accept the biblical accounts of miracles as well as the miraculous stories in scriptures of other religious traditions. That was the only consistent position to take once he had accepted the miraculous accounts of one tradition. But by accepting miracles universally, he noted, he was undermining the primary use of these accounts, which was to establish the superiority of a god or a religion.

Rammohun maintained his confidence in reason throughout his writings, but in later years he seemed more aware of the limits of reason. It was reasonable, he wrote, to look at the world and say that it must have a Creator and Governor; but reason alone could not determine the specific characteristics of this Being.²¹ This additional information was revealed through the *śāstras*. Reason could not discover this information; but reason could make the *śāstras* intelligible and could reject apparent revelation which was contradictory and not universally valid. Reason was not the only means by which things might come to be known, but it was the final authority on the validity of what was known.

This emphasis on reason as a fundamental constituent of religious debate was not new in the Hindu tradition. Indian philosophers and theologians have distinguished themselves for centuries by the rigor and subtlety of their thought. Rammohun's theological writings reflect a continuity with this tradition of religious debate.

What distinguished Rammohun's thought from his predecessors, and even from many who have written since his time, was his insistence that religious traditions must be evaluated by external rather than internal criteria. He suggested that there is an Archimedean point outside all traditions, and that point is reason. The grounds for validating knowledge are universal, and no claims of esoteric knowledge outside the normal categories of validation can be admitted. This undermines the possibility of one tradition being used as normative for others.

This approach to inter-religious discussion provided Rammohun with the means of defending the Hindu tradition against its Christian critics and even of challenging the adequacy of trinitarian Christian theology. It was a crucial stage in the Indian response to Europe, for it undermined the assumption that the Christian tradition should be normative in inter-religious debate. It established a neutral norm, reason, by which this debate should be evaluated.

Rammohun's Hindu contemporaries appear to have had little interest in his debates with Christians, and many of them rejected his rationalistic interpretations of Hinduism.²² Even succeeding generations of Brahmos were more inclined to devotionism than rationalism. Yet his contribution to the modern articulation of the Hindu tradition is great. He defined the essence of the tradition in terms of the philosophical religious texts rather than the sectarian literature. In so doing he provided a hermeneutical tool for a discriminating understanding of the Hindu tradition and a rigorous response to the Christian tradition.²³ This approach has had a noticeable effect on the way in which Hindu religious thought has been reinterpreted during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even the Ramakrishna movement, a movement which owes its inspiration to a man who valued religious experience more than rational reflection, has articulated its understanding of the Hindu tradition largely in terms of the central religio-philosophical literature, the *Upaniṣads* and *Brahma Sūtra*, rather than in terms of sectarian literature or ritual experience.

A second major theme in Rammohun's work emerged out of the controversies surrounding his personal life. He frequently found it necessary to justify his own participation in theological discussions. He had to do so generally as well as specifically; that is, he had to explain why a person in his position, a *gṛhastha* (householder) had the right to be involved in theological debates, as well

as why he in particular had this right. In discussing these issues Rammohun articulated his understanding of the role of the *grhastha* in religious life. He also had to defend his practice of engaging in theological debate in public, through pamphlets and newspaper articles. In responding to these questions he set several significant precedents which have greatly affected the context of religious discussion in modern India.

In a debate with Rammohun in 1820, Kavitaker challenged Rammohun's right to be involved in public theological debate.²⁴ He noted that Rammohun had stated that the purpose of his religious quest was to understand *brahman* more fully. This, insisted Kavitaker was inappropriate for a householder actively involved in social life. Only those who had completed their social obligations were qualified to devote their time to a fuller understanding of *brahman*.

Rammohun responded by citing numerous examples of people who had become renowned for their knowledge of *brahman*, but who were nevertheless actively involved in the obligations of a householder's life.²⁵ He also noted, in several of his publications, that the *śāstras* praised the qualities of the householder who had realized *brahman*;²⁶ for this realization could only be accomplished through rigorous control of natural instincts, disciplined meditation on the meaning of self, and careful study of the Vedas.

Sometimes, however, Rammohun's critics raised more specific objections to his participation in theological debate. Kavitaker suggested that Rammohun's disregard for the criticism of rituals and customs was based on Rammohun's unwillingness to adhere to their strict requirements.²⁷ A writer in the *Samāchār Darpan* suggested that Rammohun's distribution of *śāstras* was an indication of his pride and of his arrogant assumption that he could determine what was true religion and what was not.²⁸ Other writers accused him of indulging in excessive physical pleasures,²⁹ of eating with foreigners,³⁰ and of having unjustly amassed his personal wealth.³¹ All of his opponents argued that these faults disqualified him from participation in theological discussion. Their conclusion seemed to be reinforced by the fact that although he participated in and patronized several forms of worship during his lifetime, he did not become a spiritual leader in any of them. His life did not have the qualities expected of those who spoke with authority on religious issues.

This was compounded by his frequent criticisms of religious authorities. Already in the *Tuhfatul* Rammohun had accused religious leaders of self-interest. As he put it, "Most of the leaders of different religions, for the sake of perpetuating their names and gaining honour, having invented several dogmas of faith, have declared them in the form of truth by pretending some supernatural acts or by the force of their tongue, or some other measure suitable to the circumstances of their contemporaries, and thereby have made a multitude of people adhere to them so that those poor people, having lost sight of conscience, bind themselves to submit to their leaders."³² In his later writings he noted that religious leaders emphasized the importance of rituals and image worship because these forms of worship required their services and were a "source of their worldly advantage."³³

True authority, wrote Rammohun, did not depend upon adherence to dietary regulations, avoidance of foreigners, position, birth, or personal claims to revelation.³⁴ The basis for authority was knowledge and morality. Institutional religious leaders had legitimate authority only to the extent that they were moral and knowledgeable. *Grhasthas* like himself gained recognition and authority on the same basis, and could, if they met these criteria, be active participants in theological discussions.

It is possible to argue about whether Rammohun's life provided evidence that he complied with the standards of morality and knowledge which he expected of others, but that would be to miss the central issue in this debate. The effect of Rammohun's activities and his arguments about the *grhastha* life was to challenge the context in which theological discussion took place. He stated that such discussion should take place publicly and that it could involve people from all walks of life. The issues involved in such discussions were not only for debate by scholastic groups and religious leaders. Just as Rammohun was interested in a theology which was universally valid, so he wanted that theology to be debated as widely and openly as possible. As a consequence, the individual, like Rammohun, advocating his personal interpretation of an exegetical or theological position, had as much potential authority as the recognized spokesman for a religious community. The interpretation of the representative of the corporate community had no more prior claim to validity than the interpretation of any individual.

Rammohun's opponents not only argued that his involvement in theological debates was inappropriate because of his *grahstha* life, they also argued that the open and public context in which he engaged in these discussions was inappropriate. In fact, Kavitaker said that the publication of Rammohun's books was undermining dharma and causing uncounted evils and natural calamities.³⁵ He said that if Rammohun was genuinely concerned about the good of the people he would recognize that most people were not competent to benefit from reading and hearing the translations of the *Upaniṣads* which Rammohun was publishing. It was better for people to read the simpler *śāstras*, the *Purāṇas*, before they read the *Upaniṣads*. If they read the *Upaniṣads* without the proper predisposition they would likely become confused and irreligious.³⁶

Rammohun disagreed. He argued that most people were capable of understanding that the world was created and governed by a Supreme Being who could not be adequately understood through the stories in the *Purāṇas* and who could not be properly worshipped through the use of images. Therefore, when he established the Brahma Samaj in 1828 he inaugurated a form of worship consistent with these assumptions. The worship was congregational. The service consisted of readings from the *Upaniṣads*, *Brahma Sūtra* and Vedas, exposition of these readings, prayer, and singing. In the worship service there were no prohibitions against the attendance of any caste, religion, or nationality.³⁷

The objections to Rammohun's translations of the *Upaniṣads* and to the worship of the Brahma Samaj were based on a fundamental disagreement over man's natural capacity to understand religious truth. Hindu social and religious life is based on the premise that there are significant natural differences between individuals. This is expressed in the concept of *adhikāra-bheda*, which denotes the differences in capacity or competence between people. The *adhikāra*, competence, of one person may be significantly different from the *adhikāra* of the next.

Part of the elaboration of this concept of the uniqueness of individual inclinations has been the traditional distinction between the three (sometimes four³⁸) ends of man: *kāma* (pleasure), *artha* (wealth), and *dharma* (order). It is considered natural that men may wish to pursue pleasure, wealth, or order. Some will pursue one more than the others, while other men may pursue all of these ends simultaneously or serially. It is assumed that the end which is

pursued will be determined by the individual's inclination and capacity.

Another way in which this concept has been elaborated is through the discussion of the three basic qualities (*guṇas*) of human beings: *sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (ignorance). Again, it is assumed that each individual will have some unique combination of these qualities. These categories are broad but not restrictive. They acknowledge what might be called the different psychological dispositions of people and describe appropriate life-styles for those in each category.

This concept of *adhikāra-bheda* is also at the basis of the social structure. The general *varṇa* structure of Indian society can be understood as a very basic sketch of several fundamentally different groups of people. These classifications are not intended to limit resourcefulness, but they are intended to point to general characteristics of people in the different roles in society.

This recognition of variety is equally important in religious matters. Radhakrishnan suggests that Indian religion and philosophy acknowledge the inherent variety in human inclinations by the very terminology which they use. He points particularly to the word *darsana*, which is customarily translated as "philosophy." The word means a view or a viewpoint, a perception; it suggests that all philosophy is essentially a particular view or vision of reality held by one person or one school of thought. That view is based on the particular capacities and experiences which that "viewer" has had. This means, says Radhakrishnan, that "the Hindu philosophy of religion, starts from and returns to an experimental basis. Only this basis is as wide as human nature itself."³⁹ As Aurobindo puts it in *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, "Indian religion has always felt that since the minds, the temperaments, the intellectual affinities of men are limited in their variety, a perfect liberty of thought and of worship must be allowed to the individual in his approach to the infinite."⁴⁰

Rammohun shared the assumption that people had a great variety of dispositions and capacities. But he states repeatedly that these capacities were being underestimated. In his judgment, all but a very small minority could understand the basic teachings of the *Upaniṣads*. He did not expect everyone to benefit fully from the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*, but he argued that the effect produced in each person would be proportionately successful "according to

his state of mental preparation."⁴¹ Certainly he did not agree that people would be confused or made irreligious by hearing the *Upaniṣads* read and exegeted in theological debate or worship.

Rammohun's discussions of *adhikāra* and the *grhashta* life were challenges to the assumption that religious truth was esoteric. This assumption is widespread in the Hindu tradition. One expression of it is the prohibition against permitting certain members of society to hear the Vedas being recited. Another manifestation of this assumption is the distinction made between what can be taught to the initiated (*dīkṣita*) and to the uninitiated (*adīkṣita*). Rammohun's introduction of congregational worship, his public distribution of vernacular translations of *Upaniṣads*, and his defense of *grhashta* participation in theological discussion were among the first signs of an egalitarian emphasis in religious and social reform movements in modern India.

A third major theme which emerges from the life of Rammohun was identified very aptly by Kissory Chand Mitra when he referred to Rammohun as a "religious Benthamite."⁴² By this Mitra seemed to mean that Rammohun evaluated religious beliefs and practices largely by whether they seemed to improve human life. There is ample evidence of this in Rammohun's works.

Even in the *Tuhfatul*, where Rammohun was most cynical about religious beliefs, he acknowledged that there was some utility to religion. Two essential religious beliefs, he said, were a belief in a soul and a belief in an after-life during which the soul was rewarded or punished according to the deeds done in this world.⁴³ He acknowledged that the truth of these beliefs could not be demonstrated, but yet it was reasonable to perpetuate them. It was reasonable, he said, because these beliefs helped to restrain people from participation in immoral or illegal acts. Religion, in its essence, functioned to maintain social order.

His concern for the social implications of religious doctrine contributed significantly to his interest in the teachings of Jesus. As he wrote in his introduction to *The Precepts of Jesus*, "This simple code of religion and morality is so admirably calculated to elevate men's ideas to high and liberal notions of God ... and is so well fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in the discharge of their various duties to themselves, and to society, that I cannot but hope the best effects from its promulgation in the present form."⁴⁴

It was also largely his concern for the social well-being of his

countrymen which made him so relentless in his attack on polytheism and image worship. He was convinced that polytheism and image worship resulted in the destruction of "every humane and social feeling."⁴⁵ In the introduction of his *Translation of an Abridgement of the Vedānta*⁴⁶ he charged that the "rites introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindoo idolatry" destroy the "texture of society." He acknowledged that significant religious change needed to occur for the sake of his countrymen's "political advantage and social comfort." His campaign against *sati* was a good example of his own determination to bring about such change.

Rammohun also opposed polytheism and image worship because he was convinced that they led to immorality. Stories of Kṛṣṇa, he wrote, encouraged the belief that uncleanness, nudity, debauchery, and murder were sanctioned by the example of Kṛṣṇa. The worship of Kālī was even more offensive, since it included human sacrifice.⁴⁷

There seems to be ample evidence to support a growing number of scholars who have recently interpreted Rammohun primarily as a religious utilitarian whose central concern was the well-being of society. Susobhan Sarkar remarks that Rammohun's reason for "reviving public interest in the Vedānta was prompted by his desire to promote the comfort of the people and to unite the different groups into which society had split up. He considered the forms of direct worship as a liberation from priestly tyranny and a means of realization of human brotherhood."⁴⁸ Rammohun's social concern signaled a change from an emphasis on "mystery and metaphysics to ethics and philanthropy."⁴⁹ This change of emphasis which Rammohun's work expresses so clearly is characteristic of a substantial amount of nineteenth-century Indian thought. Theology and metaphysics became tools of ethics and social change.

Rammohun's contributions to modern Indian religious thought are diverse. Some of them, such as his emphasis on the *Upaniṣads* and *Brahma Sūtra*, and his iconoclasm, are a continuing legacy maintained by the *Brahmo Samaj*. Others have been more diffuse in their impact: that is, it is difficult to determine what influence Rammohun's position has had on subsequent thinkers. Whether those continuities can be traced or not, several significant features of his religious thought can be noted in summary.

First, Rammohun's rationalistic theism provided him with a hermeneutic by which to evaluate critically his own tradition and

Christianity. In the early years of the nineteenth century this was a useful means of refining the Hindu tradition and challenging the Christian. He could be a student of "comparative religion" without making one tradition normative for others.⁵⁰ Second, Rammohun's arguments in support of the *grhashta* involvement in religious discussion, and his personal campaign of publication and debate, contributed to the individualization of religious authority. To some extent he was assisted by technology. Printing technology has made it possible for more individuals to read scriptures outside the influence of religious leaders. Privately nurtured interpretations soon began to question the accepted wisdom of traditional authorities. Rammohun not only took advantage of the possibility of doing this, he also argued strongly in favor of greater individualization of authority. Third, Rammohun's utilitarian approach to religious thought and social practice challenged the established priority of salvation (*mokṣa*) over social order (*dharma*). Rammohun wrote very little about salvation but a great deal about the social order.⁵¹ Fourth, Rammohun shifted the focus of ethical discussion from asceticism to humanitarianism. He argued that the many regulations of food and drink were burdens which obscured people's ability to see and respond to the needs of other people.

Although Rammohun never systematically developed these aspects of his thought into a unified philosophy, it is worth noting that these features of his thought provide adequate premises for articulating a philosophy of a secular state.

Notes

1. For example, Dwarkanath Tagore (1764-1846) was a dominant influence in early Indo-British commercial relationships. Radhakanta Deb (1784-1867) was instrumental in the development of numerous educational and publishing projects. Mritunjay Vidyalkar (1762-1819) was an instructor at the College of Fort William and later a pandit attached to the Supreme Court.
2. Rammohun's press was known as the Unitarian Press, established in 1823. He used it to publish his pamphlets. His newspapers, the Bengali *Sambād Kaumudi* and the Persian *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, began in 1821 and 1822 respectively and were not published at his own press. For more information about his publishing activities see Sophia Dobson Collet, *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy*, 3rd ed. (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahma Samaj, 1962), pp. 157-205 *passim*.

3. Collet, *Life and Letters*, pp. 251-266, 346, 537.
4. Rammohun's most famous protests were against the Press Ordinance of March 14, 1823 (see Collet, *Life and Letters*, pp. 423-454), and the Jury Act which became effective in 1827 (see Collet, *Life and Letters*, pp. 266-269).
5. His precise involvement in the establishment of educational institutions such as the Hindu College has been questioned in recent years. See Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, *On Rammohun Roy* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1972), pp. 20-39. But his commitment to a broadly based educational system is not in dispute.
6. He was aware that he was establishing a precedent by doing this. He remarks on this in "A Defence of Hindoo Theism" (1817), in *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, eds. Kalidas Nag and Debajyoti Burman (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahma Samaj, 1946), 2 : 85. Hereafter this collection of his English writings is referred to as *Works*.
7. A list of Rammohun's publications is included in Collet, *Life and Letters*, pp. 525-41. More recently a list of Rammohun's religious publications has been included in Ajit Kumar Ray, *The Religious Ideas of Rammohun Roy* (New Delhi: Kanak Publications, 1976), pp. 99-103.
8. Two terms are used interchangeably here. *Nāstik* refers to one who does not believe, an atheist. *Pāṣaṇḍa* refers to a heretic or to one who falsely assumes the character of a Hindu.
9. The most extensive summaries appear throughout the biography written by Collet; in Amitabha Mukherjee, *Reform and Regeneration in Bengal, 1774-1823* (Calcutta: Rabindra Bharati University, 1968), pp. 125-202; and in several Bengali biographies, most notably Nagendranath Chattopadhyay, *Mahātmā Rājā Rāmmohun Rāyer Jiban Charit*, 5th ed. (Allahabad: Indian Press Ltd., 1928).
10. The most noteworthy analyses are those by Ajit Kumar Ray, *The Religious Ideas of Rammohun Roy*; by Sisir Kumar Das, in Niharranjan Ray, ed., *Rammohun Roy: A Bi-Centenary Tribute* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1974), pp. 71-91; and by several authors in V.C. Joshi, ed., *Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernization in India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1975).
11. One such issue is the development of religion in eighteenth-century India. For a brief description of how eighteenth-century religious thought is usually dismissed, see James N. Pankratz, "The Religious Thought of Rammohun Roy" (Ph. D. diss., McMaster University, 1975), pp. 7-10.
12. This claim was made often during the 1972 bicentenary celebrations, most dramatically in a speech read on behalf of Indira Gandhi in Calcutta in June at the National Library.

13. Majumdar, p. 40.
14. Published in English as *Tuhfatul Muwahhiddin or a Gift to Deists*, trans. Moulavi Obaidullah el Obaide (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahma Samaj, 1949).
15. *Tuhfatul*, n.p.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12, 16-17.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
19. Rāmmohun Rāy, *Rāmmohun Granthābali*, eds. Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajanikanta Das (Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, n.d.), 2 : 41-64. Hereafter cited as *Granthābali*.
20. "The Precepts of Jesus: The Guide to Peace and Happiness" (1820) in *Works*, 5: 1-54.
21. This is essentially his point in his "Translation of an Abridgement of the Vedant" (1816), in *Works*, 2 : 57-72.
22. In fact, his involvement in theological debates with Christians seemed to convince many of his contemporaries that he was probably inclined toward Christianity and thus a traitor to his Hindu tradition.
23. His response to Christians is contained in various publications now collected in *Works*, vols. 4-6. Christian criticisms were mostly directed against the sectarian rather than the philosophical literature, and Rammohun's approach diverted the criticisms substantially.
24. This debate may be found at *Granthābali*, 2 : 67-93.
25. Among the many examples Rammohun cited were Janaka, an ancient philosopher-king of Mithilā; Yajñavalkya, a famous sage and teacher; and Vasistha, the sage of the *Rg Veda*, Epics, and Purānas.
26. See especially "Translation of the Ishopanishad" (1816) in *Works*, 2: 43-44; and "Brahmanistha Grhasther Lakshman" (1826), in *Granthābali*, 4 : 29-33.
27. *Granthābali*, 2 : 75.
28. Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay, ed., *Sangbad Patre Sekāler Kathā*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, (1949), 1 : 327.
29. Gaurikanta Bhattacharya, *Jānānjan*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta, 1838), pp. 4, 14-17.
30. Collet, *Life and Letters*, p. 125, records how careful Rammohun was not to give evidence for this accusation.
31. Kavitaiker raises this issue at *Granthābali*, 2 : 72-73.
32. *Tuhfatul*, p. 1.
33. *Works*, 2 : 88.
34. *Ibid.*, 2 : 114, 159.
35. *Granthābali*, 2 : 71-72.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
37. For a description of the establishment of the Brahma Samaj see Collet, *Life and Letters*, pp. 209-50. The Trust Deed outlining the purposes of the Brahma Samaj is reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 468-477.

38. The fourth end, *mokṣa* (liberation), is sometimes regarded as one of this group and at other times is considered a separate goal which involves turning away from the other three.
39. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life* (London: Unwin Books, 1960), p. 16.
40. Sri Aurobindo, *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1959), p. 138.
41. *Works*, 2 : 132.
42. Kissory Chand Mitra, "Rammohun Roy," *Calcutta Review*, 4 (July-December, 1845) : 388.
43. *Tuhfatul*, p. 5.
44. *Works*, 5 : 4.
45. *Ibid.*, 2 : 52.
46. *Ibid.*, 2 : 60.
47. *Ibid.*, 2 : 92.
48. Susobhan Sarkar *Bengal Renaissance and Other Essays* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1970), p. 11.
49. Iqbal Singh, *Rammohun Roy* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1958), p. 78.
50. Many authors have credited him with being the "first student of comparative religion."
51. His most clear, although very short, statement about salvation/liberation is in *Works*, 2 : 197-198.

SVAMI DAYANANDA SARASVATI

Arvind Sharma

Modern India, that is to say, the India of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, produced several remarkable thinkers to whose originality the other chapters of this book bear witness. But when we speak of Svami Dayananda Sarasvati,¹ we are talking of a case in which both the man and his message were not merely original but perhaps unique. He was unique as a man in the sense that while all the other thinkers of the period under discussion had an effective knowledge of the English language, Svami Dayananda was innocent of it. "When Keshub expressed his regret that Dayananda did not know English, since if he had he could have become his companion on his next visit to Britain, Dayananda retorted that it was a greater pity that the leader of the Brahma Samaj knew no Sanskrit and spoke in a language most Indians could not understand."² And his message was unique in the sense that while the other thinkers of his time were moving away, in one way or another, from the dogma of infallible revelation, Svami Dayananda declared that "the Vedas were not only true, but they contained all truth, including the ideas of modern science."³

This essay, therefore, naturally falls in several parts. The first part will deal with the man, especially with his changing ideological patterns and the directions of that change. This will naturally lead us finally to identify his more mature thought, chronologically and hopefully logically as well. In the rest of the essay his views on Vedic revelation, attitudes to other religions, reconversion to Hinduism and social and political issues will be considered.

Changing Ideological Patterns

To begin with, the main events of the life of Svami Dayananda (1824-1883) may be narrated, though necessarily with a certain economy.

Dayananda was born into a Brahman family in a princely state of Gujarat, a section of western India relatively untouched by British cultural influence. His well-to-do father instructed him in Sanskrit and Shaivism from the age of five, but Dayananda revolted against idol-worship at fourteen, and to avoid being married ran away from home at nineteen to become a sannyasi (religious mendicant) of the *Sarasvati* order. He spent the next fifteen years as a wandering ascetic, living in jungles, in Himalayan retreats, and at places of pilgrimage throughout northern India. A tough, blind old teacher completed his education by literally beating into him a reverence for the four Vedas and a disdain for all later scriptures.

For the rest of his life Dayananda lectured in all parts of India on the exclusive authority of the Vedas. Time after time he challenged all comers to religious debates, but few could withstand his forceful forensic attack. Idol-worship is not sanctioned by the Vedas, he pointed out, nor is untouchability, nor child marriage, nor the subjection of women to unequal status with men. The study of the Vedas should be open to all, not just to brahmins, and a man's caste should be in accordance with his merits. Such revolutionary teachings evoked the wrath of the orthodox and numerous attempts were made on Dayananda's life. His great physical strength saved him from swordsmen, thugs, and cobras, but the last of many attempts to poison him succeeded. Like John the Baptist, he accused a princely ruler of loose living, and the women in question instigated his death by having ground glass put in his milk.⁴

An ideological-analytical approach, as opposed to a merely biographical-factual one as presented above, enables one to distinguish six more or less clearly marked phases in Dayananda's life. The first one may be dated from 1824-1845 and represents the period of his stay with his family, during the course of which he

formed an intense desire to seek his personal salvation—a decision to which the loss of his sister and favorite uncle must have made its contribution.⁵

The second phase must be dated from 1845-1860, when the young man, now turned Svami, roamed the sacred regions of north India,⁶ and especially the Himalayas, in search of salvation through yoga, during the course of which he temporarily took to using hemp as well.⁷

The third phase, which may be dated from 1860-1867, is represented by his discipleship of Virajananda,⁸ which was a turning point in his career as it turned him from a private spiritual aspirant into a public religious crusader.

The fourth phase is represented by the period from 1867-1872 which witnessed Dayananda's first efforts in the direction of reforming Hinduism. It was also a formative period in the growth of his new ideology. The climactic event during this phase was provided by the famous debate over the Vedic sanction of idolatry at Banaras.

The fifth period, from 1872-1875, is extremely significant, as it saw Svami Dayananda come in contact with the Hindu elite of Calcutta. This did not affect the content of his teachings,⁹ but did much to change his style. As a matter of fact Keshub Chandra Sen gave "the Svami two useful concrete pieces of advice, which he readily accepted," namely, that the Svami cover his body fully rather than appear in a loincloth, and that he lecture in Hindi rather than Sanskrit. It was also at Calcutta that the Svami discovered the importance of public lectures and publication.¹⁰ His public lectures were enthusiastically received and the *Satyārtha Prakāśa*, his well-known work, appeared in 1875.¹¹

The last phase of the Svami Dayananda's life is covered by the period 1875-1883, which saw the formation of the Arya Samaj and its success, especially in the Punjab. It ends with his death in the course of his efforts to enlist the rulers of Rajputana on his side. During this period he also produced a revised edition of the *Satyārtha Prakāśa*, among other works.

We will now concern ourselves with a few examples of the changing patterns of his values. It may be particularly useful to choose those areas in which his thoughts changed significantly over the years. It may further be useful to choose aspects of mature thought in some important areas associated with Svami Dayananda

which give the impression of being set from the very beginning though they really underwent a process of gradual crystallization.

The last chapter of the *Satyārtha Prakāśa* (last edition)¹² contains a statement of Svami Dayananda's beliefs and disbeliefs. It might be illuminating to subject some of these to the analytical process outlined above.

- (1) "I hold that the four Vedas (the divine revealed knowledge and religious truth comprising the Samhita or Mantras) as infallible and as authority by their very nature."¹³

Until 1870 Svami Dayananda seems to have held the view that the Brahmanas could be considered as Veda along with the Samhita portions.¹⁴ As a matter of fact the process of the gradual narrowing of the focus on the Samhita and especially on the *Rig-veda-samhitā* alone had been detected long ago by B.P. Pal, as the historian R.C. Majumdar pointed out¹⁵ when he observed:

The absolutely authoritative character of the Vedas, and Vedas alone, formed the fundamental creed of Dayananda. At first he included within the Vedas both Brahmanas and Upanishads, but when it was pointed out that the Upanishads themselves repudiated the authority of the Vedas as the highest or the only revelation, Dayananda modified his views. Ultimately the Samhita portion of the Vedas, and particularly the *Rigveda Samhita*, was alone held to be the real Vedic revelation at least for all practical purposes.¹⁶

We may next take a case which exemplifies change in theological orientation over the years.

- (2) "There are three things beginningless: namely, God, souls and Prakriti or the material cause of the universe."¹⁷

This is a fairly standard position in non-*advaitic* Vedanta but in the first edition of the *Satyārtha Prakāśa* Svami Dayananda had propounded what is a strikingly Christian idea: the concept of creation *ex nihilo*!¹⁸ The Lord was regarded as being close to a creator in the Christian sense in 1875. But this meant that the universe was not beginningless and endless—and this is indeed what Svami Dayananda believed. The theological transformation involved here has been discussed in detail by J.T.F. Jordens.¹⁹

- (3) "Moksha or salvation is the emancipation of the soul from all woes and suffering . . . and resumption of earthly life after the expiration of a fixed period of enjoying salvation."²⁰

In 1875, however Svami Dayananda had declared *moksha* to be an eternal state.²¹ But by the time of the second edition of the *Satyartha Prakāśa*, Svami Dayananda had departed from this position and come round to the view expressed above. The logic underlying it seemed to relate to the logic of *karma*. J.T.F. Jordens points out:

The second edition omits all these special powers of the *sannyasi*: he remains bound by works. It clearly states that the *jiva's* knowledge, even in *moksha*, can never become unlimited, and goes as far as declaring that "the relation between the *jiva* and *karma* is an eternal one." The essence of Dayananda's argumentation is as follows: *moksha* is achieved by the application of certain means, these being right actions. Whatever change is affected by the application of means can be undone by the application of means of the same order. *Moksha*, a change of condition effected by human action, can be undone by human action. Man's activity itself is an eternal quality, but its effects, even its major effects, bondage and liberation, are necessarily of limited duration: *moksha*, therefore, must be limited in time.²²

Sometimes, even when the ideas themselves did not change, the logic underlying them was extended or refined over time. In 1875 Svami Dayananda was perhaps already moving in the direction that the *Sudras* had a right to study the Vedas, but the argument had to be somewhat circuitous. He began by maintaining that "the *Shūdras* who in a properly structured society are those lacking the necessary intelligence, are excluded"²³ from the study of the Vedas. It could, however, be understood that this did not "refer to the *Shūdras of the time*, because the society has not yet been properly structured."²⁴ Technically, therefore, the *Shūdras* were to be excluded, but actually it may not be so. Subsequently, however, Svami Dayananda became forthright in the advocacy of the right of the *Shūdras* to study the Vedas and liberated himself from the vestigial traces of the orthodox tradition by arguing could God be "so biased as to forbid the study of the Vedas to them and prescribe it

for the twice-born?"²⁵ He also brings his familiarity with the Vedic corpus to bear on the point and quotes Vedic verses indicating that Vedas could be studied by the *Shūdras*. The verse quoted is *Yajur-Veda* 26.2.²⁶

Thus it is clear that the thought of Svami Dayananda was molded by the experiences he had, the men he met, and the situations he encountered. His mental firmament, like that of any dynamic thinker, was in motion even while giving the appearance to being unchanging. If, however, there was any orientation to this cosmic movement of his thought, it is to be found in the polar role the concept of Vedic revelation came to play in it. After a somewhat diachronic study of his ideas, it is to a synchronic study of this concept of his to which we must now turn.

Scriptural Authority

When the Arya Samaj was founded by Svami Dayananda to propagate his ideas, one of these was represented by the motto: "Go back to the Vedas."²⁷ What then was Svami Dayananda's attitude towards the Vedas as representative of scriptural authority within Hinduism?²⁸

The "Veda is precisely the sign, perhaps the only one," of Hindu *orthodoxy*,²⁹ as distinguished from Hinduism, so that one need not be surprised if Svami Dayananda offers the traditional salutation to the Vedas. But while "even in the most orthodox domains, to reverence the Vedas ha[d] come to be a simple 'raising of the hat,' in passing, to an idol by which one no longer intends to be encumbered later on,"³⁰ it became, in the case of Dayananda, a direct "source of inspiration."³¹ Dayananda preached in "favour of returning to an unqualified adherence to the Veda, and claimed that explicit principles of pure monotheism and of social and moral reform could be found in the hymns."³² A key aspect, therefore, of Dayananda's attitude towards *spiritual* authority is his wholehearted acceptance of the Vedas, which he regarded vitally and not merely formally as the "ultimate source of religious authority."³³ This attitude may be contrasted with that of Ramakrishna who "did not fear to teach that 'the truth is not in the Vedas, one should act according to the Tantras,'"³⁴ although elsewhere he "is more moderate, or let us say, indifferent."³⁵ And although Vivekananda's attitude was perhaps "more deferential"³⁶ even he is known to have remarked

that "in India . . . if I take certain passages of the Vedas, and I juggle with the text and give it the most impossible meaning . . . all the imbeciles will follow me in a crowd."³⁷ These remarks may be contrasted with the forthright statement by Dayananda in his statement of Beliefs and Disbeliefs (*svamantavyamantavya*) on the acceptance of Vedic authority quoted earlier.

The *intensity* of belief in the Vedas Dayananda seems to share with the Mimāṃsā and Vedānta schools of Hindu philosophy,³⁸ although the form of his belief seems to be more in the tradition of the Niyaya school, for he bases the authoritativeness of the Vedas not on the doctrine of their eternal self-existence,³⁹ but on the Niyaya belief that "the Vedas were uttered by Isvara himself."⁴⁰

However, although Svami Dayananda agrees with most of Hinduism in paying homage to the Vedas and surpasses much of it in his commitment to them,⁴¹ he departs radically from tradition in his definition of the corpus of literature which may legitimately be regarded as the Veda.⁴² Thus, although, "In accepting the Vedas as the only authority Dayananda was practically on a line with Raja Rammohan Roy,"⁴³ he differed with him both in the definition of the corpus of the Veda and in its interpretation. Rammohun Roy turned to the Upanishads for inspiration, but though at first Dayananda "included within the Vedas both Brahmanas and Upanishads . . . when it was pointed out that the Upanishads themselves repudiated the authority of the Vedas as the highest or the only revelation, Dayananda modified his views."⁴⁴

Dayananda also held to "the four *Brahmanas* of the four Vedas, the six *Angas* and *Upangas*, the four *Up-Vedas*, and the 1127 *Shakhas* of the Vedas as books composed by *Brahmas* and other *Rishis*, as commentaries on the Vedas, and having authority of a dependent character. In other words, they are authoritative insofar as they are in accord with the Vedas, whatever passages in these works are opposed to the Vedas, I hold them as unauthoritative."⁴⁵ This rather "narrow" conception of the scriptural base of Hinduism is generally believed to have limited the appeal of his movement.⁴⁶ D.S. Sarma writes:

It is regrettable that, while insisting on the authority of the Veda, Svami Dayananda has not sufficiently emphasized the importance of the Upanishads, which explain and amplify what is really valuable in the Samhita, and that he has not recognized the authoritativeness of a scripture like the *Gita*,

which is the essence of all the Upanishads, because he was apparently repelled by the Puranic pictures of Krishna given in the *Vishnu Purana* and the *Bhagavata*. He could have strengthened his hand a thousand-fold if he had included the *Gita* in his canon and rightly interpreted its dynamic gospel of action so congenial to his own temper and outlook. As it is, Dayananda arbitrarily limited the extent of the Hindu religious canon and thus to a certain extent stultified himself, as the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj stultified themselves by their blatant rationalism and the right of private individual judgment at every step in going through the Hindu scriptures. But probably the very limitation of his canon added to the powerfulness of his message and served his immediate purpose of purifying Hinduism and bringing all Hindus under one banner and enabling them to ward off the attacks of alien religions in India. For there is no doubt that the Arya Samaj, which Dayananda founded, is the church militant in the bosom of Hinduism.⁴⁷

The significance of these developments may now be assessed. The attitude of Svami Dayananda may be described as "dogmatic" in that he accepted the doctrine of the infallibility of the Vedic authority in Hindu philosophical speculation.⁴⁸ According to B.C. Pal, in this Dayananda was following the example set by Christianity and Islam,⁴⁹ although Dayananda criticized severely the claims of Christianity and Islam to be regarded as revealed religions.⁵⁰ Dayananda was in turn criticized severely by Mahatma Gandhi for the severity of his criticisms.⁵¹ Mahatma Gandhi's criticism seems to stem at least in part from the fact that Dayananda's position seems to repudiate Hindu tolerance of other religions. One may note here, however, "the view of Jaimini and Kumarila (acceptable to all authorities such as Mankara and Rāmanuja) that the Vedic faith is exclusive" which "shows that Hinduism is as exclusive as the Semitic faiths and brooks no rivals."⁵² Thus Dayananda's dogmatic exclusiveness could as well be related to a strand within the Hindu tradition itself. It may be pointed out, however, that although Dayananda gave his own interpretation of the Vedas, "theoretically every member of the Arya Samaj is free to form his own conclusions," though "in practice, the *Samhita* of the Rigveda, as interpreted by Dayananda . . . formed the bedrock on which stood the entire structure of Arya Samaj."⁵³ If, as will be shown later,

Dayananda (1) meant only the *Saṁhitā* portions of the Vedas by the term *Veda*;⁵⁴ and (2) also believed in the doctrine of *karma* and rebirth⁵⁵ then (3) if in the Vedas and earlier Brahmana literature the doctrine of transmigration is nowhere clearly mentioned,⁵⁶ one is faced with something of a problem.⁵⁷ Another consequence of this concept of the Vedas was that Dayananda came to recommend certain social usages which had gone out of vogue. Thus *Rig-Veda* X.40.2 refers to *Niyoga* or levirate.⁵⁸ Dayananda allows it,⁵⁹ although it had gone out of vogue.⁶⁰ Dayananda has been criticized for trying to revive an "immoral" practice.⁶¹

Dayananda's emphasis on the *Saṁhitā* raises not only the theological and sociological issues; his concept of scriptural authority also raises epistemological issues. In Hindu thought the means of valid knowledge (*pramāṇas*) constitute one list and the sources of *Dharma* (*dhamar-mūla*) (see *Manusmṛti* II.6., etc.) a separate list, although in both cases Vedic authority is regarded as supreme. Dayananda, working on the basis of the supremacy of Vedic authority, it would appear, combines these two lists under the name of *parikṣas* or tests of knowledge into one and remarks: "There are five kinds of tests of knowledge. The first is the attributes, works and nature of God, and the teachings of the *Veda*. The second is eight kinds of evidence such as direct cognition. etc. The third is 'Laws of Nature.' The fourth is conduct and practice of *aptas*; the fifth is purity and conviction of one's own conscience. Every man should sift truth from error with the help of these five tests, and accept truth and reject error."⁶²

Dayananda's attitude toward the scriptures of Hinduism differed from that of many other leaders of the Hindu renaissance not only on the question of what these scriptures were but also the manner in which they were to be interpreted. Thus, while Raja Rammohan Roy "accepted the authority of the Vedas as interpreted by the exegetics of ancient Hinduism," Dayananda altogether rejected the commentaries of *Sāyaṇa* and *Mahidhara* and did not consider any other commentary as binding on anyone. Dayananda therefore gave his own interpretation,⁶³ which, strikingly, though at variance with both the traditional and the modern approaches to the Vedas, tries to read in the Vedas the results of modern science. Thus, Dayananda's approach is not "scientific" in the scholarly sense but is science-oriented in the sense that he uses his scholarship to show the presence of science in the Vedas. Such an interpretation

of the Vedas is of profound significance in the context of his attitude towards scriptural authority. This significance may be summarized thus:

The word *Veda* means "knowledge." It is God's knowledge, and therefore pure and perfect. This transcendent and heavenly knowledge embraces the fundamental principles of all the sciences. These principles God revealed in two ways: (1) in the form of the four Vedas . . . and (2) in the form of the world of nature, which was created according to the principles laid down in the Vedas . . . The Vedas, then, being regarded as "the Scripture of true knowledge," the perfect counterpart of God's knowledge so far as basic principles are concerned, and the "pattern" according to which Creation proceeded, it follows that the fundamental principle of Vedic exegesis will be the interpretation of the Vedas in such a way as to find in them the results of scientific investigation.⁶⁴

The significance of this position, in the light of the traditional Hindu attitude towards scriptural authority, is nothing less than revolutionary. The traditional Hindu position on scriptural authority, especially as developed in the school of *Advaita Vedānta*, has been that scriptural authority is supreme only in the supra-sensual realm. It is not supreme in the realm of experience represented by the senses, the mind, etc., for *pramāṇas* such as perception and inference suffice to provide us with valid knowledge of this realm of experience. It is in matters relating to *dharma*, or the determination of right and wrong, and *brahman*, or the nature of ultimate reality, that scriptural authority is supreme. Hence Mankara's well-known statement that even if a thousand scriptures were to tell us that fire is cold they will have to be disregarded because the scripture here is making a statement outside its proper jurisdiction.⁶⁵ Whether fire is hot or cold is to be determined properly by *pratyakṣa* and not by *śabda*. Such an attitude towards scriptural authority disjoins religion and science and may in fact be one of the factors why the conflict between religion and science was felt less keenly within Hinduism than in certain other religions. Svami Dayananda, however, reverses this position by bringing the results of scientific investigation within the scope of scriptural inquiry.

Svami Dayananda thus gave his own interpretation to the Vedas, defined as consisting of the *Saṁhitā* portion only.⁶⁶ If the

sincerity of Dayananda's motives has occasionally been doubted⁶⁷ his methods and results have far more often been criticized⁶⁸ with varying degrees of intensity.⁶⁹ In view of this generally adverse reception to his interpretation, for which Max Müller uses the expression "incredible"⁷⁰ and which Renou describes as "extremely aberrant"⁷¹ but not without realizing its cultural significance, it is remarkable that Sri Aurobindo should remark:

There is then nothing fantastical in Dayananda's idea that the Veda contains truths of science as well as truths of religion. I will even add my own conviction that the Veda contains other truths of a science which the modern world does not at all possess, and, in that case, Dayananda has rather understated than overstated the depth and range of the Vedic wisdom. Immediately the character of the Veda is fixed in the sense Dayananda gave to it, the merely ritual, mythological, polytheistic interpretation of Sayanancarya collapses, and the merely mateological and materialistic European interpretation collapses. We have, instead, a real scripture, one of the world's sacred books and the divine word of a lofty and noble religion.⁷²

One circumstance renders Aurobindo's endorsement remarkable. While Dayananda was innocent of English and Western culture, Aurobindo "was sent by his father to England when he was only seven... and returned to India only in his twenty-first year, after completing his education in London and Cambridge. He became a scholar in Greek and Latin and got record marks in these languages in the Indian Civil Service examination. He also learned French, German and Italian and could read Dante and Goethe in the original."⁷³ Inasmuch as the modern Western interpretation of the Vedas draws on comparative linguistics, that Aurobindo, notwithstanding his wide acquaintance with classical and modern languages should not have opted for the Western method (or for that matter, the traditional Indian) but for one "who stands absolutely alone as an interpreter of the Veda"⁷⁴ is remarkable. It should be noted, however, that Dayananda himself regarded his beliefs to be "in conformity with the beliefs of all the sages from Brahma down to Jaimini."⁷⁵ Now back once more to Aurobindo. Is it a mere coincidence that Dayananda incorporated science in the interpretation of the Vedas and his admirer in this respect, Aurobindo, incorporated

evolution into the interpretation of Hinduism? Be that as it may, Aurobindo "shares a return to the Vedic hymns with Dayananda Sarasvati, whom he admired for his attempt 'to re-establish the Veda as a living religious scripture,' though rejecting the detail of Dayananda's interpretation."⁷⁶ To take an extreme example of such detail, Dayananda interpreted *Rg-Veda* 1.2.7, usually regarded as an invocation to Mitra and Varuna to mean that "water is generated by the combination of hydrogen and oxygen."⁷⁷

The attitude of Svami Dayananda towards scriptural authority also differs in another crucial respect from that of his forebears and peers. It was shown earlier how he establishes their correspondence with nature. It was also shown how he regards the Vedas as the sole revelation of God. Accordingly, Svami Dayananda argued that the Vedas were "the fountainhead of science and religion for all mankind."⁷⁸ Thus, the "principle that all the sciences have their revealed source in the Vedas is enlarged by the further principle that all religions have their original and inspired source in the same early literature."⁷⁹

Attitudes toward other Religions

At this point the attitude of Dayananda toward other religions and his attitude toward scriptural authority intersect. Before one proceeds further, however, the attitude of Dayananda toward other religions calls for a clarification. Dayananda is believed to have been hostile toward religions other than Hinduism⁸⁰—perhaps more so than any other leader of the Hindu renaissance—but his position needs to be analyzed with greater care than seems to have been bestowed on it.⁸¹ He clearly states in his autobiography that "My sole object is to believe in what is true and help others to believe in it. I neither accept the demerits of different faiths whether Indian or alien, nor reject what is good in them."⁸² It is noteworthy that Dayananda "attacks what he calls 'untrue elements' in Islam or Christianity the same way as he does in regard to Hinduism. He shows no leniency to the latter on account of its being his own, or that of his fore-fathers' religion."⁸³ It is well-known that Svami Vivekananda attended the Parliament of World Religions at Chicago in 1893; it is not as well-known that Svami Dayananda "went so far as to invite a conference of the representatives of all religions on the occasion of the Delhi Durbar in 1877. Keshub

Chandra Sen, Sir Syed Ahmed, and Munshi Alakhdari were among those who responded to the invitation. Dayananda's proposal was premature, but his idea that the exponents of various faiths should put their heads together to evolve a formula of united activity was unique in those days."⁸⁴ In the introduction to *Satyārtha Prakāśa* he writes: "At present there are learned men in all religions. If they give up prejudices, accept all those broad principles on which all religions are unanimous, reject differences and behave affectionately towards each other, much good will be done to the world. The differences of learned people aggravate the differences among the common masses with the result that miseries increase and happiness is lost."⁸⁵ It is also noteworthy that he concludes his statement of beliefs and disbeliefs with the following comment:

In short, I accept universal maxims: for example, speaking of truth is commended by all, and speaking of falsehood is condemned by all. I accept all such principles. I do not approve of the wrangling of the various religions, against one another for they have, by propagating their creeds, misled the people and turned them into one another's enemy. My purpose and aim are to help in putting an end to this mutual wrangling, to preach universal truth, to bring all men under one religion so that they may, by ceasing to hate each other and firmly loving each other, live in peace and work for their common welfare. May this view through the grace and help of the Almighty God, and with the support of all virtuous and pious men, soon spread in the whole world so that all may easily acquire righteousness, wealth, gratification of legitimate desires and attain salvation, and thereby elevate themselves and live in happiness. This alone is my chief aim.⁸⁶

These are noble sentiments. However, to argue on their basis that Dayananda had moved from his position that "all truth is found in the Vedas"⁸⁷ to the position that "truth, wherever it is found, is of the Veda."⁸⁸ is perhaps unwarranted. For the one religion under which all were to live in harmony seems to have had for him both a moral and a revelatory component. Men of all religions could act together on the moral plane but if they were to belong to one true religion it had to be the Vedic revelation.⁸⁹ In order to accomplish this latter goal it was the duty of the Arya Samaj "(a) to recall India to the forsaken Vedic paths and (b) to preach the Vedic gospel throughout the whole world."⁹⁰

Reconversion to Hinduism

Before the gospel could be preached to the world, however, it had to be preached in India. But this presented a problem. Hinduism, especially in the nineteenth century, was regarded as a non-missionary religion.⁹¹ It existed, however, in the midst of religions which were actively missionary, especially Islam and Christianity. This meant that these two religions, to the extent that their missionary activities were successful, continued to gain adherents at the expense of the Hindu community. This state of affairs did not go down well with Svami Dayananda,⁹² as the logic of his position unfolded itself. First, if the Vedic message had to be broadcast in the world one had to begin with India. Second, if the Vedic religion was meant to purify Hinduism, should it not also be used to purify those Hindus who had ceased to be Hindus, that is, had become Muslims or Christians but could now be purified and readmitted into the Hindu fold? Thus the themes of conversion of the world to Vedic Hinduism and the reconversion of the Indian Muslims and Christians to Vedic Hinduism converged—indeed, the latter in a sense geographically if not necessarily logically preceded the other. It was in the Punjab that Svami Dayananda reconverted some Christians and according to J.T.F. Jordens "this was the only area where Dayananda showed an active interest in *shuddhi*, although he occasionally reiterated his stand that *shuddhi* was a proper and necessary procedure."⁹³ Although Svami Dayananda did not pursue the idea with particular zeal, it was to become a major element in the activities of the Arya Samaj, which he founded, in subsequent years.⁹⁴

The repercussions of the Suddhi movement were far-reaching; on the one hand it infused a missionary spirit in Hinduism⁹⁵ but by the same token, it contributed to the increase in communal tension,⁹⁶ especially in the Punjab.⁹⁷

Social and Political Issues

Svami Dayananda's views on social and political issues may now be briefly considered. Dayananda emphasized the value of education, especially with a Vedic orientation for all, irrespective of caste and sex. As for English he "advocated its study for one hour a day and the rest of the time was to be devoted to the study

of the Vedas."⁹⁸ The Arya Samaj subsequently developed internal differences on the role of Western education.⁹⁹ Svami Dayananda also favoured cow protection and is believed to have been the "first who pleaded for the protection of the cow on a *utilitarian* principle."¹⁰⁰ Here again we find an element in his teaching which can only be partly traced to the Vedic hymns,¹⁰¹ but "he rightly claimed that they had nothing to say on image worship, caste, polygamy, child marriage and the seclusion of widows"¹⁰² and agitated for reform in these areas. It has been noted that while initially Dayananda advocated education for all, Sudras were to be excluded from Vedic education.¹⁰³ He consequently modified his views to include not only the Sūdras but also *ati-sūdras*, those below the Mudras,¹⁰⁴ which is more in line with the Vedic hymns. Thus the germ for the movement for the amelioration of the depressed classes had been laid, as had been the case with reconversion or *shuddhi*. Indeed, "out of the *shuddhi* movement there logically developed about the beginning of the twentieth century a campaign to recruit low castes and untouchables, with a ceremony evolved to invest the new recruits with the sacred thread"¹⁰⁵ thus making them equal with the high caste Hindus.

The political ideas of Dayananda have received less recognition than his social views. He did not approve of foreign rule over India, and asked foreigners "not to live here as rulers,"¹⁰⁶ a sentiment which Gandhi was to echo in almost identical words. Towards the end of his life, he was urging the local rulers of India, especially in Rajputana, to form some kind of a confederation.¹⁰⁷ The Arya Samaj promoted nationalism along with Hindu revivalism. It is no accident that among the later Arya Samajists, Svami Shraddhananda was assassinated by a Muslim¹⁰⁸ and Lala Lajpat died probably as a result of being bludgeoned by a British officer.¹⁰⁹ Svami Dayananda had advocated indigenous rule (*svadeshi raj*) as opposed to foreign rule (*videshi raj*) and harked back to the universal and presumably golden rule of the Vedic age.¹¹⁰

All the various constituents of Dayananda's approach may now be pulled together. This task has been admirably performed by H.D. Griswold in a rather extended but comprehensive passage. He writes:

Let us first notice the problem of the regeneration of India, religious, political, and scientific, as it presented itself to the mind of the founder of the Arya Samaj. He found himself

confronted by a variety of faiths both indigenous and foreign. Of religions of foreign origin there were Islam, introduced in the tenth century and Christianity, a comparatively recent importation from the West. The indigenous religion of India, namely, Hinduism, presented itself as a vast congeries of faiths, ranging all the way from the strict *advaita* doctrine of Sankaracharya to the crudest and grossest superstitious embodied in the Tantras, the whole being held together in a kind of external unity by the vast hierarchical organization of caste. Such was the religious environment of Svami Dayananda. There was also a political environment furnished by the vast and impressive administration of the British government in India, and a scientific environment consisting of the spectacle on all sides of railways, canals, telegraph wires, steam-engines, etc. Thus, as Svami Dayananda wandered up and down over India, he studied not only the past but also the present, not only the thought of India as embodied in *Veda* and *Upanishad*, *Sutra* and *Epics*, but also the thought of Europe as embodied especially in the inventions of modern science, everywhere manifest in India.

The problem which confronted him was how to reform Indian religion, how to effect a synthesis of the old and the new, of the East and the West, in such a way as to guarantee the intellectual and spiritual supremacy of the Indian people, do full justice to the attainments of other nations, and provide a universalistic programme of religion. The solution of this problem was found by Svami Dayananda in the doctrine of the Vedas as the revealed Word of God.¹¹¹

It is precisely because of this centrality accorded to Vedic revelation that even though the movement launched by Dayananda shares several features in common with the reform movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is considered the "leading instance of revivalsim"¹¹² rather than of reformation, despite the fact that Dayananda shares the dynamism of the other leading lights of modern Hinduism.¹¹³

Notes

1. This is a transliterated form of the name which will be favored throughout the essay. For the sake of brevity he may be referred to as Svami Dayananda or only as Dayananda. For more on his name see James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909) 2:57; on his initiation see J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (New York: Macmillan, 1915), p. 105.
2. J.T.F. Jordens, *Dayānanda Saraswati, His Life and Ideas* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 82. But also see p. 56.
3. Ainslee, T. Embree, ed., *The Hindu Tradition* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 300.
4. William Theodore de Bary, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958,2:76). For an autobiographical account see K.C. Yadav, ed., *Autobiography of Dayanand Saraswati* (Delhi: Manohar, 1976); for a hagiographical account of his life see Har Bilas Sarada, *Life of Dayananda Saraswati* (Ajmer, 1946); for a modern critical account see Jordens, *Dayānanda Saraswati*.
5. An important incident of his life during this period is his iconoclastic experience in the Siva temple, though its exact significance has been variously interpreted (see Yadav, ed., *Autobiography of Dayanand Saraswati*, pp. 14-16; Jordens, *Dayānanda Saraswati*, p. 5; Sisirkumar Mitra, *Resurgent India* [New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1965], p. 168ff).
6. He also visited Kumbha Mela at Hardwar; see Yadav, ed., *Autobiography of Dayanand Saraswati*, pp. 27-28; Jordens, *Dayanand Saraswati*, pp. 23-24.
7. See Yadav, *Autobiography of Dayanand Saraswati*, pp. 39-40; Jordens, *Dayānanda Saraswati*, pp. 29-30.
8. Yadav prefers the form Vrijananda, *Autobiography of Dayanand Saraswati*, p. 43.
9. See Sisirkumar Mitra, *Resurgent India*, pp. 169-170.
10. See A.L. Basham, ed., *A Cultural History of India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 371.
11. The year 1875 stands out as particularly significant in Svami Dayananda's life. At least three major events cluster around it: the foundation of the Arya Samaj, the publication of the *Satyārtha Prakāśa*, and the writing of *Rg-Veda-Bhāṣya-Bhūmikā*.
12. Dayananda Saraswati, *Satyārthaprakāśaḥ* (New Delhi: Sarvadesika Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 2030 Vikram), pp. 589-595 (in Hindi).
13. As translated in Yadav, ed., *Autobiography of Dayanand Saraswati*, p. 57.

14. Jordens, *Dayānanda Saraswati*, pp. 55-56.
15. R.C. Majumdar, ed., *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*, part 2 (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965), p. 157, n. 29.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
17. Yadav, ed., *Autobiography of Dayanand Saraswati*, p. 58.
18. Jordens, *Dayananda Saraswati*, p. 251-256.
19. *Ibid.*, also see pp. 251-256.
20. Yadava, ed., *Autobiography of Dayanand Saraswati*, p. 59.
21. Jordens, *Dayānanda Saraswati*, pp. 109-110.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 311, emphasis added.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 262. This last argument is interesting as it could only flow from theistic genesis of the Vedas as proposed by Svami Dayananda in opposition to its atheistic non-genesis in *Purvamimāṃsā*.
26. Dayananda Saraswati, *Satyārthaprakāśaḥ*, p. 64.
27. R.C. Majumdar, R.C. Raychaudhuri, and Kalikinkar Datta, *An Advanced History of India* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p. 883.
28. For a valuable account of scriptural authority in *advaita*, see K. Satchidananda Murty, *Revelation and Reason in Advaita Vedānta* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).
29. Louis Renou, *The Destiny of the Veda in India*, ed., Deva Raj Chanana (Delhi: Motilal Banarasisdass, 1965), p. 2. The expression in the original "Indian orthodoxy," has been altered to Hindu orthodoxy; see Satischandra Chatterjee and Dhirendramohan Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (University of Calcutta, 1968), pp. 6-7.
30. Renou, *The Destiny of the Veda in India*, p. 2. For a somewhat different metaphorical statement see *Gandhi Marg* 19, no. 2/3 (April 1975), 216-220.
31. Louis Renou, *Religions of Ancient India*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 45.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
33. Thomas J. Hopkins, *The Hindu Religious Tradition* (Belmont, CA: Dickenson, 1971), p. 135.
34. Renou, *The Destiny of the Veda in India*, p. 3.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
38. T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Outlines of Hinduism* (Bombay: Chetana Ltd., 1971), p. 130.
39. Eliot Deutsch and J.A.B. van Buitenen, *A Source Book of Advaita Vedānta* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1971), pp. 5-8.

40. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1957), 1:355; Dayananda Sarasvati, *Satyārthaprakāśaḥ*, pp. 188ff.
41. J.L. Brockington, *The Sacred Thread* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 179.
42. Majumdar, ed., *British Paramountcy*, p. 113.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., p. 112; see Dayananda Sarasvati, *Satyārthaprakāśaḥ*, pp. 190-191.
45. Yadav, ed., *Autobiography of Dayananda Sarasvati*, p. 57.
46. See D. Mackenzie Brown, "The Philosophy of Bal Gangadhar Tilak," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 12, no. 2 (February 1958), p. 202.
47. Sarma, *Hinduism Through the Ages*, p. 95.
48. See Chatterjee and Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, pp. 7-9; but also see Murty, *Revelation and Reason in Advaita Vedānta*, pp. 212-213.
49. See Majumdar, ed., *British Paramountcy*, p. 113.
50. Sarasvati, *Satyārthaprakāśaḥ*, pp. 463-588; also see de Bary, ed., *Source of Indian Tradition*, 2:79-81.
51. Hindu Dharma (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1958), p. 14; but also see Sarma, *Infra*, p. 96.
52. Murty, *Revelation and Reason in Advaita Vedānta*, p. 219; see also p. 271.
53. Majumdar, ed., *British Paramountcy*, p. 113.
54. Spear, ed., *The Oxford History of India*, p. 44.
55. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 14.
56. de Bary, ed., *Source of Indian Tradition*, (2:36).
57. But see Moni Chakravarti, "Metempsychosis in the Sāṃhitā and Brahmanas of the Ṛg-Veda," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute* 42, parts 1-4 (1961), pp. 155-162.
58. See P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. 5. part 2 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1962), p. 1268.
59. Dayananda Sarasvati, *Satyārthaprakāśaḥ*, pp. 99-108.
60. See A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That was India* (New York: Taplinger, 1967), p. 176.
61. See Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, pp. 121-122; see also Dayananda Sarasvati, *Satyārthaprakāśaḥ*, pp. 99-108, (in defense of the practice).
62. Yadav, ed., *Autobiography of Dayānanda Sarasvati*, p. 62.
63. J.L. Brockington, op. cit., p. 179.
64. Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 2:59. As E.D. MacLagan remarks: "The bases of the Aryan faith are the revelation of God in the Vedas and the revelation of God in nature and the first practical element in this belief is 'the interpretation of the Vedas in conformity with the proved results of natural science' (*Census of India*, 1891, xix, 175). In other words, there is involved the assumption that the Vedas as 'the books of true knowledge' must contain 'the basic principles of all the sciences,' and accordingly that every scientific discovery and invention of modern times must be found expressed, germinally at least, in the Vedas. The science of the West, then, is but the realization of the scientific programme anticipated by the seers of the East, over one hundred billion years ago" (ibid.). Also see Yadav, ed., *Autobiography of Dayanand Sarasvati*, p. 62, item 39.
65. Also see T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Outlines of Hinduism*, p. 13: "There is a popular saying to the effect that not even a thousand scriptural texts will be capable of converting a pot into a piece of cloth."
66. Majumdar, ed., *British Paramountcy*, p. 113.
67. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, pp. 118-120.
68. Ibid., 116.
69. Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 59; Majumdar, ed., *British Paramountcy*, pp. 113-114, etc.
70. Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 59.
71. *The Destiny of the Veda in India*, p. 4; but not without realizing its cultural significance, Ibid.; *Religions of Ancient India* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), pp. 44-45.
72. Quoted with enthusiastic approval in Haridas Bhattacharyya, ed., *Infra*, p. 634.
73. Sarma, *Hinduism Through the Ages*, p. 204.
74. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movement in India*, p. 116.
75. de Bary, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition*, 2:83.
76. Brockington, p. 184.
77. Majumdar, ed., *British Paramountcy*, p. 113.
78. Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 2:59.
79. Ibid.
80. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 112.
81. Yadav, ed., *Autobiography of Dayanand Sarasvati*, pp. 7-10; Majumdar, Raychaudhuri, Datta, *An Advanced History of India*, pp. 884ff.
82. Yadav, ed., *Autobiography of Dayanand Sarasavati*, p. 7.
83. Ibid., pp. 7-18; also see Dayananda Sarasvati, *Satyārthaprakāśaḥ*, p. 3.
84. Haridas Bhattacharyya, ed., *The Cultural Heritage of India* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1937), p. 635; Yadav, ed., *Autobiography of Dayanand Sarasvati*, p. 7, n. 23.
85. Yadav, ed., *Autobiography of Dayanand Sarasvati*, p. 8.
86. Ibid., p. 64. It may be noted that the illustration of universal maxim which he provides is a moral one. Those who seek the universal at a mystical rather than at an ethical level point out that "moral virtues cannot provide the common core of religions" because "though

- they may be common they are not the core. From the religious point of view ethics is always derivative" (Huston Smith, in the introduction to Frithjof Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, [New York: Harper and Row, 1973] p. xxiii).
87. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 113.
 88. Bhattacharyya, ed., *The Cultural Heritage of India*, p. 635.
 89. de Bary, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition*, 2:83.
 90. Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 2:59.
 91. F. Max Muller, *Chips from a German Workshop* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1880), Vol. IV, p. 254.
 92. His experience in the Punjab was crucial here, see J.F. Seunarine, *Reconversion to Hinduism Through Suddhi* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1977), p. 12.
 93. Jordens, *Dayananda Saraswati*, pp. 170-171. But also see Seunarine, *Reconversion to Hinduism Through Suddhi*; Radhey Shyam Pareek, *Contribution of Arya Samaj in the Making of Modern India* (Jaipur: Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1973), pp. 130-131.
 94. See J.T.F. Jordens, *Swami Shradhananda: His Life and Causes* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 131ff.
 95. Majumdar, ed., *British Paramountcy*, p. 114; G.R. Thursby, "Aspects of Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India, A Study of Arya Samaj Activities, Government of India Policies and Communal Conflict in the period 1923-1928," (Duke University, 1972). Unpublished dissertation.
 96. Majumdar, ed., *British Paramountcy*, p. 11.
 97. For a more detailed treatment see Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th-Century Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).
 98. Radhey Shyam Pareek, *op. cit.*, p. 181.
 99. *Ibid.*, Chapter V. Also see Brockington, *The Sacred Thread*, p. 180.
 100. Bawa Chhajju Singh, *Life and Teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati* (New Delhi: Jan Gyan Prakashan, 1971), p. 151.
 101. R.C. Majumdar, ed., *The Vedic Age* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965), pp. 399, 464, 530.
 102. Brockington, *The Sacred Thread*, p. 179.
 103. Jordens, *Dayananda Saraswati*, pp. 96, 115.
 104. *Ibid.*, pp. 262, 285.
 105. Brockington, *The Sacred Thread*, p. 180; also see Jordens, *Swami Shradhananda*, Chapter VI.
 106. Pareek, *Contributions of Arya Samaj*, p. 221.
 107. Jordens, *Dayananda Saraswati*, Chapter X.
 108. Jordens, *Swami Shradhananda*, p. 166.
 109. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London: The Bodley Head, 1958), pp. 174-175.
 110. Jordens, *Dayananda Saraswati*, p. 265.

111. Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 58.
112. Philip H. Ashby, *Modern Trends in Hinduism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 33.
113. Louis Renou, ed., *Hinduism* (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1963), pp. 32-33.

SVAMI VIVEKANANDA

George M. Williams

The image of the warrior-monk (*kṣatriya-sannyāsin*) marching into the citadels of Western materialism and triumphantly demonstrating the powers of Indian spirituality is so strongly believed (almost as a cardinal tenet of Indian patriotism) and so carefully managed by his followers that one may not be easily able to find the historical Svami Vivekananda. The archetype of Vivekananda as the Hindu spiritual hero is so pervasive, and notions about the Hindu spiritual stages so predetermined, that Vivekananda the human being has been lost to the legend. A simple search for the patterns of this man's ultimate concerns leads immediately into a labyrinth of methodological considerations, and their solutions predict success or failure.¹

"That which concerned Svami Vivekananda ultimately" will require two lines of development. These penetrate through dual consideration of the hero legend created by well-meaning followers, and of the camouflaging effect created by Vivekananda himself as he changed his patterns of ultimate concern during his lifetime.²

The contention of this study is that the practice of fitting Svami Vivekananda into a Hindu hero archetype has been costly for those who wish to know about the human quest for meaning and purpose in the life of the individual. The more the historical Vivekananda has been lost to the archetype of the spiritual hero, the more his life story fits into predetermined stages thought to be ideal exemplars of cultural goals. The less his own quest for ultimacy follows a human course, the less he is an example of human doubt and struggle.

Some might suggest that it is a sacrilegious act to question a spiritual hero legend. However, the gain from demythologizing the Vivekananda legend will offset any loss.

The following table summarizes the four stages in Vivekananda's spiritual development posited in the official accounts³ and most other studies.⁴

Archetype of the Spiritual Hero

- I. Wondrous Child:
 - visions
 - meditations
- II. Exceptional College Student:
 - master of Western thought
 - independent thinker
- III. Carefully trained by Sri Ramakrishna
- IV. Warrior-monk:
 - conquers West
 - awakens India

Different historical periods appeared as the data were allowed to cluster according to the question asked in a previous study ("What pattern of ultimate concern was held and when?")⁵ This study draws from that earlier study but finds that the first two periods (childhood and college) were more important than previously seen. The following table makes explicit these periods in Vivekananda's life.

Historical Periods of Doubt and Faith

- I. Childhood: 1863-1878
- II. College: 1879-1886
 - Brahmo Samaj
 - Freemason
 - Skeptic
- III. Ramakrishna's disciple: 1886-1889
- IV. Renewed search: 1889-1890
- V. Break with Ramakrishna *gurubhāis*: 1890
 - re-establishing contact from America: 1894
 - return and founding of Order: 1897-1902.

Each of the historical periods will be presented and, in spite of the evidential difficulties, the pattern of ultimate concern held during each period will be posited.

I. *Childhood* (1863-1878)

While there is rich lore about the future Svami Vivekananda's childhood, it lacks the historical substance to support conclusions about a pattern of ultimacy during this period. Even so, the accounts of his early childhood suggest a far more traditional upbringing than one would suspect by beginning with his college days. Two themes in these childhood stories will be examined: predictions that he would become a *sannyāsin*, and stories of his early spiritual powers.

Future Sannyāsin. Born minutes before dawn on January 12, 1863, on the festival day of Makrasamkrānti, the future Vivekananda was given the name Vireshwar in honor of and in gratitude to Miva. The birth had maternal and cultural significance from the points of view of Hindu astrology and folk piety. The childhood legends seem to indicate that his mother and relatives believed that this child was a gift from Miva, that he had a special destiny, and that he would become a *sannyāsin*.⁷ Stories about his special attraction to and concern for *sādhus* and *sannyāsis* abound.⁸ When he was about eight, Biley (Vireshwar Datta's childhood nickname) proclaimed: "I must become a Sannyāsin, a palmist predicted it."⁹ Many books on Vivekananda go to the expense of including a photostat of his palm print.¹⁰ When all these are linked with the possible influence of his grandfather, who renounced married life in his late twenties,¹¹ one must appreciate the centrality of the *sannyāsa* issue for the legend. Even though there remains none of the documentation which would raise these stories to historicity, or refute them as invention, one cannot miss the central role which the issue of marriage versus its renunciation for religious reasons had during Narendranath Datta's late teens and early twenties (Vireshwar, "Biley," received the adult name of Narendranath according to the Hindu custom). Another example, one that totally depends on the astrological prediction, was his future guru's use of the seven stars, linking these with the seven *ṛṣis*, and identifying Narendra as Nara reborn.¹²

Early Spiritual Powers. The childhood legend abounds with stories very familiar to Indian expectations. Biley was a naughty

boy (like Lord Kṛṣṇa),¹³ meditated through the visit of a snake at five or six ("I knew nothing of the snake or anything else, I was feeling inexpressible bliss"),¹⁴ demonstrated kingly attributes,¹⁵ had no caste consciousness,¹⁶ and confounded his teachers.¹⁷ His vision of and merger into the Absolute when he was fourteen (1877), is cited to prove his special gifts and his readiness for the perfect guru who could harness these *siddhis* for their proper goal.¹⁸

While the issue of development of spiritual powers (*siddhis*) will become important after Narendra meets Sri Ramakrishna, there is too much documentary evidence to suggest that Narendra had no background of *siddhic* experiences to draw upon when he first met Ramakrishna in 1881. The point will be developed later.¹⁹

Paternal Influence. If the legends have any historicity, the world of Vireshwar Datta was molded by his mother's deep and traditional piety, peopled by *sādhus* and *sannyāsis*, and enriched by spiritual and psychic experience. Its experiential content, that of a Hinduized childhood, would suggest a traditional Hindu piety.

This maternal influence was challenged in 1877 when the family moved to Raipur for two years. There he seems to have been first influenced by his father's rational, progressive ideas. The curious stories of the boy "flying into a rage" during the discussions between his father and other progressive civil and religious leaders bear the unmistakable marks of his first identity crisis, which would fully explode in 1880.²⁰ But by the time the family returned to Calcutta in 1879, his father's encouragement motivated him to begin study towards a law degree, to join the most radical branch of the Brahmo Samaj, to attend the Freemasons, and to consider further study in England, as well as marriage.

Had the maternal world been operative when he joined the Hindu reform movement, he would have lost caste (been "out-casted"), as happened to most other college students who joined.²¹ Yet his mother's traditional influence would account for his attraction to the more devotional aspects of the Hindu tradition. This attraction and repulsion would contribute to a nervous breakdown.

II. *College and Legal Studies* (1879-1886)

In 1878/9, when he was sixteen, Narendranath Datta passed the entrance exam and began studies at Presidency College. There were two pivotal crises within the college period. One occurred in 1884 when his father died; the existential crisis which resulted eventually

in his break with the Brahma Samaj. His despair led him into a period of skepticism and then to Ramakrishna. But by focusing on this crisis, as have all previous studies, including my own, the developments are interpreted as follows: the Brahma period was a mere prelude to his encounter with Ramakrishna; it allowed him to discover that Brahmists could not "see God."²² This interpretation is immediately weakened when an earlier crisis is recognized and given proper perspective.

The precise dates are sketchy, but after about a year at Presidency College in Calcutta, Narendra had a nervous breakdown. No one disputes this occurrence; it just did not seem worthy of exploration. Since complete access to all the extant Vivekananda documents has been denied to scholars, even the desire to explore such a seemingly important event could only end in frustration.²³ But several facts do emerge. The breakdown and the following recuperation at Buddha Gaya occurred sometime in 1880. *Before* this period Narendra had attended Presidency College and was a member of the most social reform-minded faction of the Brahma Samaj movement. *After* his return to Calcutta in 1881 he changed colleges to the Scottish Church College and switched his affiliation within the Brahma Samaj to the Adi Brahma Samaj, which was more conciliatory toward the Hindu community, more devotional in religious expression, more gradual in the area of social reform, and more strongly led by one religious leader, Keshab Chandra Sen.

Could this be only circumstantial? Is it probable that the nervous breakdown had nothing to do with the religious changes which such affiliations suggest? Perhaps enough of the evidence is not available to decide these questions fully, but an examination of each group and Narendra's activities within them will suggest important tendencies which continued beyond this period.

David Kopf's study of the Brahma Samaj revealed three radical ideas²⁴ that reflected notions which were becoming important to liberal religions in other parts of the world at that point in time. First was their notion of rational faith versus what they saw as the enslavement of meaningless superstitions. Second was their belief in social reform, including the emancipation of workers, peasants and women. Third was their belief in a universal theistic progress of religion, positing the perfectability of mankind and believing that this could be achieved by joining social reform to radical religion.²⁵ Spencer Lavan's study on the influence of American Unitarianism

on the Brahma movement emphasized twin pillars of reasoned faith and social or humanitarian reform.²⁶ Its reform of every aspect of Indian society and religion had been going on for sixty years when Narendra joined in 1878/9, yet 1878 was crucial to the movement. Pressures from within, between those for rapid change and those who wished to accommodate the Hindu community, irreparably burst apart the movement. Pressures from outside the Brahma movement would push individuals back into caste structures or hurl them out into a non-spiritual, skeptical, materialistic world. As a movement, this rupturing meant ever decreasing power and influence to accomplish its reforms. But individuals now occupied themselves with changing affiliations within the varying factions or by returning to an orthodox Vaiṣṇava, Saiva, or Śakta piety. Few had a stable religious identity.²⁷

Narendra's joining with the most radical faction of the Brahma movement linked him to the use of reason against superstition, magic, and miracle.²⁸ The Sadharan Brahma Samaj was led by Shivanath Shastri and Vijay Krishna Goswami (who will later be won back to Shaktism by Sri Ramakrishna). They fought to break with caste Hinduism, to raise the status of women and the masses, and to allow the individual through hard work to become self-reliant and self-sufficient.²⁹ While the Brahmists wished to reform Hinduism of its multiform varieties of idolatry and superstition, Hindus actively opposed them, sometimes physically and economically.³⁰ But the most effective weapon was to "out-caste" anyone taking the Brahma oath.

Shivanath Sastri's writings show two emphases which Narendra would later adopt from its Sadharan Brahma formulation. The first involved the belief that universal religion was practical.³¹ It entailed service to mankind. Rammohun Roy's famous dictum was cited, "The true way of serving God is to do good to man."³² Like other Brahmists both before and after him, Sastri blamed India's "pessimistic view of life" upon the teachings of Vedanta.³³ The Brahma Samaj or "the Theistic Church of India was to raise Hinduism and Hindu society from this sombre and gloomy view of life and this tainting touch of Vedantism by teaching that human society is a Divine dispensation, and all its relationships are sacred and spiritual."³⁴ Sankara and his doctrine of māyā had "drawn away into the life of mendicancy hundreds of spiritually disposed persons, and has thereby robbed society of their personal influence and example."³⁵

The second emphasis has already appeared in these quotations: the sacredness of all social relationship—even marriage. The Brahma emphasis upon the liberal spiritual life as one within both society and marriage was stressed especially by Sastri.³⁶ This was a general theme of the Brahmos, of course, but it had special meaning in 1878 when Brahmos were splitting organizationally over the role and equality of women in their quest for universal religion.

Sastri had another interesting idea: to preach “universal theism” not only to the educated but also to the uneducated masses.³⁷ This idea would be adopted by the future Vivekananda.

If the rule of full membership in the Sadharan Brahma Samaj was enforced for Narendra, he would have only been an associate member, awaiting his eighteenth birthday for the final oath and full membership. That would not have been done until January 1881. In the meantime he had suffered a nervous breakdown and the recuperation in Buddha Gaya. Since the Buddha was an important figure in the Brahma faith because of his compassion for and service to mankind, his place of enlightenment would not have been a strange choice for a Brahma.

Upon Narendra’s return to Calcutta a change occurred. He became active in the Adi Brahma Samaj, Keshab Chandra Sen’s Church of the New Dispensation. While Keshab had begun with a repudiation of Hindu superstitions and priestcraft with universal reason as the guide, by 1876 he was becoming increasingly anti-rational and was being drawn toward ecstatic religious devotion. Keshab’s visits to Sri Ramakrishna during 1882-1884 leap from the pages of Mahendranath Gupta’s account of the priest of Kālī.³⁸ As the Sadharan Brahma Samaj became more concerned about changing society, Keshab and his group turned toward “non-progressive, asocial, personal spiritual realisation.”³⁹ Keshab’s later writings showed an increasing tendency to turn inward through prayer and devotion.⁴⁰

From 1881 until Keshab’s death in 1884, Narendra was active in the Adi Brahma Samaj’s Band of Hope.⁴¹ He took part in the theatrical performances which sought an awakening of Indian spirituality. One of these, in which Keshab played the part of Pavhari Baba, introduced him to a yogi of great powers (*siddhis*) to whom he would go seven years hence.⁴² His brother would later remember his evaluation of Keshab’s influence on his life: “But for Ramakrishna, I would have been a Brahma missionary.”⁴³

One other factor cannot be evaded. Keshab experienced an opposition between spirituality and sexuality during this last phase of his life. His opponents in the radical factions of the Brahma Samaj accused him of degrading women.⁴⁴ It was true that he found their presence at Brahma worship objectionable, but he eventually yielded and allowed them to be segregated to the left side of the assembly. But he could not shake a perception that sensual contact with women, and even the possible thought of it, was inherently evil. The only way to avoid pollution in sexual contact with one’s wife was to practise “mental” renunciation. Keshab shared this view with Sri Ramakrishna, who expressed this conception explicitly and even required those who had not “touched women” to go beyond this to renunciation “in actuality.”⁴⁵ Narendra’s brother indicated that Narendra believed in celibacy when he was a Brahma—a strange belief for a Sadharan Brahma but not for a follower of Keshab in his ascetic period.⁴⁶ Keshab’s gradualism toward full equality for women rested on the subtleties of this renunciation of the senses, not on any explicit idea of women’s inferiority. The radical band of Brahmos was tampering with changes which went to the heart of several Indian religious systems’ conclusions about sense contact in general and sexual contact specifically—only one who renounced the world both “mentally and in actuality” could achieve mukti, liberation. Keshab was perhaps leading Narendra back toward the renunciation of his grandfather and the prediction of the palmist.

The second crisis during his college period would eventuate in his abandoning the reform of Hinduism as a Brahma. In fact, after his period of skepticism (1884-1885) and the period of training with a Kālī priest (1885-1889), he would become a revivalist of true Hinduism rather than a reformer.

Prior to his father’s death in 1884 Narendra had joined the Freemason’s Lodge in Calcutta at his father’s urging. Freemasonry in India concerned itself with equality, social reform, philanthropy, and a “common denominator approach to religious unity.”⁴⁷ It was another force in the drive toward breaking the caste system, communalism, and dietary laws. Narendra’s father arranged an appointment for his son as a law clerk with Nimai Charan Bose. He also pushed his son toward marriage plans, which only his untimely death prevented. He suggested that Narendra might use his wife’s dowry to go to England for further law studies.

Keshab died a month before Narendra's father. The double deaths seemed to have had a profound effect on Narendra's life. From wealth and power his family plunged into poverty and weakness. He would become involved in a family lawsuit for the next three years to try and retain the house for his mother against other members of the joint family. How far he had moved from the Sadharan Brahma ideal of the married man working in the world for the good of mankind can be observed in his struggle to keep from getting married. A marriage into a good family and with sizable dowry would have ended his financial cares.⁴⁸ He obtained employment from Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, the grand old Hindu atheist, but that lasted only a month.⁴⁹ It is doubtful that Narendra represented the kind of rational, reform-minded model for boys that Vidyasagar wanted in his school. Throughout 1884 and the beginning of 1885, Narendra struggled with unemployment and the existential, and for him spiritual, crisis of unmerited suffering. He moved into skepticism and despair. But simultaneous with these later events (1881-1885), Narendra had begun going to Sri Ramakrishna and would eventually become his disciple.

III. Ramakrishna's Disciple (1885-1889)

From the first meeting in November 1881, between Narendranath Datta and Sri Ramakrishna, *pūjāri* of the Dakshineswar Temple outside Calcutta, until the final submission of Kālī in June 1885, a complex series of events were to transpire, ending Narendra's revulsion of idol worship.

As Keshab Chandra Sen began to move back to inward-directed spirituality, he found Ramakrishna, a traditional Makta priest who shared many of the ideals of the New Dispensation Church. As Keshab turned against Unitarian social action, especially the urgency with which the American fieldworker, Rev. Charles Dall, the British Unitarian social activists, Mary Carpenter and Annette Akroyd, and the radical Samajis pressed the issue about equality for women, Keshab began to mention Ramakrishna in his magazine in 1879.⁵⁰

In 1881 Narendra heard a classroom example in which Ramakrishna was mentioned by Professor Hastie.⁵¹ Hastie tried to explain a trance that Wordsworth alluded to in his poetry, stating that Ramakrishna of Dakshineswar went into deep trance states. Narendra and the others in the class did not know about trance

states, according to official histories.⁵² And if that is the case, based on a memory of Svami Vivekananda many years after this event, it would cast doubt on the legend about childhood experiences of meditation and the altered state experience in the ox-cart on the way to Raipur.⁵³ Whichever the case, the first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna was at Surendra Nath Mitra's house in November 1881, where Narendra had sung.⁵⁴ There are substantial difficulties with the evidence to reconstruct the first three meetings.⁵⁵ The first meeting appears to have been embarrassing for Narendra. Ramakrishna immediately identified him as Nara, the sage incarnation of Nārāyana, thus punning his name. Ramakrishna told of a past vision of the seven *ṛsis* identifying Narendra with Nara: now "born on earth to remove the miseries of mankind."⁵⁶ Possibly to assuage his embarrassment, the legend has Narendra asking this Kālī priest if he had seen God. To Narendra's amazement, he reported later, Ramakrishna answered, "Yes, I see Him just as I see you, only in a much intenser sense. God can be realized; one can see and talk to him as I am doing to you."⁵⁷ (The likelihood that he asked the question in this way is almost nil. As a Brahma, God was Spirit, so the question could not have been asked this way. Both the hand of the legend-makers and that of Vivekananda's later retelling are seen here).

Almost a month passed. Then on December 27/28, 1881, Narendra went to see Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. There he was invited to sit on Ramakrishna's small bed. Immediately Ramakrishna put his foot⁵⁸ on Narendra's chest. Narendra began to lose sensory awareness of his body.⁵⁹ He was deeply frightened by the experience. There appears to have been little in his background upon which he could have drawn to explain the occurrence.⁶⁰ Narendra did not initiate the next contact. Ramakrishna had to come to the Simla Brahma temple on January 1, 1882, to see him at the annual festival of the Brahma Samaj. Keshab Chandra Sen was also there.⁶¹

The pattern for much of the next four years has emerged. Narendra is more sought after than seeking Sri Ramakrishna. Yet Ramakrishna's ability to induce altered states of consciousness both in himself and in others both attracted and repelled. The evidence is clear from both Narendra's subjective accounts (and they do vary widely as he valued the experience differently at different times in his life) and from other observers within the Ramakrishna

circle, that Sri Ramakrishna was able to induce in Narendra altered states of consciousness with his touch.⁶² Narendra experienced varying degrees of loss of body consciousness, loss of an ordinary sense of time, loss of or changes in personal identity, a sense of euphoria, and a range of experience which in the last quarter of the twentieth century are now beginning to be easily recognized as a pattern. But this was hardly the case in the 1880s. These experiences defied explanation—and that was especially true in terms of nineteenth-century Western thought.

After the third visit, during which Ramakrishna again used his touch to induce a hypnotic state in Narendra, Ramakrishna complained regularly that Narendra must not love him, as he continually stayed away and ignored his invitations to Dakshineswar.

During August 1883, Narendra began to visit Ramakrishna more regularly.⁶³ But that was short-lived. There is no documentary evidence that Narendra visited Dakshineswar between August 1883, and March 2, 1884. On January 8, 1884, Keshab Chandra Sen had died. Narendra's father died before March 2, probably in February. It was then that Narendra returned to Ramakrishna.⁶⁴ But he informed Ramakrishna that he was now studying the "views of atheists."⁶⁵

The encounters were few during 1884, usually in Calcutta and when Narendra was singing on holy days at the Samaj.⁶⁶ Narendra was running the lawsuit against those members of the joint family who tried to take his father's house, and he was preparing for law exams. But when Narendra came, Ramakrishna would touch him and would go into an altered state, *samādhi*. Once this occurred with Ramakrishna sitting on Narendra's back while he lay on the floor on his stomach.⁶⁷

But a year after his father's death, Narendra began to alter a stance which he would later identify as the key to his resistance to Ramakrishna: he would worship Kālī and finally break the letter of his Brahma oath, although the spirit may have been broken years before. There is no evidence that he worshipped as a Brahma after March 1885.⁶⁸

Several days before March 1, 1885, Narendra had an altered state experience in Calcutta without Ramakrishna's inducement.⁶⁹ This brought him to Dakshineswar and an abortive attempt to meditate on Kālī.⁷⁰ "Why, I have meditated on Kālī for three or four days, but nothing has come of it."⁷¹

After this initial turning to Kālī, Narendra seemed to go into a period of skepticism for three months. But even then Ramakrishna used his touch to alter Narendra's moods.⁷² On June 13, in absolute despair, Narendra's *pūja* to Kālī resulted in an experience of her as living presence.⁷³ He like Vijay Krishna Goswami, had been won away from the Brahma Samaj.⁷⁴ Sri Ramakrishna had continually used his powers (*siddhis*) and influence to modify the religious path of both Vijay Goswami and Narendra. Both were led to do *pūja* before Kālī's image. Image worship was one of the most important things for Brahmōs to avoid; it was a meaningful outward expression of their faith in God without form. Its practice was to condone the total system of inequality and superstitions which the Brahmōs had taken an oath to reform. It seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that Sri Ramakrishna had converted Narendranath Datta and Vijay Krishna Goswami from their faith and practice as Brahmōs and returned them to identities which were consonant with the Hindu tradition.

Ramakrishna had led Narendra to an experience of Kālī as the Supreme Mother of the Universe. Ramakrishna also had Narendra study the Vedānta to see that his Brahma prejudices were wrong about it as well. Ramakrishna taught that the Absolute of Vedānta, brahman, and the goddess form of Śāktism, Kālī, were the same. Therefore Narendra had to lay aside his Brahma repudiation of Vedānta and Sankara and realize Vedānta's truth. Devotional expressions, even before images and even persons (*guru-pūjā*), were proper. Ramakrishna taught Narendra that special persons (Īśvarakoti) had extraordinary powers (*siddhis*) and were able to know the divine directly (*nirvikalpa samādhi*). The goal of life was God-realization through renunciation of "women and money."

The long struggle between Sri Ramakrishna and Narendra culminated in Kālī *pūja* in June 1885. One year later, Ramakrishna would die of throat cancer. In this brief period, the full impact of his spiritual achievements produced their results upon Narendranath Datta. Even though he did not receive initiation from Ramakrishna, he received a kind of commission in two parts: "Teach my boys"; "Keep them together." He sought to accomplish this by forming a monastic gathering at a Baranagore house (euphemistically called a Math). With a non-traditional self-initiation they began wearing ochre robes.⁷⁵

Ramakrishna's death left Narendra with an unenviable task.

First there was the problem of his own doubts about realizing God, and even God's existence. He had had extraordinary experiences—most induced by Ramakrishna—but without a living guru these experiences did not yield certainty. His personal mixture of *jñāna* and *bhakti* were fragile at best and at their worst they erupted in fits of skepticism which greatly disturbed his fellow monks (*gurubhāis*). Kālī *pūjā* and Ramakrishna *pūjā* were less meaningful to him than study of the scriptures. But the scriptures seemed to be a patchwork of dualistic, modified monistic, and monistic concerns. If Vedanta, and monistic Vedanta at that, was the highest form of expression about God-realization, then how could it be acquitted of the charge that its doctrine of *maya* promoted social apathy. How could service to others and the social concerns of the reformers of “New India” movements be found in traditional Indian sources? What was to be the “mission” of this band of disciples of Ramakrishna?

This period of search, within the confines of Ramakrishna's last words (“Keep my boys together” and “Teach them”), spanned 1886-1889. It was relatively successful as it included the practice of various spiritual disciplines. But personal liberation (*mukti*) seemed to act as a centrifugal force spinning disciples away from the Baranagore Math and sending them on solitary quests for God-realization. (Another explanation of why they left the Math so often is that only then were they free to pursue their own *mukti* without Narendra's searing doubts.)

IV. Neo-Hinduism: Search for Universal Foundation (1889-90)

All the worship and discipline of the Baranagore period began to become distasteful to “Svami Narendra.”⁷⁶ By August 1889, he is convinced that a reinterpretation of the Vedas would provide a scriptural base for a socially concerned Vedanta. This reformed Vedanta would be free from caste distinctions and injustices. Thus it would be that universally true religion all religious liberals were seeking, and it would be based on the Vedas.

Pundit Mitra of Varanasi and “Svami Narendra” corresponded during August 1889 over his new scriptural discoveries. “Narendra” believed, like any good student, that in the proper question there was already contained the answer. He only had to ask his brilliantly constructed questions, and the answers to liberate Vedanta from its besmirched reputation would be provided by none less

than Pundit Mitra, Sanskrit scholar of Varanasi.

These questions involved some of Ramakrishna's central realizations. Ramakrishna taught that Vedanta was the highest expression of universal religion (*sanātana dharma*). Sankara's interpretation of Vedanta was recognized as the most authoritative. But Sankara's doctrine of the world as illusory (*māyavada*) had been bitterly attacked by Brahma thinkers. If the future Svami Vivekananda was to prove Sri Ramakrishna's realizations about Vedanta, then he would have to find some way to answer this criticism. But there was an even more troubling one: Sankara seemed to teach that persons could be denied study of the Vedas on the basis of their birth (*jāti*). This would lend credence to the Brahma charge that caste discrimination was integral to Vedanta and its scripture.

What excited Svami “Narendra” was the discovery that Sankara based his “birth doctrine” on less authoritative scriptures (*smṛti*).⁷⁷ His questions to Pundit Mitra were planned to elicit answers which would have judged Sankara's interpretations on caste as erroneous. Pundit Mitra's letters are not available for study,⁷⁸ but the young questioner would remark:

“Why has no foundation for the authority of the Vedas been adduced in the Vedanta-Sutras?”⁷⁹

“The Vedanta requires of us faith, for conclusiveness cannot be reached by mere argumentation. Then why has the slightest flaw, detected in the position of the schools of Sankhya and Nyaya, been overwhelmed with a fusillade of dialectics?”⁸⁰

“Why should the Shudra not study the Upanishads?”⁸¹

Pundit Mitra's kind responses instructed him to “give up arguing and disputing”—the solution of overcoming doubt in the adequacy of a belief system by giving up doubt.⁸² He had not succeeded in gaining recognition for his ideas for reinterpreting Vedanta by asserting the primacy of *śruti* over *smṛti*, especially on the caste issue. He would have to return to these notions after his worldwide recognition as Svami Vivekananda.

The months of correspondence had come to naught. All hope of finding a universally acceptable scriptural foundation for Sri Ramakrishna's realizations (and linking them to liberal social concerns) had to be abandoned.

Search for a New Guru. It is difficult to determine whether Svami "Narendra" searched for support from a traditional *siddha* and yogi, Pavhari Baba, or for someone who would give him the religious certainty he lacked.

There is evidence for both views. At the end of this period, Svami "Narendra" would state: "I am Ramakrishna's slave, having laid my body at his feet 'with Til and Tulasi leaves'... Now his behest to me was that I should devote myself to the service of the order of all-renouncing devotees founded by Him, and in this I have to persevere, come what may, being ready to take heaven, hell.... His command was that his all-renouncing devotees should group themselves together, and I am entrusted with seeing to this."⁸³ Even though this period of search is over, an anguished tone is evident. "Having to persevere" is a phrase which demonstrates this well. Note also that the service is to the order of *bhaktas*, a telling confession of his perception at this time of Ramakrishna's commission to him.

But just what his visit to this renowned yogi was to accomplish is something of a puzzle. The question about Ramakrishna's use of *siddhis* in Narendra's training may have motivated a quest for answers. Since he was soon to seek initiation from Pavhari Baba, the problem of an unorthodox ordination could be considered as well. Yet Svami "Narendra" seemed to be working on a new solution: India's spirituality could be proven by the extraordinary accomplishments of its gurus, *siddhis*, and *sādhus*. He saw "all Gurus are one and are fragments and radiations of God, the Universal Guru." If asceticism brought godliness and power, as Ramakrishna taught, then this "air eating" Baba might induce in him permanently what Ramakrishna had only provided in an impermanent taste.

Svami "Narendra" received instruction in *rāja* yoga and practiced austerities in a lemon grove. He had found a *sādhu* who could remain, "it was rumoured," in a state of *samādhi* for months. In a land (Bengal) that hardly knew of yoga he had found a master *rāja* yogi. When Svami "Narendra" sought initiation, he ran into the same problem he met with Ramakrishna. Pavhari Baba was a solitary monk, working out his own salvation; he was slow to take on the *karma* of disciples. Eventually Narendra lamented that he would get "no help from this ritualist." But even when he stated that Ramakrishna "must be an Avatara," he stayed in Ghazipur

waiting for initiation from Pavhari Baba.⁸⁴ Only circumstances forced him to leave Ghazipur. His "great agitation of mind" led him to describe himself as "a man driven mad with mental agonies."⁸⁵

His return to Baranagore Math was brief. As soon as he took care of some of their financial difficulties, he left with the intention of never returning. He had sought certainty in the scriptures but found contradictions. But he had developed a way of excising caste discrimination of Vedanta (at the expense of Sankara). Pavhari Baba's *rāja* yoga had become so important that he would begin with its exposition to his first formal classes in America three years hence.

V. Neo-Hindu Missionary (1890-1902)

This period of Narendranath Datta's life involves three phases: the break with his *gurubhāis* (1890-1893); the re-establishing of contact from America with these saktas of Ramakrishna (1893-1897), and the return to India and founding the Ramakrishna Order (1897-1902).

The Break with His Former Gurubhāis (1890-93). It appears evident that the future Svami Vivekananda (at this point in time he had adopted the name Svami Sachchitananda) could not lead his *gurubhāis* from their bhakti with its worship of Kālī and Ramakrishna or from *jñāna* with its direct approach to God-realization in *brahmajna* into combining either of these with radical social concern. Ramakrishna had taught that *bhakti* was the best form of religion of the *kaliyuga* and his former *gurubhāis* were not willing to follow Sachchitananda's call to social reform.⁸⁶

In July 1890, Sachchitananda left the Baranagore Math with a promise that he was leaving them for good. He believed that he would be able to find laborers in India, ten in every town he visited. This was to be the "work of Kālī."⁸⁷ For almost two years he sought out the *rājas* of India, for "a prince has the power of doing good."⁸⁸ He believed that India's condition was not the fault of its religion but that it had abandoned its religious identity. He believed that Vedanta was the key to raise the masses. His social program included education of women and the masses, improving agriculture, and ending child marriage. But he discovered that these were not concerns of the privileged, powerful, or religious.

By May 1892, the idea of going to the West, to the World

Parliament of Religions, was beginning to take shape. But first he would have to discard one of Ramakrishna's key dogmas—the renunciation of “gold.” He could not go to the West without handling money. The Kanyakumari vision of his “mission to the West” went through many changes, each a testimony to the agony of deciding what was perceived as an eternal question, even when doubt and uncertainty prevailed.⁸⁹ He needed funds for India, needed to defend Hinduism in the West from attacks of conservative Christian missionaries, and would swap spirituality for science and technology.

On May 21, 1893, the newly named Svami Vivekananda (he received his name from a suggestion of the Maharajah of Khetri) sailed for the U.K. Arriving several months too early, he quickly exhausted his funds. Americans aided him, even getting him credentials for the conference, although he represented no religious organization. He told the organizers he was a member of the oldest order of *sannyāsis* in India founded by Sankara.⁹⁰ The Parliament of Religions made him a celebrity. Within two months of his first speech *The Statesman* (Calcutta) carried the first news of the “Brahmin Sanyasin.”⁹¹ But it was the *Indian Mirror* which championed the Svami. On December 20, 1893, it reported that he “was one of the actors on the stage which was erected at the house of the late Babu Keshub Chunder Sen to represent a religious drama, composed, we believe, at the advice, and under the guidance of Babu Keshub.”⁹² But Calcutta heard on November 30 that this Svami was “a nephew of our late friend, Tarak Nath Dutt, of Simla, who was an *Adhyeta* of the Adi Brahma Samaj. Narendra Nath was for sometime a Brahma, and with his sweet voice led the orchestra of a certain Brahma Samaj, of this city. He was for a time one of the actors in the Nava Brindaban Theatre, when our Minister was in the flesh.”⁹³ The article added “that he is not a Hindu of the old Orthodox School; he is a representative of the Neo-Hindus.”⁹⁴

Svami Vivekananda left the Parliament of Religions a celebrity. He conceived a plan to earn enough money to continue his mission in India. First he joined a lecture bureau, but quit in July 1894. His next moves were not for hire: he lectured at the Greenacre Conference sponsored by Christian scientists, moved about as a soiree ornament in Boston and New York, entertaining the wealthy and curious. Finally he settled into giving regular

classes in Brooklyn. From February until June 1895, the classes on *raja* yoga were transcribed by Miss S.E. Waldo, and were transformed into the book by that name. It is important that his first formal teachings to his American followers involved “psychic control” — such meditative methods as *mantrayāna*, *prāṇāyāna*, *pratyāhārā*, *dhārānā*, and *dhyāna*.⁹⁵ Patanjali's yoga aphorisms were translated and studied to explain the mastery of spiritual powers, which were still a matter to be fully integrated in his own understanding. Next, he turned to what was to become the hallmark of his teachings, *karma* yoga.⁹⁶ J.J. Goodwin took down the lectures which began in December 1895, and ended in book form on February 24, 1896. Other lectures were compiled into books on *Bhakti Yoga and Jñāna Yoga*.

Re-establishing Contact. His work in America, England, and Madras was commenced before he was able to bring his former *gurubhāis* to his spiritual conception and program. His first extant letter to a former *gurubhāi* was on March 19, 1894.⁹⁷ In it he told of his plans to raise up the masses in India, working in America to get money, giving spirituality in return, depending “on no one in Hindustan.” “If any of you help me in my plans, all right, or Gurudeva will show me the way out.” Shortly thereafter (August 1894) he wrote a scathing letter suggesting that these *gurubhāis* were failing him at the moment and had failed the masses for centuries.

If you want any good to come, just throw your ceremonials overboard and worship the Living God, the Man-God—every being that wears a human form—God in His universal as well as individual aspect. The universal aspect of God means this world, and worshipping it means serving it—this indeed is work, not indulging in ceremonials...If now you can show this in practice, if you can make three or four hundred disciples in India within a year, then only I may have some hope.⁹⁸ (This second set of illusions are in the published text of the letter; the original has long ago deteriorated, and the photostats are not available for study by scholars.)

He called upon his former *gurubhāis* to renounce their personal goal of *mukti*. “It is only by doing good to others that one attains to one's own good, and it is by leading others to Bhakti and Mukti that one attains them oneself.”⁹⁹ He gradually drew some into

famine relief work, goading them into practical service. But these were monks who had renounced the world to seek their own salvation through methods such as *sādhanās*, *tāpās*, *japas*, *pūjā*, *dhyana*—all designed to remove the *karma* already acquired from past activity. Now Vivekananda called them back into action—organized activity at that! In an April 1896, letter he reorganized the Math: “If you consider it wise to be guided by my ideas and if you follow these rules, then I shall supply on [sic] all necessary funds.”¹⁰⁰ The letters which evidence the struggle are discussed elsewhere.¹⁰¹ All these letters have been carefully edited, but even then the anger displayed by Svami Vivekananda toward his former brothers was not completely excised. His Madras disciples began publishing his speeches in the *Brahmacharyin*.¹⁰² The popular press in India was constantly publicizing his remarks, often for their political content.¹⁰³ When he left America and England in December 1896, he left behind Vedanta societies in New York and London and some totally committed disciples.

Return to India and Founding the Ramakrishna Mission. The triumphal return of Svami Vivekananda to India has been explored extensively. But what must be noted is the gradual and subtle crisis which beset Vivekananda upon his return. He had been turned into a living archetype by the Indian press, the spiritual warrior who had shown the superiority of Hinduism to the world. Yet his reason for defending the glories of Hinduism lay in the fact that something eternal was there to be awakened. That awakening had not yet been effected. But as he attempted to rally Indians to their “mission”¹⁰⁴ he encountered opposition and hostility. Even the most generous assessment of the months between his return to India and the departure again to the West can find no *satya yuga*. The Ramakrishna Math and Mission were founded in 1897, training of disciples was begun, and plans were laid. But Vivekananda would not live to see the awakening. It was the message of the Eternal Religion that was his final triumph. His return to America served to give that work a firm foundation. But the second trip was more of a psychological than an organizational necessity. Vivekananda’s pattern of ultimate concern during this period brought together many of the elements which had troubled him in earlier periods. Vedanta was fully exonerated from the Brahmo charge that its doctrine of *māyāvāda* prevented humanitarian concern. Vedanta was conceived not as the true religion but as the eternal truth behind all religions.

The Message of the Religion Eternal: Sanātana Dharma. Svami Vivekananda’s Vedanta proceeded from the epistemological question: What is that by realizing which everything is realized? This question set the goal of the belief system and directed it toward a special kind of knowledge. It affirmed that the goal is that unity in which everything is realized. This affirmed that the knowledge is *aparokṣānubhūti* (transcendental meditation) which seeks “to find unity in the midst of diversity...In reality, the metaphysical and the physical universe are one, and the name of this One is Brahman; and the perception of separateness is an error—they called it Maya, Avidya, or nescience. This is the end of knowledge.”¹⁰⁵

Thus, true knowledge or truth is oneness, unity. The test of truth is oneness.¹⁰⁶ The principle by which truth is judged, which Svami Vivekananda has designated “reason,”¹⁰⁷ is unity. “Unity is the goal of Religion and Science.”¹⁰⁸ Unity or “Absolute Truth is God alone.”¹⁰⁹ Truth is to be judged by truth and by nothing else.”¹¹⁰

The Svami’s quest for meaning has as its goal nothing less than absolute truth.¹¹¹ To be absolute is to be unaffected by change. The absolute cannot be part of an order limited by space, time and causation (*deśa kala nimitta*): Yet all that confronted the senses is necessarily within the phenomenal realm, even the written Vedas. So one cannot begin with the scriptures as the foundation for the realization of changeless knowledge. The scriptures had first been accepted “on faith” in order that they might be used to prove the existence of the Absolute. This could never grant certainty. Therefore, the traditional starting point had to be discarded.

Svami Vivekananda found that the foundation of every level of knowledge is personal experience. True knowledge must never be accepted “on faith” in an outside authority. If it is universally true, it must be capable of verification by each seeker after truth when he has reached that level of understanding.

The discoveries of *ṛsis* and *avatāras*, which are repeatable when one reaches that stage of spirituality, have shown that the foundations of knowledge (*pramānas*) in the sensate world are not untrue but actually lower levels of truth which point beyond themselves to the direct experience of the Absolute (*aparokṣānubhūti*). Because of this structure of true knowledge all relative knowledge must be judged by the highest principle. That principle is unity.

According to the process of generalization, which was seen by Swami Vivekananda as the scientific way of acquiring knowledge, all lower apprehensions of truth depend upon each higher synthesis, until, at last, the highest generalization is reached—the unity or oneness of all the universe.

Svami Vivekananda identified the changeless, infinite, eternal unity as the most meaningful concern of life.¹¹² But even as the sources of knowledge were found to yield impermanent knowledge, so also the process of perception was found to leave a radical break between the impression of an object upon the mind and the knowledge of the object-in-itself. That which was external to the individual (*jiva*) was found to be unknowable in its essence. The *jiva* merely reacted to what came from beyond its mind (*manas*) and was limited to its created visions—its own illusory universe.

Not only was the *jiva's* knowledge of objects incomplete and ever changing, it also suffered from the impossibility of true knowledge of itself. The mind of the individual was limited by space, time, and causation, and because of this the mind differentiates that which is really one as a multiplicity by name and form (*nāma-rupa*). The *jiva* cannot know the true perceiver because the *jiva* has relative existence on the sensate plane where true perception does not occur. The real is beyond the mind: it is beyond differentiation.

This analysis led the Svami through the sources of knowledge to the process of perception. Each analysis has pointed beyond itself.

The unique aspect of the Svami's teachings about the cosmos is not that the cosmos lacks ultimate reality.¹¹³ While he says this, it is commonplace among *advaitans*. Nor does his usage of the notions of *māyā* and *avidyā* suggest originality. Through these notions, he was able to demonstrate, like those before him, that the world which we see is *vivāṛta* (appearance). What is unique is the Svami's combination of two theories of causation and their corollary views of the universe. He combined *pariṇāma* from *sāṅkhya* with *vivāṛta* from *advaita* Vedānta and made them refer to two complementary but distinct realms of reality. Accordingly, *pariṇāma* referred to a real transformation of the cause into a multiplicity of effects. But this was viewing the universe from beneath, within *māyā* and bound by *deśa kāla nimitta*. According to *vivāṛta* the relative view is transcended and the apparent multiplicity of

objects can no longer be found. For beyond the bonds of time, space, and causation there is only *brahman*.

When viewing the pattern of ultimacy from the vantage point of the solution, one is struck by its nearly perfect relationship.¹¹⁴ Even if it be granted that Svami Vivekananda was slightly ambiguous in his formulations about *saguna* and *nirguna brahman*, still, the solution was eventually brought to the doctrine of *neti neti*, the absolute negation of formulations about the Absolute in categories limited by space, time, and causation. Thus, each component of the pattern of ultimacy points to *advaita* (non-duality) or to *eka* (oneness). The epistemology of *sanātana dharma* was based upon the principle of unity which was found by the *ṛṣis* and *avatāras* to be the highest principle of knowledge. By it the relative value of sensate knowledge could be determined, and from it the structure of knowledge could be deduced. Thus, only data which proved unity are real data; all else (data which suggest multiplicity) must be understood in the light of the principle of unity. The process of perception found that behind a radical split between the individual perceivers and the perceived was the one perceiver, the *ātman*. His analysis of the cosmos determined that the multiplicity of objects of perception was only apparent and that behind this illusion was the source of all objects, *brahman*. Finally, *ātman and brahman* were realized as one, and that beyond all qualities of space, time and causation is the perfect existence, consciousness, and bliss of the inexpressible. The solution in the quest for ultimate meaning finally leaps beyond all categories of rational and sensate processes to the experience of the Absolute in *nirvikalpa samādhi* (changeless absorption in the One).

Except for placing the *sanātana dharma* on the epistemological foundation of personal experience judged by the principle of unity instead of the Vedas, Svami Vivekananda's formulation offers little that has not already appeared in Indian thought. What is novel is the application of the *sanātana dharma* to the social problems in *deśa kāla nimitta* to provide direction and purpose on the plane of *vivāṛta*.

In practical Vedānta (note an old Brahmo emphasis) Svami Vivekananda applied changeless principles to the problems of a changing age. The problem for Vedānta can be summarized: the only Real is *brahman*, realized only in *nirvakalpa samādhi*, the changeless state of consciousness of oneness.¹¹⁵ Limited existence

is suffering, brought about by ignorance (*avidyā*). Ultimately it is illusion (*māya*). Liberation from the bonds of suffering (*mukti*) is knowledge (*jñāna*) of one's true nature as the Unmanifested, who alone is beyond all activity. Since Vedanta teaches that *mukti* is not in the world, why should not the seeker of *brahman* turn from all activity in the world to a life of contemplation (*dhyāna*) of the Real?¹¹⁶ But if this is done, what benefit will Vedanta be for the suffering masses of India and the world? (A question which is meaningful for a Brahmo but not a strict *advaitan*!)

This philosophical dilemma posed by the apparent opposition of *jñāna* and *karma* could be solved in two steps. First, Vedanta had shown that relative truths are levels or stages (*avasthās*) in realizing the one truth. These stages of interpreting the Vedanta—*dvaita* (dualism), *viśiṣṭadvaita* (qualified monism) and *advaita* (monism)—are complementary, fulfilling each other as one “stepping stone to the other until the goal, the Advaita, the Tat Tvam Asi, is reached.” From the strict viewpoint of *advaita*, which is the highest stage of truth, there can be no duality. There is no doer or deed; there is no desire or attraction. There is only *brahman*. However, this viewpoint is eschatological. While in the world of multiplicity, the *jiva* must act. Even thought is activity. Thus Svami Vivekananda concluded: “The highest Advaitism cannot be brought down to practical life. Advaitism made practical works from the plane of Vishishtadvaitism.”¹¹⁷ At this level activity is real and plans can be made for the good of all beings. Thus, since activity is inevitably in the world of multiplicity, the real problem concerns the binding effect of activity (*samsāra*). The *Bhagavadgītā* has properly shown that the *jiva* is only bound to the results of its actions (*karma*) if it is attached to them through egotism (*Ahankāra*) or desire.¹¹⁸ By renouncing the fruits of its action, the *jiva* will be freed of the binding effect of *karma*. With regard to self (*jiva*) the action can be given in the service of the self (*atman*), the totality of all beings. The discipline of activity without selfish motives can also, therefore, lead to the attainment of liberation from *deśa kāla nimitta*. But more important, in this age of suffering (the *kaliyuga*), *karma yoga* is the means by which Vedanta serves practically in the world.

Practical Vedanta could both harmonize and revolutionize all of life in the world. It could produce “the new order of society”¹¹⁹ and “can change the whole tendency of the world”¹²⁰ by putting the

forces which have become destructive in check. This plan could be accomplished through education and service. “Our work is to ground knowledge of the real Self within the masses.”¹²¹ Ignorance of the real Self within has brought weakness, suffering and evil.¹²² Education about the potentiality within man will reverse the process of deterioration and begin the process of expansion toward men's true nature. The process of growth gradually develops the powers within until “Brahmanhood” is reached.¹²³ “Liberty is the first condition of growth.”¹²⁴

Trained in the fiery mantras of the Upanishads and in the principles of practical Vedanta, the masses will be awakened to their own strength. The radical reform of society, based upon the harmony of science and Vedanta, will have begun. Each man, woman, and child will grow according to their own nature; none will need to rule them. “They will solve their own problems. O tyrants, attempting to think that you can do anything for any one! Hands off! The Divine will look after all. Who are you to assume that you know everything?”¹²⁵

The twin principles *vairāgya* (renunciation) and *jivanseva* (service to mankind)¹²⁶ provide the basis for all activity in the world.¹²⁷ They teach mankind to discover “their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every moment of life.”¹²⁸ “I believe that the *Satya Yuga* (Golden Age) will come when there will be one caste, one Veda, and peace and harmony. This idea of the *Satya Yuga* is what would revivify India. Believe it.”¹²⁹ He believed that practical Vedanta's principle of unity would create this new India. He saw the masses being liberated from dualistic customs and superstitions.¹³⁰ *Advaita* had never been allowed to come to the people. Now it would come to them so that the impersonal idea would gradually take “away all trade from the priests, churches, and temples.”¹³¹ True knowledge of the Self would gradually raise all to “Brahmanhood.”¹³²

Able to assimilate the entire spiritual pilgrimage of mankind, Vedanta would be able to provide a rationale for being religious in the modern world. In its spiritual bankruptcy, the West would turn to Vedanta and be saved by “the religion of the Upanishads.” It would change “the whole tendency of the world,” bringing in the *satya yuga*.¹³³

VI. Facing Death (1902)

Throughout the last two years of his life, Vivekananda's medical problems with diabetes began to slow down the "cyclonic Hindu."¹³⁴ In this time he began to gravitate toward meditation and devotion.¹³⁵ Kālī pūjā, the very type of religious expression he pressured his *gurubhāis* to drop, became increasingly meaningful the last six months of his life. He left no written expression of this devotion to Kālī during this last period of his life.

He died on July 4, 1902, with great serenity and dignity. It is said that he predicted his death a week in advance. It is in the calm with which he faced death that one sees no evidence of his wrenching, lifelong doubts. But these very doubts moved him through an extraordinary religious pilgrimage.

Notes

1. These methodological considerations have been discussed in detail in an earlier study, George Williams, *Quest for Meaning of Svāmī Vivekānanda* (Chico: New Horizons Press, 1974), pp. 1-9.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9. the camouflage effect of Svami Vivekananda's different versions or valuing of the same event is overcome through careful examination of contemporaneous and later documentation and through understanding the significance of periods of belief.
3. Official accounts of the life and teachings of Svami Vivekananda designate three types of literature coming from the Ramakrishna movement. First, there are the direct sayings and writings of Svami Vivekananda. These have been collected and carefully edited by the Ramakrishna Order and published in *The Complete Works of Svami Vivekananda*, 8 vols., 6 eds. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964), hereafter *CW*; and in innumerable monographs, usually selecting sayings topically. Second, there is the "direct disciple" literature collected by the Order. This includes *The Life of Svami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples*, 4th ed., currently undergoing another revision (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965; hereafter *LVK*); *Reminiscences of Svami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Admirers*, 2 eds. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964; hereafter *RSV*); and Sister Nivedita's *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, 4 vols., 2 eds. (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls School, 1972). Third, there are the class of works by svamis and laymen of the Ramakrishna movement. Jean Herbert's *Svami Vivekananda: Bibliographie* (Paris: Advien Maisonneuve, 1938), lists some of this third class as well as some of the first. Studies by

Svamis Abhedananda and Nikhilnanda are representative, while lay followers would be typified by Majumdar, Rolland, Isherwood, and Yale. Secondary articles are to be found in such journals as *Prabuddha Bharata* and *Vedanta Kesari*.

- Marie Louise Burke's *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries*, 2 eds. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1958), and *Swami Vivekananda: His Second Visit to the West. New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) report even damaging data before interpreting it in a light positive to the movement.
4. Even historians like R.C. Majumdar, *Svami Vivekananda: A Historical Review* (Calcutta: General Printers & Publishers, 1965), and V.S. Naravane, *Modern Indian Thought* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964) follow this scheme.
 5. Williams, *Quest for Meaning*, p.6.
 6. *LVK*, p. 9.
 7. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14.
 8. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.
 9. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
 10. *Vivekananda: A Biography in Pictures* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973), p. 12.
 11. *LVK*, pp. 4-6. Charan Dutta became a monk at twenty-five, leaving his wife and baby son.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
 13. *Ibid.*, pp. 9ff., *The Story of Vivekananda: Illustrated* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970), a children's book in English for young Indians, pp. 8-11.
 14. *LVK*, p. 13-14.
 15. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-19.
 16. *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 14.
 17. *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 15-16, 21, 23.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 18: "Had Naren's powers not been checked by this accident, he would have shattered the world." This remark is attributed to Sri Ramakrishna.
 19. Cf. section 3 (Ramakrishna's Disciple).
 20. *LVK*, p. 22: "So Ambitious was he in this respect that if his mental powers were not given recognition, he would fly into a rage, not sparing even his father's friends and nothing short of an apology would quiet him."
 21. David Kopf, *The Brahma Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 103.
 22. The significance given to Narendranath Datta's asking religious leaders if they had "seen God" is central to the legend. By struggling with this aspect of the biography, we have all missed the significance of the nervous breakdown.

23. The existence of the photostats at the Belur Math Library is a well-kept secret. Scholars are encouraged by this author to ask to see them.
24. Kopf, *The Brahma Samaj*, pp. 3-14.
25. Ibid.
26. Spencer Lavan, *Unitarians and India: A Study in Encounter and Response* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977).
27. Kopf, *The Brahma Samaj*.
28. Ibid., p. 18.
29. Ibid., pp. 26-31, 39-41, 92-94.
30. Ibid., pp. 98ff.
31. Shivanath Sastri, *The Brahma Samaj: Religious Principles and Brief History*, abridged ed. (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahma Samaj, 1958), Chapter 3.
32. Ibid., p. 26.
33. Shivanath Sastri, *The Mission of the Brahma Samaj or the Theistic Church of India*, 2nd. ed. (Calcutta: Kuntaline Press, 1910), p. 57.
34. Ibid., p. 51.
35. Ibid., p. 50.
36. Sastri, *The Brahma Samaj*, chapter 3.
37. Sastri, *The Mission of the Brahma Samaj*, pp. 97ff.
38. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, recorded by Mahendranath Gupta and translated from Bengali into English by Svami Nikhilananda (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1969); hereafter GRK.
39. Kopf, *The Brahma Samaj*, p. 26.
40. Keshab Chandra Sen, *Spiritual Progress: Sayings and Writings* (Calcutta: Navavidhan Publication Committee, c. 1934), pp. 6, 7, 25.
41. Bhupendranath Datta, *Svami Vivekananda: Patriot-Prophet* (Calcutta: Nababharat, 1954), p. 259.
42. GRK, p. 198.
43. Datta, *Svami Vivekananda*, p. 154.
44. Kopf, *The Brahma Samaj*, p. 124.
45. GRK, pp. 82, 112, 113, 157, 166, 247, 438-439, 583-584, 670, 748, 817, 819.
46. Datta, *Svami Vivekananda*, p. 102 and GRK, p. 127.
47. Robert F. Gould, *A Concise History of Freemasonry* (London: Gala & Polden, 1903), esp. p. 398.
48. Datta, *Svami Vivekananda*, p. 109.
49. LVK, p. 90, cf. Kopf, *The Brahma Samaj*, pp. 47ff, concerning Vidyasagar.
50. Kopf, *The Brahma Samaj*, p. 32.
51. LVK, p. 26.

52. Ibid. See also citations in n. 3 above.
53. R.C. Majumdar, ed., *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume* (Calcutta: Swami Vivekananda Centenary Committee, 1963), p. 47; hereafter *SVCMV*.
54. Ibid., p. 48.
55. Williams, *Quest for Meaning*, p. 26.
56. LVK, p. 46.
57. Ibid., p. 47.
58. GRK, p. 841; LVK, p. 65; *SVCMV*, p. 48. Three of the four versions of this event say "hand" instead of "foot": GRK, pp. 231, 717, 770.
59. GRK, pp. 231, 717, 770.
60. Scientific research in a sufficient number of fields to produce significant interpretive breakthrough began to take place in the late 1970s. Altered (or alternative) States of Consciousness (ASC) is now a recognized field of research engaged in from neurophysiology, bio-feedback research, drug research, transpersonal psychology, etc. Daniele Goleman and Richard J. Davidson, eds., summarize what has transpired to date in *Consciousness: Brain, States of Awareness, and Mysticism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979). Two more edited works which survey the field are recommended to those wishing to survey the research (1) Charles T. Tart, ed., *Altered States of Consciousness* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), and (2) Norman E. Zinberg, *Alternate States of Consciousness: Multiple Perspectives on the Study of Consciousness* (New York: Free Press, 1977).
61. GRK, pp. 1019-20.
62. Ibid., pp. 231, 717, 770, 841; LVK, pp. 65, 93-94; Williams, *Quest for Meaning*, pp. 25-26.
63. GRK, p. 279.
64. Ibid., p. 394.
65. Ibid., p. 397.
66. Ibid., pp. 462, 508, 562.
67. Ibid., p. 569.
68. Ibid., p. 727.
69. Ibid., p. 711.
70. Ibid., p. 987; Williams, *Quest for Meaning*, p. 21, nn. 77, 78.
71. GRK, p. 734.
72. Ibid., p. 735.
73. Ibid., pp. 724ff.
74. Ibid., pp. 538ff., 581.
75. Williams, *Quest for Meaning*, p. 22, and LVK, pp. 158-159, 168.
76. Svami "Narendra" is a construct to indicate that he now had self-ordination but had not yet come to the name he would be known by later. Since the redactor's hands is present once again in the extant data, all his letters are signed as if he were already using

- "Vivekananda" at this time. How he perceived himself by name would be important information.
77. *CW*, 6:208-9.
 78. Unfortunately the Order only saved Vivekananda's part of the correspondence.
 79. *CW*, 6: 211.
 80. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
 81. *Ibid.*, p. 209.
 82. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
 83. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
 84. *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232; and Williams, *Quest for Meaning*, pp. 47-51.
 85. *CW*, 6:239; and *LVK*, p. 200.
 86. Williams, *Quest for Meaning*, pp. 54ff.
 87. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
 88. *RSV*, pp. 38-39.
 89. *LVK*, pp. 251-255.
 90. This is demonstrated in the biographical entries of the histories of the parliament: Walter R. Houghton, ed., *Neely's History of the Parliament of Religions and Religious Congresses at the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: F.T. Neely, 1893), p. 64; John Henry Barrows, ed., *The World's Parliament of Religions*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Parliament Publishing Company, 1893); J.W. Hanson, eds., *The World's Congress of Religions* (Chicago: International Publishing Company, 1894), pp. 366ff. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in America* (pp. 69-70) details some of the times he identified himself as a *brahmin* monk.
 91. S.B. Basu and S.B. Ghosh, eds., *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers, 1893-1902* (Calcutta: Dineshchandra Basu Bhattacharyya and Co., 1969) p. 8.
 92. *Ibid.*
 93. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
 94. *Ibid.*
 95. *CW*, 1:119-313.
 96. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-118.
 97. *Ibid.*, 6:250.
 98. *Ibid.*, 6:263.
 99. *Ibid.*
 100. *Ibid.*, 8:489-94.
 101. Williams, *Quest for Meaning*, p. 120, n. 36.
 102. Swami Satprakashananda, *Swami Vivekananda's Contribution to the Present Age* (St. Louis: Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 1978), p. 128.
 103. Basu and Ghosh, eds., *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*.
 104. Vivekananda's use of the term "mission" reflects a borrowing from his Brahma Samaj background.

105. *CW*, 5: 519-20.
106. *Ibid.*, 2: 304.
107. Vivekananda has used the English word "reason" in two ways: (1) as the activity of the mind, *anumana* (*CW*, 7:91: inspiration is higher than reason) and (2) as the criterion of truth (*CW*, 2:335-36: reason is the universal authority: "I believe in reason and follow reason having seen enough of the evils of authority, for I was born in a country where they have gone to the extreme of authority"; 5:315: "The Vedas, i.e., only those portions of them which agree with reason, are to be accepted as authority"; 5:411: "Personally I take as much of the Vedas as agrees with reason.")
108. *RVK*, p. 396.
109. *CW*, 7:120.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
111. For more than adequate documentation of this summary see Williams, *Quest for Meaning*, pp. 63-67.
112. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-73.
113. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-79.
114. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-85.
115. *Ibid.*, pp. 85-104.
116. *CW*, 7:181.
117. *Ibid.*, 6:122.
118. *Ibid.*, 1:446-80; 4:102-10; 5:239-42; 246-49; 6:83-84; 7:273-75 (note Svami is being challenged on his particular usage of *Karma* yoga); 88:-9, 484.
119. *Ibid.*, 3:161.
120. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.
121. *Ibid.*, 2: 358.
122. *Ibid.*, p. 355.
123. *Ibid.*, 3: 293.
124. *Ibid.*, 3:246
125. *Ibid.*
126. *Ibid.*, 2: 285; 5:228.
127. *Ibid.*, 5: 382; 7:133.
128. *Ibid.*, 7: 498.
129. *Ibid.*, 5:31
130. *Ibid.*, 3: 225, 263-265, 279.
131. *Ibid.*, 2:320, 303: "You know in your inmost heart that many of your limited ideas, this humbling of yourself and praying and weeping to imaginary beings are superstitious."
132. *Ibid.*, 3: 293.
133. *Ibid.*, pp. 159, 197-198, 293-304; 5:31; 7:95.
134. Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in America*.
135. *CW*, 7:129f; 5: 391f; 7:139f, 230, 252f., 264; 8:517; 6:515f.

ULTIMACY AS UNIFIER IN GANDHI

Boyd H. Wilson

Mohandas K. Gandhi has been variously depicted as a politician, a social reformer, and a religious leader. Although these are divergent fields, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. On the one hand, Gandhi's activities can be characterized by a diversity of goals. But on the other hand, there is a consistency, even a certain myopia, to his activities. It will be seen that Gandhi's diversities are unified under the aegis of his ultimate concern.

When Erik Erikson tried to understand and explain Gandhi in his book entitled *Gandhi's Truth*, he did so by applying Freudian analysis to Gandhi's early life. This was an attempt to explain why Gandhi did what he did. Such an investigation into Gandhi's childhood and development is not necessary in the present study because the questions at hand are "What did Gandhi do?" and "How did he do it?" Even Gandhi's development as a thinker is not germane to the study. D.K. Bedekar maintains that to understand Gandhi, one must realize that by 1920 Gandhi had established the "form" of his thought and action. After this, there was no substantial change or development.¹ Whereas this conclusion is basically sound, the date is a bit late. All the strands of Gandhi's thoughts and actions can be found in incipient form in his tract entitled *Hind Swaraj*, which was written while Gandhi was in South Africa, and published in 1908.

In his autobiography, Gandhi marks as the turning point in his life an encounter in a South African train station in which he was forced out of a first-class berth because he was "colored." It was then that he decided to champion the causes of the minorities and "little people" in the world. Subsequent to this encounter, he began

developing the programs and methods that characterized his life-long endeavors. Although he continued clarifying and honing his ideas, there were never any significant changes or drastic jumps in development. Gandhi was conscious of criticisms of inconsistency, and in 1932 disclaimed any attempt at consistency in his writings and his work, but this was unnecessary.² There is a consistency. There are many edited works which collate and assimilate Gandhi's writings on any particular subject. In these works, no effort is made to distinguish between early writings and later writings, and when so juxtaposed, it is not possible to discern any marked change or development in his later writings. Therefore, for an understanding of Gandhi on the level sought here, it is not necessary to delve into his early life, nor look for development and change in his writings. It is possible to treat the writings of his active period (1900-1948) as a homologous whole, and this is the method applied here.

Yet, simply treating the writings of Gandhi as a homologous whole does not guarantee a unified picture of Gandhi. Gandhi is often characterized as being quite diversified in his activities, as pursuing various goals in different arenas. One writer, in an introduction to a study guide on Gandhi, writes,

From one angle of view, he [Gandhi] appears as a virtual saint, seeking to bring moral regeneration to India, to her British masters, and even to a troubled world at large. Seen in another light, he seems a shrewd politician, drawing out the latent force of India's millions, guiding and directing it in channels of non-violent direct action toward the goal of Indian freedom from British rule.... Finally, in still another dimension of his protean career, Gandhi stands out as a social reformer, attempting to free India from scars of poverty, caste and class antagonism, untouchability, and conflict between the adherents of Hinduism and Islam.³

So characterized, Gandhi is seen as a person with multiple levels of goals and interests which are only tangentially related. He is a religious man—a "saint"; he is a politician; he is a social reformer; and (a category overlooked by the writer quoted above) he is an economic theorist. This is Gandhi in diversity, and it is one way of understanding him. Gandhi can be described as a man operating under several different categories and performing in as many

different arenas. This is how he will first be studied here: Gandhi in the four arenas of religion, politics, social reform, and economics.

Gandhi considers himself a "Hindu." In his autobiography, Gandhi tells of his encounters with other religions, his questioning of Hinduism, and his conclusion that Hinduism is his religion. He later concluded that "Hinduism with its message of *Ahimsā* is to me the most glorious religion in the world."⁴ He is careful to delineate what he means by Hinduism: he rejects the Hinduism of untouchability, superstitions, and sacrifices. His Hinduism is the Hinduism of the *Gītā*, the Upaniṣads, and Patañjali, which teaches *ahimsā*, the oneness of creation, and the pure worship of the formless imperishable God.⁵ Gandhi says that he is a Hindu because he believes in the Vedas, *varnāśrama dharma*, in cow protection, in idol worship, in the *śāstras*, and in the oneness of God.⁶ To Gandhi, the essence of Hinduism is *ahimsā*, non-violence; without *ahimsā*, there would be no Hinduism.⁷ For Gandhi, *ahimsā* is more than the negative aspect of harmlessness and non-violence; it includes the positive state of love and of doing good even to the evil-doer.⁸

The goal of Gandhi's religion is truth, *satya*.⁹ To him, only truth is eternal; everything else is momentary.¹⁰ At one point, Gandhi describes his goal in terms of God: "What I want to achieve—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years—is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *Moksha*. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal."¹¹ But later, he says he does not regard God as a person; for him, truth is God.¹² His goal, then, is to find truth, which he equates with God: "I am but a humble seeker after Truth and bent on finding it. I count no sacrifice too great for the sake of seeing God face to face."¹³ So, when Gandhi says he is trying to achieve self-realization, when he says he seeks to see God face to face, when he says he wants to attain *mokṣa*, all these are different expressions of the same religious goal: truth. The means of attaining this goal, for Gandhi, is *ahimsā*.¹⁴

But in the political arena, Gandhi has a quite different stated goal: *svarāj*. Although *svarāj* literally means "self-rule", Gandhi used it more as a synonym for freedom. *Svarāj* for him includes freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of the press.¹⁵ This freedom in his *svarāj* includes freedom of opinion, even, as he

says, if they are distasteful opinions.¹⁶ Freedom of opinion extends to freedom of religion as well. Gandhi did not envision a nation that supported and recommended one religion over the others. This would have gone contrary to his view of freedom. He felt that any imposition in the personal life of the citizens on the part of the government was not *svarāj*. *Svarāj* implies not only the freedom of the nation to rule itself, but also the freedom of each individual to rule himself. Gandhi sees this as a process that can work two ways: either the government gains freedom and filters this freedom down to the individuals, or the individuals in the nation gain *svarāj*, or freedom for themselves, and institute it in the ascending levels of government.¹⁷

Gandhi's *svarāj* is not an isolationist policy; he does not want foreigners in control of India, but neither does he recommend their expulsion. Foreigners are welcomed by Gandhi to merge with the nation of India and enjoy their own *svarāj*.¹⁸ *Svarāj* for India means the throwing off of foreign control of sources of revenue and expenditures.¹⁹ Gandhi saw this economic drain of foreign industry and commerce to be one of the greatest hindrances to *svarāj*. Until India becomes economically free, it could never become politically free. *Svarāj*, then, is an all-encompassing concept for Gandhi; it includes political freedom, economic freedom, social freedom, and personal freedom. He was content to let the ambiguity of the concept of *svarāj* continue because he thought this would encourage the growth of the concept. He says: "To give it one definite meaning is to narrow the outlook and to limit what is at present happily limitless. Let the content of *Svarāj* grow with the growth of national consciousness and aspirations."²⁰

Gandhi's *svarāj* can be interpreted as a movement of national consciousness and national pride. He considered the civilization that had evolved in India to be unexcelled in the world.²¹ If the foreign influence, the English control, were thrown off without an infusion of national consciousness, Gandhi feared there would be a retention of English customs and laws. This was not the *svarāj* he wanted: in this case India would "be called not Hindustan but Englistan."²² Gandhi's *svarāj* includes a reinstatement of Indian customs, Indian laws, and Indian values. This reinstatement starts with the abolition of English as the national language. Gandhi thought that the national language of India should be Hindi, with the option of writing it in Persian or Nagari characters.²³ This return to the

native language would instill in the people a sense of nationhood based on Indian roots. Often when Gandhi spoke of *svarāj* as a return to the pristine values of early India, he used the term *rāmarājya* (or *rāmāraj*). This recalls the days when India was ruled by a beneficent and moral monarch. By *rāmarājya*, Gandhi means the sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority.²⁴ This government based on morality implies that both the ruler and the ruled are pure. Gandhi believed that India's heritage and history proved that it was suitable for such a rule.

In the political arena, then, Gandhi's goal is *svarāj*, or self-rule, and freedom of the people and the government. The means to this goal include the development of national consciousness and national pride, the institution of Hindi as the national language, and the removal of foreign control. But to complete the means to his political goal of *svarāj*, Gandhi moves into the social and economic arenas. Gandhi sees social and economic reforms as necessary preparations for *svarāj*.

In the social arena, Gandhi has three items on his agenda: Hindu-Muslim unity, the removal of untouchability, and equal distribution of wealth, or *sarvodaya*. Gandhi feels that there can be no social harmony until there is a settlement with the Muslims. He sees the religious differences of these two groups as segmenting and alienating the Indian people. He does not ask that either the Hindus or the Muslims change; what he wants is for them to accept each other as equals and respect each other's religion. He stalwartly maintains that until the differences are overcome and communal unity is established, *svarāj* would be only an idle dream.²⁵ *Svarāj* depends on the idea of nationhood and nationhood depends on the unity of society. As long as the Muslims and the Hindus are divided, there can be no Indian nation.

Besides the division caused by the Hindu-Muslim rift, Gandhi sees another problem in society hindering social harmony. This division, though, is solely in the Hindu camp: the problem of untouchability. On this question, Gandhi's problem is not with the institution of caste, or *varṇa*. He considers the four castes to be fundamental, natural, and essential. The caste system is not based on inequality or inferiority, but on ability.²⁶ Gandhi sees the law of *varṇa*, or caste, as descriptive rather than prescriptive; that is, a person fulfils the duties in society that he is best equipped to do, based on his natural tendencies and limitations.²⁷ Usually, though,

the law of *varṇa* prescribes that a person will, if capable, follow the heritage and traditional calling of his forefathers.²⁸ Gandhi thinks that the law of caste, as originally formulated, promotes national well-being, because it insures the presence of qualified personnel in all occupations.²⁹ Gandhi's argument, then, is not with the institution of caste, but with the aberration of that institution found in the practice of untouchability.

Gandhi considers untouchability to be a "heinous crime against humanity."³⁰ He does not consider it to be a part of Hinduism; he finds no justification for it in the *śāstras*.³¹ Although it is supported by the so-called orthodox party, Gandhi sees it as a device of Satan to destroy religion.³² He refers to untouchables in his writings with the word *harijan*, which means "man of God." He reasons that if God is, as all religions claim, the friend of the friendless, the help of the helpless, and the protector of the weak, then no one is more worthy of being called *harijan*, man of God, than the untouchables.³³ This appellation also imbues the untouchables with a feeling of dignity and worth. First the untouchables must respect themselves, and then others will respect them and accept them as part of the human family. Until this acceptance is accomplished, Gandhi says there will be no social harmony, no social unity, and no hope for nationhood. Like the rift between Muslims and Hindus, the division between caste Hindus and untouchables stands in the way of *svarāj*.

A third division that Gandhi sees in society is the gap between the rich and the poor, the "haves" and the "have-nots." His solution to this division is termed *sarvodaya*, the welfare of all. In this program, Gandhi asks those who have money and property to behave as trustees, holding their wealth on behalf of the poor.³⁴ Gandhi's goal in *sarvodaya* is equal distribution of wealth. He wants to reduce the gulf between the rich and the indigent. He does not ask those with money to give up all their wealth and drop to the same level as the poor, but asks merely that those who have more money than is necessary to live on a comfortable level hold this excess wealth as a trust for the needy.³⁵ The implication of equal distribution to Gandhi is that everyone will be able to supply for themselves all the natural wants of food, clothing, and shelter.³⁶ This program of *sarvodaya* would, then, truly be for the welfare of all, because everyone benefits from this equal distribution. The poor would be raised above the mere subsistence level, and the wealthy would learn to love the poor and regard them as brothers

and sisters. This would result in a harmonious society.

Sarvodaya can also serve as a solution to the other problems of social disharmony: the Hindi-Muslim problem and the question of untouchability. The key to *sarvodaya*, according to Gandhi, is looking upon every person as an equal. The humblest and lowest Indian is regarded as equal with the rulers of India. The program of *sarvodaya* makes no distinctions between Muslim or Hindu, caste or outcaste. All are regarded as equal and held together with the bond of love.³⁷ This is the answer to the problem of social disharmony: to consider the welfare of all in every action. The Hindus and the Muslims will reconcile their differences in light of the good it will bring society. The untouchables will be accepted as fellow human beings in society when it is seen that this is for the general welfare of all of society. And the wealthy will look upon the needy as their trusts. All this, according to Gandhi, will be done in the spirit of *sarvodaya*.

In the social arena, then, Gandhi's goal is social harmony and communal unity. The means to his goal are the settlement of the Hindu-Muslim dispute, the removal of untouchability, and the equal distribution of wealth. But Gandhi's social goal of harmony and unity has been shown to be penultimate to his goal of *svarāj*. Each means to the goal, and the goal itself, in the social arena become the means to Gandhi's political goal of *svarāj*. The significance of this observation will be noted below.

In the economic arena, Gandhi sees the solution to India's poverty to lie in his program of *svadesī*. *Svadesī* literally means "one's own country", and Gandhi applies this principle to all orbs of life. Gandhi claims that

Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition, I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion.... In the domain of politics I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting.³⁸

Svadesī in general, then, means the enlistment of things from one's

immediate surroundings to meet all human needs. In the area of economics, it means using goods manufactured in India to the exclusion of foreign goods. But this principle extends only as far as protecting the native industries. It does not mean the boycotting of all foreign goods, but only those which compete with a native industry and put Indian laborers out of work. Gandhi is against the importation only of those foreign goods which hurt the Indian economy.³⁹ At one point, Gandhi says that he derives his principle of *svadesī* from the *Gītā*'s teaching of *svadharma*. The *Gītā* says it is better to die performing one's own duty (*svadharma*) because another's duty (*paradharma*) is fraught with danger. Gandhi says, "What the *Gītā* says with regard to *swadharma* equally applies to Swadeshi also, for Swadeshi is *swadharma* applied to one's immediate environment."⁴⁰

Gandhi thinks that the establishment of *svadesī* in economics is the foremost reform necessary in India. He sees the immediate problem as not how to run the government, but how to feed and clothe the people. *Svadesī* is for Gandhi the automatic solution to India's grinding poverty.⁴¹ The first economic market that he attacks is the cloth industry. Gandhi finds this industry to be the single largest drain on the Indian economy: Indian cotton is shipped to England, woven into cloth, and then sold back to the Indians. India loses on both ends of the deal. Gandhi's solution to this drain is symbolized by the *charkha*—the hand-spinning wheel. Gandhi says, "That winter of despair can be turned into the 'sunshine of hope' only through the life-giving wheel, the *charkha*."⁴² His idea is to shut off this foreign market by having each household spin the cotton from its own region into *khadi* (home-woven cloth) to meet its own needs. This provides a means of industry as well as income and worth to each individual. People without other employment can spin and weave in their own homes; people with jobs can spin in their spare time; people with seasonal jobs (agriculture, etc.) can spin in the offseason.⁴³ This activity is gain for those without jobs and it is sacrifice and service for those with jobs. Everyone benefits from hand-spinning.⁴⁴ Hand-spinning is for Gandhi the essence and spirit of *svadesī*.⁴⁵ It uses local materials, local labor, and the local market.

Gandhi sees *svadesī* leading to economic freedom. But he sees it leading to something else as well: *sarvodaya*. *Svadesī* also means equal distribution of wealth, to Gandhi.⁴⁶ The follower of *svadesī*,

particularly one who spins as a sacrifice, not a necessity, is serving his immediate neighbors. There is no room for selfishness in *svadeśi*, or distinction between high and low.⁴⁷ *Svadeśi* is for the benefit of all Indians, and all Indians can participate. When the poorest person in society can produce *khadi* just as can the highest person in society, there is an equalization of society. The lower person gains self-respect and a sense of worth; the higher person gains understanding and empathy, as well as a sense of service toward fellow humans. This is the spirit of *sarvodaya*.

Furthermore, *svadeśi* leads to *svarāj*.⁴⁸ Economic independence is the first step towards political independence. Gandhi feels that once India is able to throw off its dependence on England for its economic well-being, *svarāj* will follow as a matter of course. *Svadeśi* exemplifies the spirit of sacrifice and the spirit of nationalism that is necessary for Gandhi's *svarāj*.

In the economic arena, then, Gandhi's goal is economic independence. His means for achieving this goal is *svadeśi*—the use of native materials, native labor, and native markets. Gandhi's main example of this *svadeśi* is the *charkha*. Home-spinning and home-weaving are very important steps toward his goal of economic freedom. Yet, again, it was seen that this goal is not an end in itself: the goal of economic freedom and the means of *svadeśi* serve as means for other goals. *Svadeśi* is a means for the social goal of *sarvodaya*. *Svadeśi* and economic independence also serve as means for the political goal of *svarāj*.

When Gandhi is viewed in diversity, as he has just been depicted, he appears to have one ultimate goal and three other goals that are, at various times, either penultimate or temporarily elevated to the level of ultimacy. His ultimate goal is stated in his religious quest for God, *mokṣa*, or truth. This goal does not appear to impinge on or intersect any of his other goals. But Gandhi's other three goals appear to be interrelated. His political goal of *svarāj* is dependent on his social goal of social harmony and unity, and his economic goal of *svadeśi* and economic independence. In logical order, his economic goals seem to come first. Gandhi's social goals are dependent for their realization, at least partially, on his economic goals, and his political goals are, in turn, dependent on his social goals. So, viewed in this way, Gandhi could be said temporarily to elevate first his economic goals of economic independence and *svadeśi* to the level of ultimacy, because they are the corner-

stone of his programs. Once these goals are achieved, however, his social goals would be temporarily elevated to the level of ultimacy. Again, though, once achieved these goals are subordinated to his political goal of *svarāj*, the capstone of his program.

Although there is, then, a certain organic unity to Gandhi's penultimate goals, apparently none of them are related to his ultimate religious goal. All his subordinate goals are temporarily elevated to a level of ultimacy, but it seems that none of them contribute to his stated ultimate goal of seeing God, reaching *mokṣa*, or finding truth. It is this apparent discrepancy that leads to the characterization of Gandhi as a man with a diversity of goals, and a man operating in several distinct and separate arenas. In the problem, though, also lies the solution. Gandhi's ultimate concern—his stated religious goal—can be found to be the unification of all his other goals. There is a relationship between all of his goals, even his religious goal, and it lies in his view of truth.

The truth that Gandhi speaks of, that he seeks, is not mere factual truth, or accuracy and veracity of statements. Nor is it logical truth reached by deduction from accepted premises. For Gandhi, "Truth is the sovereign principle which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also and not only the relative truth of our conception but the absolute Truth, the Eternal principle, that is God."⁴⁹ Truth, for Gandhi, is just not a metaphysical principle; it is *the* metaphysical principle. Nothing really exists except truth: "The word *satya* [truth] is derived from *sat*, which means 'being'. Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why *sat* or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact it is more correct to say that Truth is God, than to say God is Truth...*sat* or *satya* is the only correct and fully significant name for God."⁵⁰ Whenever Gandhi speaks of seeking God, he is reiterating his desire to find this eternal principle that he calls truth.

For Gandhi, truth is the metaphysical principle of the world: "The world rests on the bedrock of *satya* or truth."⁵¹ The main manifestation of truth in this world is *ahimsa*. Gandhi believes that truth and *ahimsā* are two sides of the same coin. Truth is known in the world through non-violence.⁵² For all practical purposes, then, *satya* and *ahimsā* are synonymous to Gandhi. This is significant to note because both these concepts play an important role in the description and attainment of all Gandhi's various goals. It will be

seen that truth is the overarching goal lying behind all of his other goals, and *ahimsā* is the overarching means lying behind all of his other means. This is the unity of Gandhi.

Gandhi tenaciously maintains that all activities, all endeavors, must be founded on truth, or they will amount to nothing.⁵³ Since truth is the foundation of the world, if one's endeavors are not built on truth, there is no foundation at all. Not only should all activities be founded on truth, though, they must also be in the pursuit of truth. Gandhi claims that all of his activities, whether social, political, humanitarian, or ethical, are directed toward the goal of finding truth.⁵⁴ For this reason, Gandhi subtitled his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. As he understands it, truth was the hub around which the rest of his life revolved. Gandhi said his search for truth, or God, naturally sent him into the political arena. He states, "Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all of his activities, political, social and religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavor simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service to all. And this cannot be done except through one's own country."⁵⁵ In this statement, Gandhi proclaims that his ultimate concern is the unification of his diverse activities in the various arenas. The full implication of this will now be investigated in each of the four arenas previously depicted as the segmentation of Gandhi.

Gandhi's religion—his "Hinduism"—is informed by his concept of truth. As noted above, he considers Hinduism to be the most glorious religion of mankind because it brings with it the message of *ahimsā*, which is the manifestation of truth on earth. He does, however, also concede that non-violence is the common element, the truth factor as it were, of all religions.⁵⁶ But for Gandhi, Hinduism best embodies the truth of *ahimsā*; it is the religion of humanity and includes the best of all religions.⁵⁷

Although Gandhi calls himself a Hindu, he readily avows that "Truth is my religion and *Ahimsā* is the only way of its realization."⁵⁸ He is most comfortable with Hinduism because he considers truth to be the essence of Hinduism. He argues this point by citing texts from the *Sāma Veda*, the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the

Bhagavadgītā, the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, the *Laws of Manu*, and the *Hitopadeśa*, which teach truth as the central feature of Hinduism.⁵⁹ Yet Gandhi does not derive his understanding of truth from the *śāstras* of Hinduism alone; the texts themselves are subject to the judgment of truth. Gandhi does not accept something simply because it is cited in the Vedas or the *śāstras*. He measures the teachings in scriptures against truth. He maintains, "In Hinduism we have gotten an admirable footrule to measure every Shastra and every rule of conduct, and that is Truth. Whatever falls from Truth should be rejected."⁶⁰ On this basis, Gandhi rejects untouchability, even though some argue its validity from scripture. He also rejects animal sacrifice. Gandhi says that he cares not that the Vedas teach animal sacrifices; it is enough for him that such sacrifice is not consistent with truth and *ahimsā*.⁶¹ Gandhi says that anyone who has not attained the perfection of truth and non-violence does not know the *śāstras*, so quoting them becomes an academic question.⁶² In Gandhi's Hinduism, then, the principles of truth and non-violence are primary and absolute, whereas belief in and study of the scriptures, the Vedas, *śrutis* and *smṛtis* are secondary and relative.⁶³ His ultimate goal, then, surely is the focus of his activities in the religious arena: truth and non-violence are the hub of his religion.

This is not a great surprise, because Gandhi's ultimate concern clearly impinges on the religious arena. But Gandhi's political goal is also informed by his quest for truth. As noted above, Gandhi envisions the search for truth as necessarily concomitant with the service of humanity.⁶⁴ It is this service that draws him into the political arena. Gandhi says, "I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind, and that I could not do unless I took part in politics."⁶⁵ Gandhi's religion is the quest for truth, and he sees its realization in politics, in the service of mankind. He claims that politics which are not committed to the search for truth are like a corpse, fit only for burial.⁶⁶ Gandhi says that all of his activities, in every realm including the political, are derived from his religion, his search for truth. There is no distinction between actions that are religious and actions that are political; they have the same basis.⁶⁷ Gandhi says one need not choose between politics and religion because to do so would imply that there was a difference between the two. He says, "I do not conceive religion as one of the many activities of mankind... There is no such thing for me therefore as leaving politics for religion.

For me every, the tiniest, activity is governed by what I consider to be my religion."⁶⁸ Gandhi's activity in the political arena, then, is not distinct from his ultimate concern: it is part of his search. In 1924, Gandhi told his followers, "I have plunged into politics simply in search of truth."⁶⁹ So politics, rather than being a separate goal, is seen as a means to Gandhi's ultimate goal of finding truth.

Conversely, though, Gandhi's truth is also depicted as the means to the political goal of *svarāj*. This is consistent with Gandhi's theory of means and ends: they are interchangeable. Truth is both the end and the means; *ahimsā*, likewise, is both the end and the means. Gandhi says that if every Indian lives according to truth, "swaraj will come of its own accord."⁷⁰ Living a life of non-violence, which Gandhi frequently calls the doctrine of law of love, will produce the same result. He says, "If India adopted the doctrine of love as an active part of her religion and introduced it in her politics, Swaraj would descend upon India from heaven."⁷¹ Truth and its manifestation, *ahimsa*, are necessary means for achieving *svarāj*. *Svarāj* gained by any other means would be *asatya*, a word which Gandhi employs because it implies both "untrue" and "unreal." *Svarāj* based on untruth is unreal *svarāj*.

Gandhi uses the term *rāmarājya* to delineate his goal of *svarāj*: it means, as noted above, a rule based on moral authority. This moral authority is truth or *ahimsā*. Gandhi explains that *rāmarājya* means "the Kingdom of God on earth", referring not to the Hindu god, Rāma, but the god of all religions: truth.⁷² The rule of God is the rule of *ahimsā*; when all live by that rule, there will be *rāmarājya*.⁷³ Gandhi used the term *rāmarājya* to emphasize what sort of rule he sought in his *svarāj*, his self-rule. The issue was not, then, who made the rules, but rather the basis of the rule. The only legitimate basis for Gandhi was truth. That is why England was not qualified; she ruled with violence and force. This made the English rule *asatya*—untrue and unreal. An Indian home rule based on violence and force would be the same. Gandhi's political goal of *svarāj* was informed by his ultimate goal of finding truth. One place to find it and one place to exercise it was the political arena.

Gandhi also brings his ultimate concern to bear on his pursuits in the social arena. Just as he was drawn into politics in order to find truth in the service of mankind, so he was compelled to enter the field of social reform. His religion demanded that he identify with the lowest on the social scale and endeavor to elevate these

forgotten representatives of humanity. Gandhi said in this regard, "The bearing of this religion on social life is, or has to be, seen in one's daily social contact. To be true to such religion one has to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of all life. Realization of Truth is impossible without a complete merging of oneself in, and identification with, this limitless ocean of life. Hence, for me, there is no escape from social service, there is no happiness on earth beyond or apart from it."⁷⁴ Gandhi's social activities, then, are also part of his search for truth. Truth in society is the institution of love, *ahimsā*, on all levels of society. Gandhi interprets the removal of untouchability as a facet of *ahimsa*. He states, "Removal of untouchability means love for, and service of, the whole world, and thus merges with *ahimsa*."⁷⁵ Gandhi rejects the classification of "untouchable" not because it is not taught in the scriptures, but because it is not consistent with *ahimsa*, and therefore is *asatya*. Untouchability is more than a social ill then, it is a religious problem. Its solution is found through religious means: truth and *ahimsa*.

This holds true for Gandhi's analysis of the Hindu-Muslim problem as well. The hatred between the Hindus and Muslims is wrong, not only because it disrupts the social harmony, but because it is founded on untruth. Such hatred does not follow the law of love; it does not view all people as brothers and sisters. It is, therefore, according to Gandhi, *asatya*. Again, a social ill relieved by the religious means of truth and *ahimsā*.

If social service begins, as Gandhi says, with the identification with all humankind, then *sarvodaya* is surely its pinnacle. Gandhi's program of *sarvodaya* demands that everyone consider the needs of others to be as important as one's personal needs. When everyone achieves this, there will be *sarvodaya*—the welfare of all humankind. The basis, the bedrock, of this program is love, or *ahimsā*. It is *ahimsa* that causes the rich person to hold money as a trust for the poor person; it is *ahimsa* that causes a man to think of his brother before himself. This, for Gandhi, is truth. In all his social concerns, Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, and equal distribution of wealth, it is truth demonstrated by *ahimsa* which is Gandhi's impetus. His goal of social harmony and communal unity is not an end in itself; nor is it simply another step toward *svarāj*. This goal is another manifestation of Gandhi's ultimate concern: the search for truth.

Gandhi's ultimate concern draws him into the economic arena as well. It is his religion, he says, to observe *svadeśi* and *khadi* (homespun cloth).⁷⁶ Truth and love demand that he serves his immediate neighbors, his fellow Indians, first. This is done, on the economic scale, by establishing *svadeśi* and economic independence.⁷⁷ It is not love, it is not *ahimsā*, to support a foreign country's economy at the expense of one's native brothers. This is particularly true when the foreign country is not founded on truth. Gandhi saw the presence of England as an exercise in exploitation. This exploitation was based on greed, and did not take into consideration the economic burden it placed on the Indians. This policy was not, then, based on *ahimsā*, and therefore it was *asatya*. Gandhi did not approve of England's economic policy, but he did not bear, nor recommend, hatred for the English. That would be contrary to truth. Gandhi says, "A true votary of Swadeshi will never harbour ill-will towards the foreigner; he will not be moved by antagonism towards anybody on earth. Swadeshimism is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service that has its roots in the purest *Ahimsā*, i.e., love."⁷⁸ To follow truth in economics, Gandhi saw the necessity of *svadeśi*. *Svadeśi*, when properly established, is based on love. It is not *svadeśi* when an Indian merchant exploits a fellow Indian. This is no better than the English. It is *svadeśi* when an Indian merchant serves a fellow Indian in love, providing the best possible merchandise at the best possible price. It is *svadeśi* when an Indian patronizes his local Indian merchant in order to help the local economy, even if the local products cost more than imported ones. This is love; this is *ahimsā*. Sacrifice on the part of the merchant and the patron for the good of India is *svadeśi* performed in the spirit of truth and love.

Sacrifice based on love lies behind Gandhi's program of the *charkha* as well. He calls on those who do not need to spin, those who can afford to buy cloth, to consider spinning as *yajña*, a sacrifice.⁷⁹ Spinning then becomes a religious endeavor in the spirit of the *yajña* taught in the *Gītā*, it becomes a demonstration of *ahimsā*. This understanding is fueled by Gandhi's ultimate concern: truth manifest in love.

Gandhi desires *svadeśi* and economic independence in order to prepare the proper environment for *svarāj*. But this is not the only reason. The support of other countries at the expense of India is for him *asatya*; it is untrue and unreal. The economy, as well as

everything else, must be based on truth. This truth for Gandhi is *svarāj*. *Svarāj* must be based on truth, starting on the level of economics.

So all of Gandhi's apparent separate and distinct goals—his religious, political, social, and economic goals—can be seen to be unified under the aegis of his ultimate concern, his search for truth. All these goals are unified, too, by his means to his ultimate concern: *satyāgraha*. Gandhi says, "Satyagraha is literally holding on to Truth and it means, therefore, Truth-force. Truth is soul or spirit. It is, therefore, known as soul force. It excludes the use of violence."⁸⁰ As Gandhi describes *satyāgraha*, there is no end that cannot be achieved by *satyagraha*.⁸¹ This means is functional in realizing goals in any arena because it is founded on truth. Thus, it is capable of overturning untrue laws and institutions. Untruth in any area cannot stand up against the power of truth as applied in *satyāgraha*. Gandhi explains, "The world rests upon the bedrock of *satya* or truth. *Asatya* meaning untruth also means that which is. If untruth does not so much as exist, its victory is out of the question. And truth being that which is can never be destroyed. This is the doctrine of *satyāgraha* in a nutshell."⁸² There is the reason that *satyāgraha* can be effective in any arena. It is based on truth, reality, and can defeat untruth or unreality. The truth that *satyāgraha* is based upon is the major manifestation of truth on earth, the truth of *ahimsā*. The most important facet of *satyāgraha* for Gandhi is its unrelenting demand for adherence to *ahimsā*.⁸³

Naturally, *satyāgraha* is the means to Gandhi's religious goal. But it is the central means in the attainment of all his other goals as well. In his first work on *svarāj*, *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi avows that the way to self-rule is through soul-force or love force, i.e., *satyāgraha*.⁸⁴ A home rule gained by any other means would not be true home rule to Gandhi.⁸⁵ In the social arena, Gandhi sees the spirit of *satyāgraha* to be the solution to the Hindu-Muslim split.⁸⁶ It is also the principle that guarantees the success of *sarvodaya*.⁸⁷ In his economics, Gandhi believes that the *charkha* is the symbol of *satyāgraha*, and it is the most effective weapon of the *satyagrahi* (a follower of *satyāgraha*).⁸⁸ The entire *svadeśi* movement is a *satyāgraha* campaign in the eyes of Gandhi, and its success lies in the strict adherence to non-violence.⁸⁹ Gandhi can implement the same means to achieve his various goals because he sees all these goals not as separate, but parts of the same whole. This whole is

his search for truth, his ultimate concern. *Satyāgraha* is a means for discovering and establishing truth. Gandhi utilizes it in all arenas because the search for truth is his one overarching goal.

It has been seen, then, that Gandhi can be viewed as a man with one goal that could be called "religious" and three goals that could be termed "this-worldly." From this perspective, he appears to be one who is willing to suspend his ultimate goal, the goal of seeing God or finding truth, and temporarily elevate his penultimate goals to the level of ultimacy. In this context, he has an economic goal, *svadeśi*, that feeds into his social goals of social harmony and *sarvodaya*, which, in turn, contribute to the realization of his political goal of *svarāj*. This is the depiction of Gandhi in diversity.

But such a depiction underplays the extent of his ultimate concern. Gandhi's ultimate concern is all-embracing and shades all his other goals. His ultimate goal is a search for truth, which he finds demonstrated in *ahimsa*. This goal extends to the fields of politics, social activism, and economic reform. It is capable of doing this because Gandhi sees truth as the foundation of the world, the metaphysical basis of all reality. Therefore it is necessary for him to search for truth in all fields. Such a view of the world, then, unifies all his concerns. Truth is the focus for Gandhi. Gandhi's ultimate concern unifies all his other concerns, and his major means *satyāgraha*, is further testimony to the unification. All Gandhi's goals are pursued through this one means that spring from his search for truth. Thus it can be said that for Gandhi, ultimacy is the unifier.

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18

RABINDRANATH TAGORE: RELIGION AS A CONSTANT STRUGGLE FOR BALANCE

Donald R. Tuck

Introduction

Religion, like so many other cultural expressions, seems simple on the surface levels, but becomes increasingly complex in itself, and even more so in its various interrelationships with other aspects of culture. For the scholar, its pattern of ultimate concern cannot be drawn merely in hierarchical pyramidal form. It is more like the complex molecular structures of a living organism within which each part can be studied as something in itself, but which is a whole greater than any of its parts, and ultimately inexpressible. This pattern of inter-human relationships functions to give balance and harmony to human life, so that people know who they are as personalities, and what their duties and responsibilities are within a society of transactional beings.

Such an understanding of religion is necessary at the beginning of our study of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). Tagore's religion of humanity contains both expressions of personality and social interrelations. Religion is a balanced whole which radiates good in society. Tagore's life experiences transformed his analytical ideas into human transactions in which he learned to differentiate inharmonious extremes from the harmonious whole. Extremities cause suffering because they overload and imbalance a positive and affirmative relationship of religious beings with this world of human beings and nature. Tagore does not confine religion only to the

horizontal relationships between a human and humans. He was an artist of life who recognized a vertical dimension, which linked a disciplined human to an ultimate spiritual being. The horizontal and vertical dimensions did not exhaust the complexity of religious relationships, however.

Other dimensions complicate the model, but added together the dimensions do not exhaust religion, because beyond the manifestations of religion is a harmonious whole, which is in essence indescribable but ultimately most satisfying. Manifested religion is a part of the whole. It may be received in part by the human consciousness, logically understood by the mind, described by means of the senses or experienced by a complex mixing of human characteristics, but the whole is beyond these partial manifestations. If the manifestations are complex and frustrate a religious person's attempts to adequately understand, describe and experience them as parts, the religious whole elusively stands beyond the manifestations. The religious artist (Tagore uses this illustration extensively), who attempts to materialize the parts in view of catching a glimpse of the whole, finds his best efforts and talents frustrated. At best, the results of his artistic struggle have manifested the whole as a complexity of ever deepening perspectives; the more apparent perspectives manifest simpler characteristics of the whole, and the deeper perspectives become more complex and more interrelated. Tagore selectively drew out of the reservoir of historical Indian wisdom and experience materials which could be used to describe the indescribable ultimate at various levels understandable to human beings for whom the quest for religious satisfaction was ever deepening, interrelational, and qualitative. A religious person, Tagore says, progresses from surface perspectives to deeper perspectives until one experiences the whole. From that perspective one can see all parts in relationship to the whole.

This paper will attempt to analyze and describe aspects of the religious dimension of Tagore's *The Religion of Man*, the Hibbert Lectures of 1930. It will examine the influences which Bengal Vaiṣṇava thought exerted upon Tagore's exposition of religion. He delivered these lectures in English to the Oxford community. In these lectures he demonstrates how deeply he has drawn from the Vaiṣṇava traditions.

To understand *The Religion of Man*, we will first examine certain continuities and changes which occurred in Tagore's conceptions

of religion from 1913 until 1930. In 1930 Tagore delivered the Hibbert Lectures at Oxford. These lectures had been cancelled several times on account of Tagore's health, so they reflect the thought of many years. We will examine *The Religion of Man* and study that period of Tagore's life from those lectures back to a former visit to England, where his own translations of poetry originally written in Bengali were translated by him and published as *Gītānjali*. These translated poems became the literary basis for the awarding of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 to an Indian writer.

Context for *The Religion of Man*

Tagore lived as an elite Bengali. Until 1912, when he translated and transformed some of his earlier published verses into English on a trip to England, the English-speaking world outside India hardly knew of his art and literary production. By that time the Bengalis had known that one of their already famous families had produced a writer of diverse literary genre: verse, drama in verse, musical drama, songs, comic plays, novels, short stories, essays and letters by a traveling intellectual who penetratingly described Europeans outside India.¹ Europeans, who came to know him as "The Poet" after the awarding of the Nobel Prize would soon know him as a multi-genre artist about whom many wanted to know more. In time, Tagore would no longer be an Indian writer, but one who belonged to the developing and spatially expanding record of the collected human consciousness manifested in the twentieth century.

By 1912, Tagore had developed into a mature writer at the age of fifty-one years. The next thirty years of his life he spent in producing a greater volume of publications, developing their quality, and experimenting with new forms and non-European symbolisms. The mere quantity of his published writings (estimated to cover over one hundred thousand pages in print) staggers the bibliographer and exhausts the abilities of those who attempt to grapple with content analysis and hermeneutical understanding.²

Bibliographical data will quantify these statements. A certain amount of interpretation has exercised order on these data because Tagore's genre does not fit easily into English categories and he used, several genres in one work and published them in one volume.

This chapter will facit Tagore as both creative and productive, and gain an understanding of his religion as at once complex, developmental, and inter-culturally active. From 1912 till 1941 (some were published posthumously), Tagore continued to write in Bengali while a variety of translators struggled to bring his former writings to people outside Bengal and to try to keep up with this fertile and creative man. During these later years, Tagore's expanded and extensive publications included 28 volumes of verse, six musical dramas, three collections of songs, two comedies, seven novels, five short story works, 15 collections of essays, another autobiographical work, 13 books of letters and several other categories, e.g., a book of epigrams, three dance dramas, four collections of lectures and addresses, three travel-diary works, as well as his continuing effort at revisions of earlier works into creative combinations of the aforementioned genre.

After 1912, the English reading world had acquired translations of his verse, drama, songs, novels, short stories, essays, autobiography, letters, epigrams, lectures, and travel descriptions. Although the translations varied in quality and were often transformations of his Bengali originals, enough of his thought creative expression existed in English to give readers an idea of his genius and to show that he was more than a poet. Selections of his works reached the reading public through the support of special interest groups ranging from faith-motivated devotees to discrediting negative critics.

Continuities in Tagore's Religion

The concepts of Tagore's religion present complex though often unsystematic patterns, even when written in and translated into seemingly simplified English. He never felt completely at home in the English language, and his ideas, as has been noted by Tagore specialists, have suffered in translation. Until his trip to England (1912) when he experimented with English translations of poems from several publications, Tagore wrote in the Bengali language. Tagore filled his writings with historical, ideological, and sociological references to the subcontinent of South Asia. Our hermeneutic will grapple with that complexity of religions thought, which Tagore transformed from Bengali into the English language.

Freedom from Sectarian Orthodoxy

In a letter dated February 25, 1916, and addressed as "Dear Madam," Tagore summarized his own understanding and personal approach to religion.³ In it Tagore stressed that he neither belonged to any exclusive religious sect nor subscribed to any confining creed. Those familiar with his *magnus corpus* and the development of his religious consciousness, realize that he had experimented with a vast amount of the historical, sectarian Hindu religions, i.e., Vaisṇava, Śaiva, and Śakta variations; he had studied various reforms both within the subcontinent and caused by movements coming from outside it. (For example, *The Religion of Man* contains allusions and references to Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Muslim, and Christian religions.)

In his attempt to communicate to readers beyond India's borders and whose religious presuppositions were different from his own, Tagore tried to show that his own interpretations of religion came from his constant struggle in which he attempted to free his concerns regarding ultimacy from the enforced conformity both of Indian and Western theologians. Theological norms require religions people to believe specifically and dominate the followers by a set of ideals formulated into a normative creed; these norms arise from a canon of accepted scriptures and take a structured form of expression by an organized body of worshippers. In particular, Tagore had in mind such examples as British Christianity in India or Sunni Islam which formulated their norms from the results of their triumphal missionary activities.⁴ Tagore sharpened his critique of ideologies which claim exclusive, and thus divisive authority. He negated the demand for unified conformity to a normative interpretation of truth. Tagore relegated such claims to the level of lower comprehension of what one commonly called "religion." We will not attempt to critique all of Tagore's facile and generalizing statements about religions from which he drew illustrative material, but we will attempt to grapple with statements which help us to sympathetically understand what he called the religion of man.⁵

Scholarly Credentials

Speaking to the Oxford University community Tagore asserted

that he came to lecture neither as a scholar nor a philosopher.⁶ These disclaimers must undergo analysis and evaluation before we attempt to grapple with Tagore's religious continuities and changes.

I mention these references especially because of their contextual significance. The first comes within the chapter on the prophet Zarathustra in which Tagore emphasized the element of personal leadership in religion. Tagore used the voice of the prophet to air religious ideas his own. He believed that a person reaches truth not through analytical processes alone.⁷ He also contended that no single people possessed the exclusive knowledge of truth.⁸ Zarathustra faced his message of truth upon both intellectual and intuitive knowledge and experience; the message would reach all humankind, he did not deliver the message for Persians exclusively.

Having discussed a few major ideas of Zoroastrian—"Persian" religion and sampling some of the songs (*gathas*) and writings of the prophet, Tagore stated that the detailed facts of religious history extended beyond his area of expertise. He presented himself as a singer rather than a textual scholar of Avestan, Pahlavi, and Persian languages.

Tagore did not have an earned university degree. His temperament and early distaste for mediocre and repetitive education led him instead to a qualitative, guided education under the tutelage of his extended family. His writings give evidence that he had studied both primary and secondary sources in a variety of historical religions. He did not, however, devote his life to the writing of commentaries, historical criticisms, nor philosophical treatises on sectarian texts. That Tagore should have felt inferior in scholarly circles for these reasons is more an indication of the scholarly norms of the times rather than an indication of his own ability to exegete and interpret textual meanings for religious thought and human-cultural situations.

The second reference to his disclaimer of university credentials appeared in the chapter which he called "The Vision." Here Tagore emphasized the inner realization of truth—the realm of personal religious experience—which can give balance to the outer intellectually guided social manifestations. Tagore objected to an overly rational approach to religion which prevailed in the 1920s and 1930s, and he attempted to bring balance among the varied manifestations of what he understood as ultimately real. The religion of humanity which Tagore exposed to inquiring minds of Europe and

America did not contain a conglomeration of vague conceptions; rather, those who understood the philosophical and scholarly traditions from which Tagore came realized that many of his notions came from major preceptions (*mahavakya*) of Sanskrit literature (The Great Tradition) and also reflected religious debates carried on in vernacular and specialized religious languages of the Little Traditions.⁹ (More will be said later in reference to some of these ideas, i.e., Lord of My Life, *jivan-devatā*, and the technical vocabulary of Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal.)

Our analysis of Tagore will examine him for what he was—a literateur of religion—and will not critique him for what he was not, a specialist in Indian philosophical argumentations or a philological scholar.

Tagore's importance for the study of religion is based on his translated writings and his influences upon Indian civilization rather than the academic degrees which he received belatedly and for "honorable cause" from both Indian and Western universities.

Vaiṣṇava Sources for Tagore's Religion

The sources for Tagore's religious thought and expressions are varied, for he drank from many wells. One of the many contributing satisfactions for his constant thirst came from the rich traditions of Bengal Vaiṣṇavas.

By Vaiṣṇavism we mean that form of religion which, by the practice of *bhakti*, faithfully regards Viṣṇu as the ultimate god; furthermore, the devotees believe that such religious practices and symbolizations directed to Viṣṇu remove followers from the rounds of rebirth (*samsāra*) to experience freedom and to enjoy the bliss of Viṣṇu as a foretaste in this life (*Jivan mukti*). Finally, after the destruction of one's physical life, the devotee will experience more fully the religious life in the presence of Lord Viṣṇu himself, in *vaikuṅṭha* (transcendental *vṛndāvan* or *vraja*).¹⁰

Bhakti comes from the root $\sqrt{bhā}$ which means "to serve" or "to adore." Historically *bhakti* came to mean faith in Viṣṇu as one's personal god, and especially love (*prema*) for him, which included the dedication of the devotee's whole life to Viṣṇu's service and which resulted in the attainment of divine realization (*mukti*) by disciplined personal attitudes and actions of devotion to Viṣṇu.¹¹

Bengal Vaiṣṇavism burst upon the religions scene as a revitalization movement with the ultimacy of Viṣṇu brought about by the Bengali leader-saint, Caitanya-dasa (1486-1534). Among other emphases, Caitanya directed the Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* religion to the (*avatāra*) incarnation of Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad gitā*, and especially Kṛṣṇa's manifestations as ultimate Lord among devotees in the Mathurā-Vṛndāvan area as discussed in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*. Caitanya also drew upon Vaiṣṇava developments like those poetically dramatized in the *Gita Govinda*, and which identified the favored cowherdess of Kṛṣṇa's love-play (*līlā*) as Rādhā. The resulting Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā religious patterns came to be called Gauriya (or Bengal) Vaiṣṇavism, which was associated with Caitanya's emphasis upon corporate singing and dancing (*saṅkīrtana*) as efficacious witness to one's devotion to Kṛṣṇa and the transformation of devotees into the servants (*dāsyā*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The ecstatic and emotional Vaiṣṇavism of Caitanya was transmitted to his earliest disciples, called the six Gosvamins, whose knowledge of Sanskrit and Tantric traditions brought intellectual acumen to the intuitive experience,¹² and who propagated the religion as far west as Vṛndāvan, Uttar Pradesh.

Caitanya himself spread Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā religion not only throughout Bengal, but also into neighboring Orissa, where he took up residence in Puri during the latter period of his life. Thus, Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, a religious system of beliefs, practices, and symbolizations, is not confined to Bengal, but radiating out of three epicenters, i.e., Navadvīpa, Bengal; Vṛndāvan, Uttar Pradesh; and Puri, Orissa.

The thesis of this paper proposes that Tagore knew Bengal Vaiṣṇava religious norms and that they influenced his writings to a great extent, especially during the period under review (1913-30), and that *The Religion of Man* reflects the impact Bengal Vaiṣṇavism had upon him.

In addition the analysis assumes familiarity with the American lectures, *Sādhanā* (published in 1913), the short story "Bostami" written in 1913, songs in *Gitimālyā* (1914) and *Gitāli*, the character Lilanandaswami in the novel *Chaturangā* (1915), letters written to W.W. Pearson (March 10, 1918) and to C.F. Andrews (October 18, 1920), love poems in the novel *Sesher Kavita* (published in 1929), and the poems of *Mahua* (1929). These writings exemplify the impact of Vaiṣṇava religious thought, practices, and symbolism

upon Tagore from 1913 until 1930.

Vaiṣṇavism in *The Religion of Man*

Tagore views religion as containing both intellectual and intuitive knowledge. He calls it a poet's religion and attempts to balance objective and subjective attitudes in his exposition. Though Bengal Vaiṣṇavism has influenced greatly his perceptions, he does not approach religion systematically or textually. His understanding expresses sympathy, but he tries to avoid dogmatism. Neither does Tagore attempt to offer an apology for a specific group. His restraint (*epoché*) from writing as a devotee's faith-oriented position forms the expression substantial, although he lacks certain criteria that many regard necessary, especially the scholarly world of South Asian religious academics.

Although Tagore knew some of the literature of the structure and anti-structure of Indian religious traditions, his own religion came together as a creative construction of thought, practice, and symbolizations which drew upon Sanskritic as well as regional and local Hindu traditions. Tagore's writings had similarities to these but also differences. He criticized both structure and anti-structure and then set up his own collective ideas which ran contrary to many of these contemporary restatements of religious motifs and structures. Bengal Vaiṣṇavism included elements of the Great Tradition as well as Little Traditions. As a proponent of *bhakti*—the superior means of religious satisfaction—Bengal Vaiṣṇavism provides for the inquiring mind a good illustration of anti-structure. Tagore drew nourishment from these wells, but added enough condiments to enhance the taste. Consequently, the analysis of the "religion of humans" leads us to other analytical categories which help us understand Tagore's developed structures of behavior and thought. The result presents a symbiosis rather than an enforced synthesis; intellectual conflict becomes avoidable by the means of a more satisfying and holistic harmony.

Vaiṣṇava "Religion of Humans"

Tagore was an unusual Bengali in that he had traveled extensively and lectured on various religious topics. His travels had

taken him to England, the United States, Japan, several cultural areas of Europe, China, Argentina, Southeast Asia, and Canada by the time of the Hibbert Lectures in 1930. Elements drawn from many religious traditions affected his lectures, but the Vaiṣṇava influences afford us a means to grapple with his attempt toward balance in religion and life.

The ideas propounded by Tagore in Bengali suffer when they are translated into English. Tagore experienced this himself, when he tried to communicate some of his earlier poems via the English language. Subsequently, translators have travailed to bring forth his ideas into the medium of the English-speaking world. The Hibbert Lectures give an appropriate example of these problems because Tagore wrote them in English.

In a letter in response to Alice Rothenstein's invitation to join them in France, Tagore touched upon the problem of translation: "I have to prove, so long as I am in the West, that Indians ... in the language of their conducts observe the same accents and idioms as you do. In fact, we have to translate ourselves—otherwise you do not understand us, or what is far worse, misunderstand ... But the translation has to observe a different grammar and be correct."¹³

One of Tagore's harshest critiques of an English author's misunderstandings of himself was aimed at E.J.A. Thompson's *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist*. In a letter written to William Rothenstein in 1927 from Visva-Bharati, Tagore voiced his bitter protest against Thompson's book by saying:

It is one of the most *absurd* books that I have ever read dealing with a poet's life and writings... he has a very imperfect knowledge of Bengali language which necessarily prevents him from realising the atmosphere of our words and therefore the colour and music and life of them. He cannot make distinction between that which is essential and non-essential and he jumbles together details without any consideration for their significance. For those who know Bengali his presentation of the subject is too often ludicrously disproportionate. He has been a schoolmaster in an Indian school and that comes out in his pages too often in his *pompous spirit of self-confidence* even in a realm where he ought to have been conscious of his limitations. The book is full of prejudices which have no foundation in facts.... Then again, being a Christian missionary, his training makes him *incapable of*

understanding some of the ideas that run all through my writings—like that of *jivan-devata*, the limited aspect of divinity which has its unique place in the individual's life in contrast to that which belongs to the universe...On the whole, the author is never afraid to be unjust, and that only shows his want of respect.¹⁴

Aware of the problems involved in interpreting Tagore and acknowledging our own limitations, we turn to an analysis of *The Religion of Man*.

Tagore's Sources of Authority (Intellect and Intuition)

Tagore, like the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, referred to the revealed texts (*śruti*) as authorities in themselves, viz., he rested his ideas on the etymological/denotative or primary meanings of the texts (*mukhya vṛtti*). Theoretically, he raised the question of the means of valid knowledge (*pramāna*) and assumed that the highest means for revealing ultimate reality rested upon scriptural testimony (*śabda*). In the Hibbert Lectures, Tagore leaned heavily on what he called Hindu Sanskritic scriptures, and specifically he referred to Vedas, i.e., *Atharva Veda*, the Upaniṣads, i.e., *Iśa*, and the Epics. In his references to these *śruti and smṛti* texts, he did not argue their authority; he assumed them to contain valid knowledge (*pramā*), and appealed to their primary meanings.

Missing in these lectures were any reference to the *Brahmasūtra* which would give clues as to which schools of the Vedānta Tagore aligned his thought and to which he objected, for example, the commentaries of Śāṅkara, Ramanuja, or Madhva. Such references would involve Tagore in the questions asked by traditional Indian religious thinkers, but Tagore demonstrated more interest in what he called "The Vision." In this view, he withdrew from scholarly debate by referring to his growing up in the Tagore extended family and his own personal experience of "freedom from the dominance of any creed that had its sanction in the definite authority of some scripture, or in the teaching of some organized body of worshippers."¹⁵

Another lack of reference in Tagore's *The Religion of Man* was his failure to mention the Purāṇas. Tagore's relationship with the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas came through his acquaintance with their

poets, not by means of the philosophical-religious thinkers who based their ideas on interpretations of the Purāṇas. He referred specifically to the influences of these poets upon his early life. Although he mentioned neither the *Bhagavata Purāṇa* nor the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, the contents of these writings were reflected by the poet and affected both Tagore's "vision" and helped shape him as an artist. He does include, however, a poem by the medieval Vaiṣṇava poet Chandidasa in *The Religion of Man*.

Omitted also in *The Religion of Man* was Tagore's intellectual leap from the Vedas to the modern period. Basic assumptions which Tagore failed to identify characterized the (*bhakti*) devotional, personalistic religions, as they revitalized under Caitanya and became established emphasized in the religious thought systems of the Gosvamins, especially Jiva Gosvamin and Rupa Gosvamin. During the period of Tagore's exposure to English (European and American readers), Tagore constantly complained that his readers misunderstood him. He could have assisted their understanding by referring specifically to these *bhakti* studies. The Bengal Vaiṣṇavas included within their ideas of scriptural testimony (*śabda*) the equal authority of the derived post-Vedic texts, i.e., *Itihasa*, *smṛti*, and *Purāṇas*. To Jiva Gosvamin, especially, the spiritual sense of the Vedas was exposed by these sources of *śabda* for the present age (*kaliyuga*). Vyasa, the classifier of the four Vedas, is regarded as the composer of the Purāṇas; in these texts he unveiled the unfathomable and incomprehensible mysteries of the Vedas and completed or fulfilled their sense as well as made the essence of them available to persons irrespective of caste, sex, or age. Jiva Gosvamin established the supremacy of the *Bhagavata Purāṇa*, which Bengal Vaiṣṇavas regard as Vyasa's most reliable commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* and the other Purāṇas. To the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas all cases of conflict arising out of these texts must stand the test of the hermeneutics of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

Bhāgavata Purāṇa

How does Tagore's Vaiṣṇavism compare to this? Perhaps, if we take as an illustration his initiation (*upanāyana*) rite, and the *Gayatri mantra* in particular, we can catch a glimpse of the poet's religion. The *Gayatri* comes from the *Rg Veda* 111.62.10 and is not

only a part of every *brahmin's* rite of spiritual birth (*dvija*), but his daily meditation. Tagore translated its meaning as: "Let me contemplate the adorable splendour of Him who created the earth, the air and the starry spheres, and sends the power of comprehension within our minds."¹⁶ Tagore's father, the Maharshi, arranged the ceremony and personally presided over the rite for his sons and grandson. Affected by the teachings of the Brahmo Samaj, the Maharshi had revolted against many orthodox ideas and practices, but he retained this celebration. With golden earrings and shaved head, Rabindranath retreated within the Tagore mansion for three days to meditate upon this rite of the twice-born. It continued to offer a source of inspiration throughout his life, long after he had discontinued wearing the sacred thread as a sign of his spiritual rebirth.

This same verse (*śloka*) opens the first book (*Skandha*) of the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, and has various interpretations by Vaiṣṇava teachers. Tagore's translation follows mainly the denotative sense and he uses it to differentiate his poet's religion from the orthodox man of piety or from dogmatician's interpretation. Tagore's "vision" in *The Religion of Man* is different from the explanation of Sridhara, the oldest commentator of the *Bh.P.*, who was a non-dualist (*advaita*), from that of Vira-raghava, a follower of Ramanuja (*viśiṣṭāvaita*), and from that of Vijaya-dhvaja of the dualistic (*dvaita*) school of Madhva. Nor does he make any specific reference here to the Bengal Vaiṣṇava's emphasis upon the love between a man and a woman who is the wife of another person (*parakiyā preman*), viz., the loves of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. In this interpretation Rādhā represents the paramour of illicit erotics. It is no wonder that his Western audiences understood imperfectly, and that Indian religious thinkers wondered how Tagore's religion of humans fit into the traditional systems of Indian thought (*darsana*). A reference here could have helped the listener-reader's comprehension. His professed avoidance of dogmatism and criticism does not measure up as thorough as he assumes. His method of exposition suffers on account of this lack of specificity.

Tagore's Vaiṣṇavism had another source—the Bāul singers of Bengal. In his lecture on "The Man of My Heart", Tagore referred specifically to these singers and quoted some of their lyrics.¹⁷ K.M. Sen's article on the Bāuls appeared in the appendices of *The Religion of Man*. Tagore was one of the first modern writers to collect

their songs and to show interest in their religious lyrics; they drew inspiration from Vaiṣṇava thought, practices, and symbols. Tagore describes his affinity to them by saying:

I have mentioned in connection with my personal experience some songs which I had often heard from wandering village singers, belonging to a popular sect of Bengal, called Bauls, who had no images, temples, scriptures or ceremonials, who declare in their songs the divinity of Man, and express for him an intense feeling of love. Coming from men who are unsophisticated, living a simple life in obscurity, it gives us a clue to the inner meaning of all religions. For it suggests that these religions are never about a God of cosmic force, but rather the God of human personality.¹⁸

Although Tagore could not qualify as a classical teacher, *āchārya*, he did address himself to the sources or means of valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*). He appealed to *śruti* and *smṛti* scriptural sources (*śabda*) in his *The Religion of Man* as self-authoritative, and employed a denotative method (*mukhyā vṛtti*) to his interpretations of those texts.

But Tagore did not confine his religion to textual evidences (*śabda*) as discussed in the preceding paragraphs. He appealed more often, and particularly in *The Religion of Man*, to what he has variously called personal experience, the creative spirit in man, the surplus, freedom of expression, feeling, personality, inner principle of religion, or the vision which leads to a "perfect harmony of relationship, which we realize in this world not through our response to it in knowing, but in being."¹⁹

In the epistemology of Indian philosophy, valid knowledge (*pramā*) includes discussion of the sources of right knowledge (*pramāṇa*) and the validity of knowledge (*prāmāṇya*). Tagore does appeal to scriptural authority (*śabda*), but employs perceptions (*pratyakṣa*) by both the truly learned or great seers (*vaidusa*) and also the village singers (*avaidusa*), inference (*anumana*), comparison (*upamāna*), postulation (*arthāpatti*), especially the assumption of a fact in order to explain what is known from scriptures (*śrutārthāpatti*), and tradition (*aitihya*). All of these sources Tagore regarded as valuable aids to the knowledge of truth. Tagore's interest lies not in a philosophy divorced from life's problems, but rather in religion founded upon human experiences, both ordinary

and spiritual. Religion satisfies more than the mind or intellect. On a higher level, it is a direct, immediate, and holistic realization of truth for the solution of human problems. Or in other words, Tagore's religion is not primarily a discursive knowledge of the highest concern (a lower level) but it is on its highest level an intuitive experience which is meaningful for man's life within this world.²⁰

Definition of Religion in *The Religion of Man*

Tagore linked religion and philosophy to poetry. Describing an incident in a remote Bengali village, Tagore reflected upon an operatic performance which he had attended. In the dialogue, a pilgrim approached Vṛnadāvana but was detained by the watchman because the visitor was smuggling the self into this holy area. The religious sect described in the performance was obsolete during Tagore's day, but the point he was making was that by means of a poetic drama, the village actors were enacting ultimate meaning through the genre of dance, music, and humorous dialogue. Tagore observed, "This illustration will show how naturally, in India, poetry and philosophy have walked hand in hand."²¹ The philosophy to which Tagore referred is that which "guides men to the practical path of their life's fulfilment."²² Such a correlation makes religions the base or the fulfilment toward which Indian philosophy points. In such a freedom in truth one seeks to proceed from the unreal to the real. For Tagore, then, religion is not a separate category unrelated to ethics and aesthetics, but is expressed in social relationships, the arts and humanities.

The Sanskrit word Tagore uses for religion is *dharma*. In its denotative sense *dharma* means the essential quality or virtue of a thing, but in its derivative meaning it implies the principle of relationship that holds human's firm. Thus, Tagore explains, "Religion consists in the endeavor of men to cultivate and express those qualities which are inherent in the nature of Man the Eternal, and to have faith in him."²³

Tagore uses the English word philosophy in at least two ways: philosophy is used pejoratively when it retreats into abstractions or negations, and it is employed synonymously with religious thought when it leads to spiritual fulfilment and realization (*mukti*).

The exclusive method of non-dualism is rejected by Tagore

because it is too abstract for the religion of humans. He calls this cult of union (*yoga*) non-religion when its aim is to merge the personal self into an impersonal entity which is without quality or definition. Although Tagore recognizes the philosophical position of non-dualism (*advaita*) as a time-honored tradition in India, he does not take the time to grapple with its arguments. Rather, he refers to the *Īsopaniṣad* for a more harmonious and balanced view.²⁴

A philosophy of negation is also rejected by Tagore. He refers to the royal poet Kalidasa. In Ujjaini, Kalidasa sang about the ideal norm of the forest dwelling (*tapovana*). Those who dwelled there were seekers of truth; they "lived in an atmosphere of purity, but not of Puritanism, of the simple life, but not the life of self-mortification."²⁵ Religion, to Tagore, is not a negative renunciation but rather a complete and comprehensive realization.

The philosophy to which Tagore refers synonymously with religion is that to which the Upaniṣads refer as knowledge (*vidyā*), which is the antonym of *avidyā*, acceptance of error born of unreason. Religious knowledge (*vidyā*) can be obtained through the intermediaries of love and action. To put this into the history of Indian religion, the way (*mārga*) for religious attainment includes knowledge (*jñāna*) and actions (*karma*), but both are mediated through loving devotion (*bhakti*) which gives balance and harmony to life.

Tagore conceives of religion as "the creative principle of unity, the divine mystery of existence."²⁶ This unity resides not merely in a subjective idea, but in an energizing truth. The consciousness of this unity comes from the spiritual and humans expend effort to be true to its direct vision of complex interrelationships in the world of appearance. Religion through various names, forms, and states. Tagore began his lectures by stating that he wished to discuss one main subject— "the idea of the humanity of our God or the divinity of Man the Eternal."²⁷ Ultimately such religion baffles analysis, but Tagore attempted to describe it penultimately. Religion to him is manifested through personality and suggests to the human intellect, imagination, feeling, and experience, an intuitive vision of a unified whole.

Brahman to Tagore and Bengal Vaiṣṇavas: God

What is the clue to the inner meaning of religions? Tagore found this clue in the religion of the God of human personality.

This Supreme Person (*parma puruṣaḥ*) is the supreme reality of man, the divine Narāyana, or the Mahatma, the Supreme Spirit. Tagore quotes the Vedic poet who exclaims in a poem addressed to the Sun, "Reveal thy exceeding beauty to me and let me realize that the Person who is there is the One who I am,"²⁸ and again the poet of the Vedas states, "Nothing is greater than the Person; he is the supreme, he is the ultimate goal."²⁹ This truth, explains Tagore, is not the exclusive possession and insight of the *ṛṣi*s of ancient India, but it is also the experience of persons since that time and even of the village poets of East Bengal. It is in such a perspective of human personality that man finds his religion.

These references lead us to a discussion of Tagore's use of the words *brahma*, *brahman*, and *parabrahman*. As indicated above, Tagore rejects the *advaita* Vedantic interpretations of *parabrahman* as the impersonal It of absolute truth and man's enlightenment to a pure state of consciousness of undivided unity. He states in his conclusion that his religion "can only have its significance in this phenomenal world comprehended by our human self... (and we are to accept the testimony of those who) have felt a profound love, which is the intense feeling of union, for a Being who comprehends in himself all things that are human in knowledge, will and action. And he is God, who is not merely a sum total of facts, but the goal that lies immediately beyond all that is comprised in the past and the present."³⁰

Such a conclusion has not been drawn without considerable influence from the Indian religious tradition which we call Bengal Vaiṣṇavism. As stated above, the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas developed their personalistic religion as a revitalization of the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Purāṇas* (especially the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*), the thoughtful writings of the Gosvamins (Jiva Gosvamin in particular), and Jiva's student Krishnadasa in his *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

To the Bengal Vaiṣṇava, ultimate reality has three aspects, which are hierarchically arranged and ascend in order from *brahman*, to *paramātman*, to *bhagavat*. The *bhagavat* is the highest reality, the Supreme Person who is infinitely qualified and infinitely differentiated by perfect attributes. *Brahman* and *paramātman* are included in or are a part of *bhagavat* and, consequently, are to be transcended by means of knowledge and experience to the truth of the whole which is *bhagavat*.

Tagore, like a Bengal Vaiṣṇava, probes the qualities and

differentiations of God/*bhagavat*. What is unsystematically scattered *throughout* Tagore's lectures we can analyze and compare with the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas. Ultimately inseparable (*svābhāviki*) but penultimately understandable, there are among the infinite numbers of active powers and operative energies of divinity (*śaktis*), those which scholars have grouped under three main categories, namely, *svarūpa-śakti*, *jiva-śakti* and *māyā-śakti*. If Tagore had discussed these categories, his readers would have understood him better.

Bhagavat's svarūpa eternally exists with him, and is inseparable from him (it is technically termed pure existence, *suddha-sattva* and is called his internal and intimate power [*antaranga-śakti*]). This power is a complexity of three aspects, viz., (1) *sandhini*, the power which upholds his own existence, (2) *saṁvit*, the *śakti* by which he knows and make himself known, and (3) *hladini*, that aspect through which he enjoys and makes others enjoy his bliss. It is the *hladini* to which Tagore refers in his lectures, for with this aspect in preponderance, *Bhagavat* manifests himself in *bhakti* or loving devotion (called *guhyavidyā* by the Vaiṣṇavas). *Bhagavat* in his pure existence is untouched by *māyā*,³¹ but fulfilled through *bhakti*, loving devotion. Had Tagore referred more specifically to these elements so important for the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, his readers would have understood him better.

In his discussion of "Spiritual Union," Tagore describes God as the Supreme Person (*parama puruṣaḥ*) who is love itself. That love is not static, but is dependent and relational. Tagore says, "For the God in Man depends upon men's service and men's love for his own love's fulfilment."³² When asked how this love is demonstrated, Tagore refers to *Bhagavat's* relation to man as Father, Friend, and Beloved. Rather than continuing a discussion of the divine essence, Tagore turns to the human realization of *Bhagavat*, for he concludes, "Whatever character our theology may ascribe to him, in reality he is the infinite of man towards whom men move in their collective growth, with whom they seek their union of love as individuals, [and] in whom they find their ideal of father, friend and beloved."³³

Jiva as the Same Essence as Bhagavat (bheda)

The second aspect of *bhagavat* as understood by Bengal Vaiṣṇavas is *jiva-śakti*—the power to manifest himself through

human individualization. *Bhagavat* in this aspect is known as *paramātman*. When *paramātman* assumes the smallest indivisible part of his infinitely qualified existence (*anu*) the ultimate becomes human, the *jivātman*. As a part of *bhagavat*, the *jiva* participates in a limited sense in the infinite qualities of *bhagavat*. *Jiva* is a *śakti* of *Bhagavat* and as such is a possessor of *śaktis*; *Jiva* is a *śaktimat*. *Jiva-śakti*, then, along with *paramātman*, is the intermediate operative energy of the divine, and links the *jivātman* with *bhagavat*. Conceived as a part of *Bhagavat*, who participates in *bhagavat's* qualities, the *jiva* is the same (*bhedā*) as *Bhagavat*.

Jiva as Different Essence Than *Bhagavat*

Yet the *jiva* to Bengal Vaiṣṇavas is different (*abheda*) from *bhagavat*. To them the *jiva's* qualities are not infinite, and a *jiva* remains distinct from both *bhagavat* and other *jivas*. This sameness yet difference (*bhedābheda*) is the keynote of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, and is especially propounded in *Jiva Gosvamin's* writings.³⁴ As Dimock observes, the point of such a discussion is that because of the sameness of *bhagavat-jiva*, it is possible for the *jiva* to approach *bhagavat* and to retain a loving relationship with him. Also, because of the difference between *jiva* and *bhagavat*, there remains the need for an eternal worship by the *jiva* which is directed toward *bhagavat*, and which increases the pleasure of both the deity and the worshipper for eternity.³⁵

The Human in Tagore: *Jiva*

Although Tagore does not footnote his *The Religion of Man* with reference to the writings on *bhedābheda*, the influence of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism is represented strongly in his thought. It is the diversity of religion, Tagore states, that reveals the unity. We have discussed the *bhagavat*, let us turn to Tagore's ideas about man (*jiva*).

When Tagore discusses the human, he refers to a favorite concept of his, the personality. He defines personality as "a self-conscious principle of transcendental unity within man which comprehends all the details of facts that are individually his in knowledge and feeling, wish, will and work. In its negative aspect it is limited

to the individual separateness, while in its positive aspect it ever extends itself in the infinite through the increase of its knowledge, love and activities."³⁶ Religion for Tagore is not confined to the physical or material interests of man, but rather centers in the personality of the human. The human, as a part of *bhagavat*, is endowed with surplus. This surplus frees one from attachments or limitations of physical nature, liberates a person from the bondage of the mind in which one limits himself by individual separateness, and it relates a person to a harmonious whole, which is a "mysterious unity of interrelationship complex in character, with differences within the forms and function."³⁷ The surplus gives a human leisure and detachment and upon the basis of this surplus one becomes a creator too. One is not only a recipient of *bhagavat's* favor and gracious creation, but a person offers gifts to one's God/*bhagavat*.

Curiously enough, the text to which Tagore refers in his discussion of the surplus is the *Atharva Veda*. By means of this surplus a person is aware that one is greater than the parts of one's own character, and realizes that one is not imperfect, but only incomplete, so one must exceed the self and search for ultimate meaning not yet realized. The surplus is an inner truth in one's personality, which the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas identified as *bhagavat's jiva-śakti*. Tagore describes it as "him in whose image we are made."³⁸ When one becomes a creator one realizes oneself in the perspective of a dependent relationship to *bhagavat*, and with the experience of human self-realization, a person becomes aware of religion.

Religion as Self-Realization in Tagore and Bengal Vaiṣṇavism

Self-realization (*mukti*) is the experience of union in truth for Tagore in which the *jivan-devatā*, God, the Lord of Life, and the *jivan-muktā*, liberated man, are mutually dependent. The union is characterized by freedom, love, and joy in its individual experience and is shared with other *jivas* by means of disinterested, selfless, and creative works of social welfare. *Mukti* demands a disciplined life in which the *mukta* progresses normally through the four stages of life, characterized as a life of simplicity. Such a union of parts makes up Tagore's religion of self-realization.

Sanskrit term Tagore uses the (*mukti*) for self-realization which he defines as freedom in the unity of truth. This spiritual union has two dimensions: one that is inner, which reconciles the complex parts of human personality into a harmony of self-adjusting interrelationships within his whole personality; and the second dimension is the outer, in which the liberated *jiva* finds his larger and truer self in his interrelationships with the community of *jivas*, humanity a human's consciousness of this spiritual unity and efforts to be true to such a vision Tagore calls religion. Such liberated personalities are not historicised as beings out of a past, more religious age, nor are they confined to those whose birth and development have given them the privilege of high caste, for even an unsophisticated village fisherman was known to Tagore as a *jivan mukta*. To such a freed personality is given the name of the "twice born" for they maintain a relationship with the Divine which is of mutual dependence. Finally, Tagore teaches that self-realization is attained by means of disciplined effort. As an illustration of the mutual relationship of the infinite being and the finite self, Tagore refers to the Upanisadic parable of two birds sitting on the same bough. One is feeding while the other observes. Both of these birds are in man: the objective one busies himself in this life's matters, while the subjective one looks on with disinterested joy. Both the inner and the outer dimensions of self-realization affect one another and overlap in the human personality. What is imprecise in Tagore's lectures can be clarified when we turn to the writings of the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas.

The Bengal Vaiṣṇavas differentiate a third active power (*śakti*) of *bhagavat*, namely *māyā-śakti* (see above for *svarūpa* and *jiva śaktis*). *Māyā-śakti* is outer or external (*bahiranga*) to *bhagavat*, that is, it is not directly connected with the essential self of *bhagavat*, but is known only at the lower levels of existence. *Paramātman* is the cause, sustenance, and dissolution of the created world and exerts control over human beings and the material nature. The *jiva* of the *jiva-śakti* of *bhagavat* shares qualities, but as *māyā-śakti jiva* possesses an organic body which has a limited form. As long as the *jiva* identifies itself with the body, it is under *māyā's* control. But when the *jiva* no longer identifies the self with the material form (*prakṛti*) and experiences the liberating realization that the *jiva* is in its highest form and essence (a part of the *svarūpa śakti of bhagavat*), the *jiva* is no longer a captive of the

inferior physical form of *māyā-śakti*.

The Bengal Vaiṣṇavas differentiated *māyā-śakti* further as *jiva-māyā* and *guṇa-māyā*. *Jiva-māyā* obscures the vision of the individual (*jiva*) ātman, so that it does not realize that it possesses pure consciousness (*cit*), a quality it shares with *bhagavat*. *Guṇa-māyā* refers to the binding power of *māyā* which keeps the *jiva* from liberation by overdue involvement with the tripartite material world, viz., the material (*prakṛti*) of 'he *sattva-guṇa*, *rajas-guṇa* and *tamasguṇa*. The *jiva* as part of *bhagavat* can transcend both *guṇa-māyā* and *jiva-māyā* and experience by means of *bhakti* the liberating, loving relationship with *bhagavat*, in which the *jiva* is a part of the whole and both dependent upon and interdependent with *bhagavat*.

The inner dimension of self-realization is characterized by Tagore as one of freedom, love, and joy. The *jiva* is free to realize his divine dignity. Such freedom is not just independence but "lies in a perfect harmony of relationships, which we realize in this world not through our reponse to it in knowing, but in being... through the union of perfect sympathy."³⁹ This freedom is religious in that it is "the liberation of our individual personality in the universal Person who is human all the same."⁴⁰ Without the Bengal Vaiṣṇava technical vocabulary, the reader of *The Religion of Man* could easily misunderstand Tagore.

To Tagore, human freedom is for expressing the infinite by continually breaking through imposed limitations. Just as a physical person overcame physical limitations when one stood upright, developed one's eyesight and mind to be able to comprehend a larger view, attained skill and grace by the coordination of one's functional parts for actions, so a religious person used one's divine gift of mind and imagination (Tagore's surplus) to apprehend the Supreme Person by breaking through the limitations and binding power of *māyā*. With the Vedic *mantra* inspiring a person's energies and aspirations, the human devotee progresses from the unreal to the real, and a human exercises one's freedom by breaking through the isolation of the self. But freedom is more than a negative release from something incomplete; freedom is religious when it is a positive realization which finds its personal fulfilment in the apprehension of and companionship with the Supreme Person.

From the period of his youth until his mature age, it was the love poems of the Vaiṣṇavas that influenced his thinking. Dissatisfied with various religious alternatives in his contemporary milieu,

Tagore during the period under review, began to examine these love poems for meanings beyond their obvious and surface expressions. Without mentioning him by name it is apparent that the religious movement revitalized by Caitanya and perpetuated by his followers became a major source of Tagore's understanding of the religion of the human. In his search for religious meanings, Tagore was interested in the religious expressions of villagers in remote Bengal areas. Their dramas reminded him of the events which happened in Vṛndāvan, when Kṛṣṇa played his flute, calling devotees to come and to experience religion as expressed by means of the metaphors of personal love.

Like the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, he presupposed the position of dualism, in which man finds his spiritual satisfaction via a progressive growth in loving devotion for the Supreme Person, *bhagavat*. Tagore does not always use the technical Vaiṣṇava terms, but in order to avoid confusion his English transformations are forced to use them if we are to understand *The Religion of Man*, *bhakti*, Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, and Tagore.

The word *bhakti* comes from the verbal root, which signifies complete servitude. By derivation the essential characteristic of *bhakti* is servitude or submission of body, mind, and words to *bhagavat*. This term was translated by Tagore as loving devotion.

True devotional feeling for the Vaiṣṇavas is developed through two stages: *vaidhi-bhakti* and *rāgānuga-bhakti*. *Vaidhi-bhakti* is that form of devotion which is external and involves ritual activities. The majority of people who read the scriptural texts are instructed as to how to perform devotional actions which will remove the human fears of transgressing the normative injunctions. These activities are formal and require correct mechanical performance. This is the preliminary stage of *bhakti*; it is indispensable for the beginner as a guide for introductory knowledge and practice. The means of *vaidhi-bhakti* have been enumerated by Rupa as sixty-four acts of piety.⁴¹ These positive actions bring the devotee's body, senses, and mind into a devotional state of worship. They also assist the devotee, negatively, by helping one to avoid the offenses to devotion.

The devotee advances, according to the Vaiṣṇavas, beyond the outward forms of rules and actions to the higher stage of *bhakti*, called *rāgānuga*. At this level, the devotee experiences a deep and inseparable love for *bhagavat*, and the emotional part of his char-

acter is stirred. The *bhakta* experiences intimate human sentiments in a relationship with *bhagavat*, and imitates a variety of human relationships, i.e., that of a child to its parents (*vātsālyā*), relative to relative, lover to beloved (*mādhuryā*), friend to friend (*sākhyā*) or servant to master (*dāsya*). *Rāgānuga* is the advanced stage of the way to spiritual fulfillment.

When *bhakti* matures for the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas it develops into the human sentiment of love (*prema*). *Prema* is the highest stage of devotion and its sequence begins with faith (*śraddha*) and advances through hierarchical stages until it is fulfilled.

Comparable ideas are found in Tagore's *The Religion of Man*; in his lectures we see the imaginative mind of a poet seeking to translate these Indian ideas of love into English for an audience which probably did not know the variations within Bengal Vaiṣṇavism.

In dualistic and theistic terms, Tagore defines the Supreme Person as love, and also the relationship between the spiritual aspirant and *bhagavat*, the Supreme Love, in terms of love. When a human experiences the love of nature's beauty, of an animal, child, comrade, a beloved or the highest love of *bhagavat*, he tastes *prema*. But the love of a human for the Supreme Person is greater than all other loves and is the most perfect relationship. That highest love is characterized as one of mutual dependence. The lover's flute is Kṛṣṇa's, and the flute notes urge a human to come out of one's existence in separation to one of loving union. Those who answer the call of the flute meet *bhagavat* in the "hall of union."⁴² Present just beneath the descriptive words of the poet are the Bengal Vaiṣṇava love actions (*līlā*) in which Kṛṣṇa carried on his love drama with the *gopis* (cowherdesses) and *gopas* (cowherds) of *Vṛndāvan*. In English Tagore is restrained; he does not use Vaiṣṇava erotics. Instead his approach is to interpret those sensual actions on a level of spiritual relationships, and consequently the English reader misses the deeper meanings. Yet, he states that love is the perfect commingling of physical, mental and spiritual associations.⁴³ *Vaiṣṇava* erotics would have assisted his translation even if he demanded that his readers become acquainted with Vaiṣṇava normative literature.

Like the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, Tagore explains the dualism of the relationship between the *jiva* and *bhagavat* as one of mutual dependence. Because of the love for a human, *bhagavat* graciously responds to the *prema* of the worshipping *jiva*. As father, friend,

and supreme lover, *bhagavat* depends upon a person's service and sacrificial love; that service and love are needed by *bhagavat* to accomplish fulfillment. The jiva's love, prompted by a willingness to sacrifice one's own pleasures for fulfilling loving devotion to *bhagavat*, is always mutually dependent upon the prompting and response of the Supreme Person.

In following the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas in his exposition of dualism, Tagore rejects what he characterizes as the *advaita* Vedantic (non-dualistic) ultimate state of abstract Being. The Infinite, in *The Religion of Man*, at its highest level is expressed in human terms, and this ultimate Person needs the reciprocal love and cooperation of the devotee. In a poem which he translated in the Oxford lectures, Tagore assumes the relationship of a love partner to illustrate this mutual dependence. Most of Tagore's discussion is sexually restrained, but in this poem addressed to *Jivan devatā*, "The Lord of My Life," Tagore wonders if his failures and wrongs are forgiven and if his days without service and nights of forgetfulness of the Supreme Person have affected their love relationship. Flowers which should have been offered, tunes which should have been played on the lute, and lyrics which ought to have been sung in praise of *Jivan devatā* have all been neglected. In the last section of the poem, the poet asks:

But have my days come to their end at last,
Lord of My Life, (*Jivan devatā*),
While my arms round there grow limp,
My kisses losing their truth?

He answers his own question and implores *bhagavat* to renew this love drama, which is reminiscent of the *Vṛndāvan* metaphors:

Then break up the meeting of this languid day
Renew the old in fresh forms of delight;
And let the wedding come once again
In a new ceremony of life.⁴⁴

It is unnecessary for this discussion to explain the implications of Hindu erotics, and Tagore suggests to our imagination the love battle of the bed chamber. Human love has two interdependent phases, viz., love in sexual union, and the anticipation of union while the lovers are separated. This human love can be elevated to

the plane of human-divine relationships, in which the pain of separation always suggests the joy of union. Perhaps Dimock can help us understand Tagore's communication problem: "The essential problem of poetic expression is the communication through image and symbol of those intuitions and perceptions that often lie beyond consciousness and that cannot be expressed by what is often called 'denotative language.'"⁴⁵ More explicit reference to Bengal Vaiṣṇava *prema* would have enhanced the level of comprehension in Tagore's audience.

Finally, Tagore denotes the relationship between the *jiva* and *bhagavat* as one of love by stating that *prema* is both the means and the end of *bhakti*. We have already introduced *bhakti* as a means to the religious end, *mukti*. Like the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, Tagore lectures on the superiority of *bhakti* over the other modes of worship, viz. *Jñāna*, yoga, and *karma*. The way of knowledge (*Jñāna*) leads to the realization of *brahman*. Yoga is the disciplined effort which is another means to self-realization, and sacrificial activities (*karma*) induce the devotee from selfish pleasures, desires, intents, and activities to a higher state which is characterized by loving devotion of the Supreme Person. These modes are inferior because they are means. The unmixed or pure (*śuddha*) *prema bhakti* is the superior mode and the highest expression of the means to ultimate satisfaction.⁴⁶

To the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, there is a hierarchy of the modes of worship; *bhakti-mārga* is superior to the *jñāna*, yoga, and *karma* ways. When, as a means, *bhakti* is accompanied by the desire for fruits it is *sakāmā*; such *bhakti* progresses to the level of its highest means, when it is accompanied by actions free from inferior desires (*niṣkāma-kārmahitā*). *Sakāmā bhakti* can be mixed with a desire for activity; this arises out of the *rajas guṇa*. It can also be prompted by the lower passions such as envy or pride when it is mixed with *tamas guṇa*. As the inclination and capacity of the devotee develop, the *bhakta* progresses into the experiential relationship of pure *bhakti* (*śuddhā*) in which resides divine pleasure and *prema*. This is the best mode for attaining the highest good. Thus, of the traditionally accepted ways of religious progress and guidance (*mārga*), *bhakti* is superior to *jñāna*, yoga, and *karma*.⁴⁷ The Bengal Vaiṣṇavas consequently do not reject these other modes of worship, but relegate them to preliminary or penultimate status. They are inferior means to the end, yet they are parts which

make up the whole. Saints or devotees who follow these mixed paths are encouraged to progress further in their devotion and to become the highest type of devotees of *bhagavat* (*bhakta siddha*).

Bhakti, then, is the highest means to the *prema* of bhagavat. Jiva Gosvamin had written in his *Bhakti-samdarbha*, "True *mokṣa* (*apavarga*) consists in a direct vision (*sākṣātkāra*) or attainment (*prāpti*) of the deity in his highest appearance as the Bhagavat, which is realizable by *bhakti* alone."⁴⁸

Tagore, like the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, regards *bhakti* as the end of religious aspiration and ultimate satisfaction, because the Ultimate is the Supreme Lover. The technical vocabulary is translated into English as: "We must realize not only the reasoning mind, but also the creative imagination, the love and wisdom that belong to the Supreme Person...love for whom comprehends love for all creatures and exceeds in depth and strength all other loves, leading to difficult endeavors and martyrdoms that have no other gain than the fulfillment of this love itself."⁴⁹ Within this same dualistic and theistic model for the religion of man, Tagore concludes his lectures by appealing to the reader, "Let us have faith in the testimony of others who have felt a profound love, which is the intense feeling of union, for a Being who comprehends in himself all things that are human in knowledge, will and action. And he is God, who is not merely a sum total of facts, but the goal that lies immensely beyond all that is comprised in the past and the present."

Like the vision of the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, Tagore's self-realization (*mukti*) is an experience of freedom which leads from the isolation of the self to a unifying relationship with the Supreme Person. This union is characterized by love, in which the *jivan-mukta* expresses gratitude for the gift of love by means of service and devotion to *bhagavat*. *Bhagavat*, in turn, depends upon a human cooperation and reciprocal love (*prema*). Such devotional responses continue throughout the lifetime of the devotee and are involved in the maze of physical, mental, and spiritual associations.

Conclusion

Bengal Vaiṣṇavism is one of the many religious traditions from which Tagore drew for his exposition of the religion of humans. Many writers in the secondary literature on Tagore have mentioned

its influence, but have neglected to substantiate it.

Tagore emphasized both intellectual knowledge and intuitive knowledge as means for understanding and experiencing religion.

He drew heavily upon religious thought patterns connected with the *acintya bhedābheda* school founded by Sri Caitanya and systematized and elaborated by the six Gosvamins of the Vaiṣṇava traditions of Bengal.

When Tagore translated the Ultimate as God in English, he removed from the word a complexity of Vaiṣṇava thought unknown to many of his readers or listeners, and the result of this reduction led some of his listeners to oversimplify and misunderstand him.

Jiva is both of the same essence (*bheda*) and different from (*abheda*) *bhagavat*. The mutually dependent relationship of bhagavat and jiva is ultimately indescribable (*acintya*). The experience of inner self-realization is characterized by freedom, love, and joy, and the application of these inner characteristics to the outer community of humankind is their creative expression in the social context.

Religion understood as the pattern of ultimate concern demonstrates Tagore's constant struggle for balance, when he attempted to explain it in his Hibbert Lectures in *The Religion of Man*.

Notes

1. N. Sen, "The Foreign Reincarnation of Rabindranath Tagore," *Journal of Asian Studies* 25 (1966): pp. 275-286; S.N. Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1970); K. Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography* (London: Oxford University, 1962).
2. B. Bose, *An Acre of Green Grass* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1948), p.1; see bibliographies in Hay and Kripalani, *op.cit.* as suggestive.
3. R. Tagore, *Wings of Death* (London: John Murray, 1960), pp. 95f.
4. R. Tagore, *The Religion of Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 92. Hereafter cited as *RM*.
5. M. Singer, "Text and Context in the Study of Contemporary Hinduism," in *When a Great Tradition Modernizes* (New York: Praeger, 1972), pp. 39-52.
6. *RM*, pp. 89f.
7. *RM*, p. 79.
8. *RM*, p. 82.
9. A.K. Ramanujan, trans., *Speaking of Siva* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1973);

- R. Redfields, *Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago: Univeesity Press, 1956), pp. 67-104.
10. T.S. Rukmani, *A Critical Study of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Varanasi: Chokhamba Sanskrit Office, 1970), p. 182; S.K. De, *Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1961), D.R. Kinsley, *The Sword and the Flute* (Berkeley: California, University of California Press, 1975), pp. 1-78, M. Singer, *Krishna: Myth: Rites and Attitudes* (Chicago: University Press, 1966); S.J. Rosen, *Vaisnavism: Contemporary Scholars Discuss the Gaudiya Tradition*, S.J. Rosen, ed. (New York).
 11. Rukmani, *A Critical Study*, p. 174.
 12. See especially the developments initiated by Rupa, Jiva, Sanatana, who returned to Vṛndavana to write theological texts for Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism. They expounded Caitanya's ideas and emphasized Kṛṣṇa bhakti, Rukmani, *A Critical Study*, p. 96; D.R. Tuck, "Double Incarnation *avatara*) of Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya in *Caitanya-Caritamita*," *Bengal Vaisnavism, Orientalism, Society, and the Arts*, J.T. O'Connell, ed. (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1985), pp. 29-35, P.R. Tuck "Three Patterns of Religions Devotion among Caitanya's Followers," J.P. Thorp, ed. (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1986), pp. 161-169.
 13. The letter was written on September 1, 1930, and is cited in M. Lago, *Imperfect Encounter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 330.
 14. Lago, *Imperfect Encounter*, pp. 320-322.
 15. *RM*, p. 92; see also his disclaimer of being a scholar or philosopher, *ibid.*, p. 90.
 16. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
 17. *Ibid.*, pp. 109ff.
 18. *Ibid.*, pp. 18ff..
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
 20. Religion is *darśana*, a way of apprehending the world, or a *rasavastu*, a life to be enjoyed rather than a theory to be propounded.
 21. *RM*, p. 183.
 22. *Ibid.*
 23. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
 25. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
 26. *Ibid.*, pp. 14f.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
 28. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
 29. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
 30. *Ibid.*, pp. 205f.
 31. R.G. Nath, "The Acintya-bhedābheda School," *Cultural Heritage of India* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission, 1953), 3.367. E.C. Dimock, Jr., *The Place of the Hidden Moon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 124ff.
 32. *RM*, p. 72.
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
 34. Dimock, *The Place of the Hidden Moon*, p. 124; *RM*, pp. 46ff. See also S.K. De, *The Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1961), pp. 281ff.
 35. See below for a discussion of *mayā-sakti*.
 36. *RM*, p. 119.
 37. *Ibid.*, pp. 46f.
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
 39. *Ibid.*, pp. 172f.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
 41. De, *The Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal*, p. 181.
 42. *RM*, p. 106.
 43. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
 44. *Ibid.*, pp. 47f.
 45. Dimock, *The Place of the Hidden Moon*, p. 4.
 46. S.C. Chakravarti, *Philosophical Foundation of Bengal Vaisnavism* (NP: Academic Publishers, 1969), pp. 177f.
 47. *RM*, p. 119.
 48. De, *The Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal*, p. 356.
 49. *RM*, p. 24.

SRI AUROBINDO AND EXPERIENCE: YOGIC AND OTHERWISE

Robert N. Minor

Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) has been thought of as one of the most important religious thinkers of modern India. A large body of secondary literature demonstrates the interest in his thought,¹ and centers for the study of his thought and yoga are located throughout the world today.

The evolution of the mature form of Aurobindo's thought, which is of interest to most students and scholars, is traceable from his early days as a student in England to his final days as a yogi in Pondicherry.² His system of thought attempted to affirm both a transcendent unity in the tradition of Vedanta, and the reality of the multiplicity which is the phenomenal world.

Though Aurobindo placed himself within the Vedantic tradition, which relies on scriptures and a tradition of gurus for authority his decisions, as to what would be accepted, rejected, or reinterpreted from that tradition were based upon the authority of his own experiences. The experiences which were authoritative for his ultimate concern were both yogic and non-yogic. This study traces the relationship of these experiences to his religion. At first, in England, only an aesthetic experience of nature was the authority for his religious stance. Upon his return to India, the experiences of others, the yogi-seers of the Upanisads, were considered authoritative. These, did not deny his earlier aesthetic appreciation of the phenomenal world. His own yogic experience became fully authoritative, however, only when it too affirmed the reality and worth of this world as well as the reality of the Upanisadic Unity behind and

within the phenomena. At Pondicherry, in the final period of his life, he wrote as a "realized" yogi,³ or, better, a yogi in the process of a progressive realization. Finally, then, his yogic experience, and it alone, became the authority for all truth.

Religion and the Aesthetic Experience of Nature in England

Sri Aurobindo was born on August 15, 1872, in Bengal, India. His father was an English-educated physician who wanted his son to receive a British education. After attending an Irish-Catholic school in India, Aurobindo was sent to England, to King's College, Cambridge. Though he never qualified for the Indian Civil Service, the vocational goal of his studies, these years were marked by the receipt of a number of academic awards.

In England Aurobindo wrote a dozen or so poems and a number of prose works which remained incomplete. In *The Harmony of Virtue* he attempted to develop an ethical system without a "religious" basis. In this he rejected what he had experienced as a Christian world-view, beliefs which affirmed a personal Divine Being who acted as a law-giver.⁴ Instead, Aurobindo wrote that his ultimate concern was "to restore the harmony to the Universe," the experience of which was open to all. *The Harmony of Virtue* is a Socratic-style dialogue, and the participant who is finally convinced of the truth by Aurobindo's philosophy summarizes: "I see now that to be in harmony with beauty, or, in other words, to take the guiding principle of the universe as the guiding principle of human life, is the final and perfect aim of the human species."⁵ In this he believed that he was taking a principle which was found in nature and which all could experience, and applying it to the task of the human ultimate concern. There was no sense of an absolute which transcended Nature. What was ultimately real for Aurobindo was Nature's principle of harmony. Nature's beauty consists in "harmony in effect and proportion in detail."⁶

Every element of Nature contained both an internal harmony and, in taking its place in the universe, exhibited an external harmony with all else in the universe. In another prose work of the period Aurobindo adds that this harmony exists even though at times one might think otherwise: "However she may seem to grow grapes from thistles, [Nature] is really too wise and good to do

anything so discordant, and only by her involved and serpentine manner gives an air of caprice and anarchy to what is really apt and harmonious.”⁷

Only the human being falls outside of this harmony. This is so because of humanity’s wilful choice of what Aurobindo calls “False Reason,” which causes it to misunderstand Nature and its ways. The human being should choose now to follow Nature by taking a place in its harmony.

There is no evidence of spiritual or yogic experiences for Aurobindo in England. He later says that there was some sort of “realization” in the year of his departure for England, but he knew nothing of yogic practices at this time. The system of thought was limited to his experience of Nature, but this was Nature conceptualized as harmonious, and articulated as overwhelmingly aesthetic and obviously real. His poetry reflects his experience of the beauty and harmony of Nature. “Songs to Myrtila” is a debate between two fictional Greek aesthetes over the relative beauty of night and day. In “Phaethon” he sighs with the trees a requiem for “Pale-gilded Autumn, aesthete of the years.” In “To a Hero-Worshipper” he claims to have studied Nature and found no message, yet like “a russet nightingale/Who pours sweet song, he knows not why,” he sees beauty and harmony there. Aurobindo, in spite of even contradictory yogic experience, would always be committed to the world in such a manner. Yogic experience would have to conform before he would completely accept its authority.

One poem highlights Aurobindo’s desire to return to India, a desire which he realized in February 1893, and which was accompanied by “spiritual experiences.” In “Envoi”⁸ Aurobindo writes that to stay in England is to experience unfulfilled hopes and dreams:

Depart and live for seasons many and few
If live you may, but stay here to pain
My heart with hopeless passion and renew
Visions of beauty that my lips shall ne’er attain.

His intense desire to return to India is described as a call:

Me from her lotus heaven Saraswati
Has called to regions of eternal snow
And Ganges pacing to the southern sea,

Ganges upon whose shores the flowers of Eden blow.

India, a land in which he was born, but about which he knew little, seemed to be beckoning to him, and he returned. He later recalled experiences which he evaluated as indicative of the importance of experiential understanding. Upon stepping on Indian soil, he experienced “a vast calm which descended upon him...(this calm surrounded him and remained for long months afterwards).”⁹ As he looked back on this event, he believed this “spiritual experience” confirmed his divine call.

Religion and the Experiences of the Upanisadic Seers

Aurobindo spent about thirty years in Baroda in the state service. Here he first read Sanskrit and Bengali literature, and translated portions of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana* epics as well as the *Bhagavadgītā*. This placed him in touch with a tradition he was to identify as his own. He claims to have been adverse to metaphysical speculation, but he read the sayings of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, some of the speeches of Svami Vivekananda, and the Upanisads. In Baroda he began his study of the Upanisads, writing *Philosophy of the Upanishads* and *On Translating the Upanishads*, the latter to critique Max Müller.

In the former work he identified his own position as that of the Upanisadic seers. He believed this position reflected a common Indian spiritual experience as well as the center around which Indian thought had developed. “The idea of transcendental Unity, Oneness and Stability behind all the flux and variety of phenomenal life is the basal idea of the Upanishads: this is the pivot of all Indian metaphysics, the sum and goal of our spiritual experience.”¹⁰ The teachings of the Upanisads, understood as consistent, became his own religion and were affirmed as the religion of India because they were based upon her spiritual experience. This last element was the key: spiritual experience.

Aurobindo claimed to have had “spiritual experiences” in the Baroda period. They are later described as “the realisation of the vacant Infinite while walking on the ridge of the Takhti-Suleman in Kashmir; the living presence of Kali in a shrine on the banks of the Narmada; the vision of the Godhead surging up from within when in danger of a carriage accident in Baroda in the first year of

his stay, etc.”¹¹ These may have reinforced his belief in the truth of the Upanisads, because the importance of the Upanisads for him was that they were based upon experiences which resulted from the yogic practice of their authors. He could not identify his experiences with theirs at this period, but he was convinced of the truth of their experiences. These reinforced the belief in the harmony of existence he set forth in his early writing in England, and reinforced his belief in the reality of the world by means of intuitive realizations which he believed were as real as experiences of everyday life might be to others. He affirmed their experiences as authoritative, though they were not his own. Thus *The Philosophy of the Upanishads* regularly refers to their knowledge as experiential.

The seers, by means of yoga, realized first the existence of the Unity behind all of the flux, called absolute *brahman*.¹² *Brahman* as Absolute is beyond the limitations of speech and conceptualization, like the *nirguṇa brahman* (*brahman* without characteristics) of the eighth-century non-dualist Sankara. The *brahman* that may be known, however, is not *sagūṇa brahman* (*brahman* with characteristics) of Sankara, which is also spoken of as a personal deity or lord, *īśvara*. The *brahman* that is known is designated by the traditional Upanisadic formula *saccidānanda*. This compound speaks of the absolute as *sat*, “pure existence, pure being,” as *cit*, “pure consciousness,” and *ānanda*, “absolute bliss.” The undeveloped hints of Aurobindo’s later evolutionary theory of consciousness are found in his statements from Baroda which teach that the origin of the phenomenal universe is in Brahman envisioning himself. It is at this point that Brahman “chooses to regard himself as qualified.”¹³

Aurobindo interprets the doctrine of *māyā* in terms of experience. *Māyā*, for Aurobindo, is not a declaration of the illusoriness of existence in ultimate terms, as it is for Sankara. Instead it is a designation for two apparently contradictory but experienced facts. First, the universe is experienced as an Absolute Unity, *brahman*, as the essence of the world, in the yogic experience of the Upanisadic seers. Second, the universe in its multiplicity is also experienced as real in non-yogic experience. Since Aurobindo will not relegate the duality to a lower level, as Sankara does, because it is also experienced as real, *māyā* is seen as a term which embodies both facts of experience, though apparently contradictory: “Maya is no theory but a fact: no mere result of logic or speculation, but of careful

observation and yet unassailable by logic and unsurpassable by speculation.”¹⁴ *Māyā* is not a part of experience, but it is the one postulate which Vedanta demands in order to account for the apparently contradictory experiences of the Unity and the Diversity.¹⁵

The second realization from yogic experience which Aurobindo finds in the Upanisads and which he himself affirms is “that the transcendent absolute Self of things was also the Self of living beings, the Self too of man, that highest of the beings living in the material plane on earth.”¹⁶ *Brahman* is not to be found as separate from the world of existence, but as its very essence. The third Upanisadic realization amplifies this further: “The Transcendent Self in individual man is as complete because identically the same as the Transcendent Self of the Universe.”¹⁷ As traditionally put, *brahman*, the Absolute, is *ātman*, the “self,” or as the Upanisads put it, *tat tvam si*, “you are that.”

Though ignorance clouds the realization of this reality, these are facts experienced by the seers of the Upanisads. Aurobindo spends much time discussing the levels of yogic experience revealed in the Upanisads. His ultimate concern was not just the exposition of the Upanisads, but first, the experience of the realization of *ātman* as *brahman*, pure, absolute consciousness, and second, the realization by the whole world itself of *brahman* in its outer life, conforming all beings to the nature of the Absolute. The means for accomplishing this are available to all, though Aurobindo did not spell out its details. It required the recorded revelation of the Upanisads, *śruti*, “that which is heard,” to seize the mind and saturate it with the ideas of the supreme. Then it required a sacred teacher, who would teach what the *śruti* implies. Third, it required the practice of yoga, a practice which Aurobindo did not explain at this point. Finally, it required the “Grace of God,” to enable one to persevere in the faith.¹⁸ No further information is presented. Aurobindo may have only begun a study of the scriptures in order to attain a like experience of the Absolute. It would not be until 1908 that he would actually seek out a guru, or teacher, to help him to rise to Upanisadic realizations.

Though Aurobindo began a type of yogic practice in 1904, he did not practice it for “spiritual reasons,” but in order to gain strength and endurance for his political work. It was mainly a practice of *prāṇāyāma*, “breathing exercise.”¹⁹ This continued for about four years until, frustrated, he turned to a teacher for help. He later

said that this early yoga brought "an increased health and outflow of energy, some psycho-physical phenomena, a great outflow of poetic creation, a limited power of subtle sight (luminous patterns and figures, etc.) mostly with the waking eye,"²⁰ but no deep religious experience. In fact, in 1910 he would emphatically downgrade *prāṇāyāma*.²¹

Thus, in this period he accepted Upanisadic thought on the basis of the experiences of others, the Vedic seers, not on the authority of his own yoga. Aurobindo would later be convinced that his experiences were like theirs, but only through his own experience would his elaboration of the evolutionary scheme become the central element of his thought. In the period spent in England, Aurobindo had committed himself to the positive affirmation of this world as a place of beauty and harmony. While in Baroda he saw that affirmation as a part of the Upanisadic realization. Soon he would seek to make the Upanisadic realization his own and be satisfied with his yogic experience only when it would affirm both *brahman* and the world.

A Temporary Nationalism and Yogic Interests

Though Aurobindo had been interested in the politics of Indian independence earlier, attending sessions of the Indian National Congress and writing a few essays for *Indu Prakash*, the independence of India, which was a penultimate issue, was temporarily raised to the level of ultimacy in 1905-1906 with the writing of a revolutionary pamphlet entitled *Bhawani Mandir*. Aurobindo had previously identified his own *Weltanschauung* with that of the Vedanta of the Upanisadic seers. India, he believed, was the key to the promotion of that Vedanta in the whole world, changing the world in terms of Vedantic truth. As David Johnson has shown, worship of the nation was a necessary condition for the realization of the ultimate, and thus it is incorrect to argue, as the Mukerjees did, that Aurobindo was merely using Vedanta for political purposes.²²

Prior to a decisive yogic experience of 1908, Aurobindo continued his search for the experience of the absolute *brahman*, an experience which was not his, but which he saw behind the writings of the Upanisadic seers: "Our aspiration can be satisfied with nothing short of the Omnipresent. In littleness there is no bliss. So

we must not run after petty ideals. The Universal alone should be the one object of our knowledge and pursuit. Then the Vedas explain the nature of the Universal."²³ This aspiration was articulated as late as August, 1907 in *Bande Mataram*, the journal which was primarily concerned with the extreme "Nationalist" cause, the immediate independence of India.

Added to this goal was the concept of India as the *śakti*, the "energy or power" of the Ultimate. Aurobindo joined other Extremists in using this concept, which was borrowed from traditions which revered the goddess in India. The goddess was thought of by many of her devotees as the active power (*śakti*) of the god and was often worshipped in her own right. Most commonly she was the consort of Siva and schools of thought developed which elaborated upon worship of the *śakti*. Ramakrishna, the modern religious figure whom Aurobindo admired, was a devotee of the goddess Kālī at the Dakshineswar Temple outside of Calcutta.

Aurobindo conceived of the *śakti*, the Mother, as the energy of the Absolute brahman. In *Bhawani Mandir* he wrote: "When, therefore, you ask who is Bhawani the Mother, She herself answers you, 'I am the Infinite Energy which streams forth from the Eternal in the world and the Eternal in yourselves. I am the Mother of the Universe, the Mother of the Worlds.'"²⁴ Since he believed the Absolute was behind the movement towards independence and that the goal was to bring Vedanta to the world India was the greatest incarnation of the Absolute's energy. India, then, was the Mother, the *śakti*. However, Aurobindo exhorted all to see India as *śakti*: "It is not till the Motherland reveals herself to the eye of the mind as something more than a stretch of earth or a mass of individuals, it is not till she takes shape as a great Divine and Maternal Power in a form of beauty that can dominate the mind and seize the heart that these petty fears and hopes vanish in the all-absorbing passion for the Mother and her service, and the patriotism that works miracles and saves a doomed nation is born."²⁵ Because he believed the movement was the work of the Divine *śakti* itself, for the remainder of his life Aurobindo affirmed that Indian independence was inevitable: "For this thing is written in the book of God and nothing can prevent it, that Sati shall wed Mahadeva, that the national life of India shall meet and possess its divine and mighty destiny."²⁶ For Aurobindo, then, nationalism, as the immediate stage in the promotion of the Vedantic Absolute in the world,

was a religious movement. He called it a "religion" as well, meaning by this that it was an activity whose goal is the realization of the Divine. It was an "active path" (*pravṛtti mārga*) and, therefore,

"There is no rationality in asking us to practise religion and morality first and politics afterwards: for politics is itself a large part of religion and morality. We acknowledge that nothing is likely to become a universal and master impulse in India which is not identified with religion. The obvious course is to recognise that politics is religion and infuse it with the spirit of religion; for that is the true patriotism which sees God as the Mother in our country, God as *śakti* in the mass of our countrymen, and religiously devotes itself to their service and their liberation from present suffering and servitude."²⁷

Aurobindo recognized the influence of religion in India and was not hesitant to identify his political activities with it, but this was because they in fact were a "religion" in his mind, a path to the divine, temporarily of ultimate concern, because the result would be the freedom of India to spread Vedanta to the world.

In the pages of *Bande Mataram*, Aurobindo preached the cause of Indian independence as the way to spiritual liberation. However, as 1907 drew to a close he was becoming more and more frustrated by the lack of his own Vedantic-type realizations. He had no realizations like the Upanisadic seers, no assurance of the Unity he affirmed. Politically he looked ahead to the Surat conference in December 1907. This he hoped would be the final confrontation between the more moderate positions in the Indian independence movement and the "Nationalists." In the pages of *Bande Mataram* he called all "Nationalists" to attend the conference and to spread the view of immediate Indian independence against the compromises of the "loyalists" (i.e., the "moderates" who were willing to accept a period of British tutelage). Writing immediately before the conference, on December 13, 1907, he exhorted,

"If Bengal goes there in force it will, we believe, set flowing such a tide of Nationalism as neither bureaucrats nor Bombay Loyalists are prepared to believe possible... We must go as poor men whose wealth is our love for our Motherland, as missionaries taking nothing with them but the barest

expenses of the way, as pilgrims traveling to our Mother's temple. We have a great work to do and cannot afford to be negligent and half-hearted. Be sure that this year 1907 is a turning-point of our destinies, and do not imagine that the session of the Surat Congress will be as the sessions of other years."²⁸

The "Moderates" outnumbered the "Nationalists" at the conference. There was much spirited debate and the outcome was a split in the Congress. Aurobindo, who chaired the separate meetings of the "Nationalists", gave the order to break up the Congress because there was no hope of compromise. The Congress would not take Nationalist sentiment into consideration.

Thus, by the end of 1907 Aurobindo had seen what was an apparent setback in the progress of nationalism as well as what he later called "failure" in his attempts to attain a personal experience which would make the experience of the Upanisadic seers his own. He later recalled, when asked whether he had realizations in this period, "If it is the flow of experiences, that did come after some years, but after I had stopped the *prāṇāyāma* for a long time and was doing nothing and did not know what to do or where to turn once all my efforts had failed. And it came not as a result of years of *prāṇāyāma* or concentration, but in a ridiculously easy way, by the grace either of a temporary Guru (but it was not that, for he was himself bewildered by it) or by the grace of the eternal Brahman and afterwards by the grace of Mahakali and Krishna."²⁹ In what he labels a "failure" in his attempts at Vedantic experience, and at the time of the failure of his goals at the Surat conference, Aurobindo turned to a "temporary guru," a Maharashtrian *bhakta*, Vishnu Bhasker Lele. The resulting experience, though not recognized as central in some other studies of Aurobindo's religious experience,³⁰ was what Aurobindo would much later call a discovery of "the foundations of my Sadhana [yogic discipline],"³¹ and the first of "four great realisations on which his Yoga and his spiritual philosophy are founded."³²

The experience did not add new content to Aurobindo's ultimate concern, but it provided the beginnings of the authoritative personal experience which he sought. Aurobindo's later recollections of the experience show his desire to communicate a divine destiny at work and only a minimal reliance upon a human guru,³³ but they speak of the experience as an *advaitic*, non-dual, experience of

brahman and negatively "attended at first by an overwhelming feeling and perception of the total unreality of the world."³⁴

Lele was a dualist *bhakta* and, therefore, Aurobindo's experiences did not correspond with Lele's hopes: "The Brahman experience came when I was groping for a way, doing no Sadhana at all, making no effort because I didn't know what effort to make, all having failed. Then in three days I got an experience which most Yogis get only at the end of a long Yoga, got it without wanting or trying after it, got it to the surprise of Lele who was trying to get me something quite different."³⁵

Thus, the three days spent in seclusion with Lele resulted in the beginnings of yogic experiences which Aurobindo would understand as authoritative over all other experiences and religious claims.

The description of the experience in non-dualist terms in Aurobindo's later assessment is noteworthy, for in his later period Aurobindo did not affirm "the total unreality of the world," or that the world is understood from yogic experience "as a cinematographic play of vacant forms in the impersonal universality of the Absolute Brahman."³⁶ His concern in the later writings in which these recollections are found was to affirm that the world is not illusion, but that it is the Absolute in evolutionary Becoming. The experience of the unreality of the world is called "an overwhelming feeling and perception" which "feeling disappeared after his second realisation."³⁷ Such a perception could not have been accepted, for Aurobindo had already affirmed that the world of multiplicity was real, as was the Unity of the Absolute, and was certain that both must be affirmed. Thus, his own yogic experience was not yet the only authority in his religious thought, for, he tells us, it did not affirm the world, while he continued to do so.³⁸

Aurobindo's writings and speeches following this experience show a continuing concern for the elevation of India to independence, so as to be the guru of the nations, spreading the Vedantic vision throughout the world. Yet, beginning with his first lecture after the yogic experience, sponsored by the Bombay National Union on January 19, 1908, he placed a greater emphasis on the application of yoga to nationalism, and especially the concept of letting the divine work in oneself as its instrument: "If you are going to be a Nationalist, if you are going to assent to this religion of Nationalism, you must do it in the religious spirit. You must re-

member that you are the instruments of God...Do you hold your political creed from a higher source? Is it God that is born in you? Have you realised that you are merely the instruments of God, that your bodies are not your own? You are merely instruments of God for the work of the Almighty. Have you realised that? If you have realised that, then you are truly Nationalists; then alone will you be able to restore this great nation."³⁹ Likewise Aurobindo places more emphasis upon yogic detachment and a quieting of the mind which allows the work of the divine to flow through one. The difference between his nationalism prior to the experience and following it is the *attitude* of the nationalist while working toward independence. The Nationalist's work is in *faith*, not in terms of the intellect, just as in the fight in Bengal, "the intellect having nothing to offer but despair became quiescent, and when the intellect ceased to work, the heart of Bengal was open and ready to receive the voice of God whenever He should speak."⁴⁰ So all should have a conviction of the heart, an *experience* which authoritatively says that this is the right thing to do, that the divine is at work in it:

What is the one thing needful?...They have had one and all of them consciously or unconsciously one over-mastering idea, one idea which nothing can shake, and this was the idea that there is a great Power at work to help India, and that we are doing what it bids us. Often they do not understand what they are doing. They do not always realise who guides or where he will guide them; but they have this conviction within, not in the intellect but in the heart, that the Power that is guiding them is invincible, that it is the Almighty, that it is immortal and irresistible and that it will do its work. They have nothing to do. They have simply to obey that Power.⁴¹

Following Aurobindo's first yogic experience, which began to make the experiences of the Upanishads his own, the emphasis upon the application of elements of the attitude of a yogi to politics and the emphasis upon the need of nationalists to experience the divine work became central in his writing and speaking. The intuition, not the intellect, was central even in the political sphere. Thus, the authority for nationalism is yogic experience, the model for nationalism is yogic technique.⁴² This model and that authority would guarantee the attainment of Indian guruship, the penultimate concern

raised temporarily to the level of ultimacy:

You see a movement which no obstacle can stop, you see a great development which no power can resist, you see the birth of the Avatar in the Nation, and if you have received God within you, if you have received that power within you, you will see that God will change the rest of India in even a much shorter time...It will continue its work with the matured force of Divinity until the whole world sees and until the whole world understands him, until Sri Krishna, who has now hid himself in Gokul, who is now among the poor and despised of the earth...will declare the Godhead, and the whole nation will rise, the whole people of this country will rise, filled with divine power, filled with the inspiration of the Almighty, and no power on earth shall resist it, and no danger or difficulty shall stop it in its onward course. Because God is there, and it is his Mission, and he has something for us to do. He has a work for this great and ancient nation.⁴³

India will bring Vedantic truth, that *ātman* is *brahman*, to the world.

Alipur Jail and the Authoritative Experience

On May 5, 1908, Aurobindo was arrested in connection with a bombing incident in which his brother may have taken some part. He spent the next year in jail and in court, until on May 6, 1909, he was acquitted of the charges against him and released. While in jail the second of the "four great realizations" of his integral yoga took place. On May 30, 1909, he delivered his famous Uttarpara speech, in which he revealed publicly what had befallen him while in the Alipur jail. With this "realisation" yogic experience became the exclusive authority for the remainder of his life, and the cause of Indian independence, which independence he continued to accept as inevitable, was no longer raised to the level of ultimacy.

His arrest and imprisonment had shaken his faith in the belief that the divine was working a mission through him. He cried out, "What is this that has happened to me? I believed that I had a mission to work for the people of my country and until that work was

done, I should have Thy protection. Why then am I here and on such a charge?"⁴⁴ In jail he spent time studying and practicing a yoga related to the *Bhagavadgītā* and meditating on the Upanisads. He later also recalled that he heard the voice and felt the presence of Vivekananda.⁴⁵

The content of the experience was presented at Uttarpara in terms of the Vedantic vision which Aurobindo had previously affirmed. What before he had only intellectually understood, now he had confirmed in spiritual realization. "I was not only to understand intellectually but to realise what Sri Krishna demanded of Arjuna...I realised what the Hindu religion meant."⁴⁶ "He made me realise the central truth of the Hindu religion."⁴⁷ Yet the experience, unlike that with Lele, also confirmed the belief which Aurobindo had accepted but which the *advaitic* experience with Lele seemed to reject. In the Alipur jail, the divine message was that the world is real because it is *brahman*. This is called the "central truth of the Hindu religion" which he only now personally realized.

I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned; no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell, but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me his shade. I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arms of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my Friend and Lover...I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers, and as I looked at them I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in these darkened souls and misused bodies.⁴⁸

This experience was seen to fulfil what was missing in the experience of Lele, an affirmation of this world and work in it. "I strove long for the realisation of Yoga and at last to some extent I had it [the Lele experience], but in what I most desired I was not satisfied."⁴⁹ Now his realisation affirmed that the world is real; the world is Divine. Therefore, work in the world is good, valuable

after all.

The experience also raised to a higher point the value of yogic experience in Aurobindo's life and thereby devalued the place of the independence of India. It was not that Indian independence would not continue to play a role for Aurobindo, but in his Uttarpara speech Aurobindo lowered the fight for independence of India to a less than ultimate level and re-enthroned the spread of the Vedantic vision, which was the eternal religion, *sanātana dharma*, essential to all else.

I spoke once before with this force in me and I said then that this movement is not a political movement and that nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith. I say it again today, but I put it another way. I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say that it is the Sanatan Dharma which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the Sanatan Dharma; with it, it moves and with it it grows. When the Sanatan Dharma declines, then the nation declines, and if the Sanatan Dharma were capable of perishing, with the Sanatan Dharma it would perish. The Sanatan Dharma, that is nationalism. This is the message that I have to speak to you.⁵⁰

The promotion of the Vedantic vision, true yoga, the Upanisadic realization that the self is *brahman*, will result in the promotion of India, not vice versa. "To magnify the religion means to magnify the country."⁵¹

To spread the vision, Aurobindo inaugurated two new journals. On June 19, 1909, the *Karmayogin*, an English language weekly, appeared, and on August 23 of the same year its counterpart in Bengali was published. Their specific purpose, he wrote in the first issue of *Karmayogin*, was to promote "spirituality, the force and energy of thought and action arising from communion with or self-surrender to that within us which rules the world."⁵² *Brahman*, the Vedantic Absolute, is to be experienced, and, unlike those who would on that account devalue the world, the world is to be affirmed in the process. It is as real as *brahman* because it is *brahman*. He held this on the authority of his personal yogic experience.

With this authority in hand, Aurobindo began openly to devalue the formulations of the great thinkers of Vedanta in India's

past.⁵³ Aurobindo believed that he was in agreement with the viewpoint of the Upaniṣads. He did not see these texts as a collection of a variety of metaphysical gropings, but as setting forth a consistent position, not necessarily in the logical sense but consistent with the realizations of the yogic experience. The great *advaitin*, Sankara, attempted to understand this, but his view was only "temporarily satisfying" as an interpretation of the Upaniṣads.⁵⁴ Likewise the other interpretations have no ultimate value. "*Advaita*, *viśiṣṭādvaita*, *dvaita* are merely various ways of looking at the relations of the One to the Many, and none of them has the right to monopolise the name Vedanta."⁵⁵ *Advaita* emphasizes the fact that all are merely manifestations of the one *brahman*. *Viśiṣṭādvaita* emphasizes that the manifestations are real and in the One. *Dvaita* speaks from the point of view of the manifestations and says that they are "persistently recurrent." Aurobindo's system, it is implied, sees these other interpretations in their correct perspective because it is based upon the Upaniṣads—upon the seers' experiences, not the later systematizers' logical constructions. Aurobindo laments as well that modern Indians are not basing their lives and religions on experience as did the Upanisadic seers, but on "*āptavākya*, or authority, the recorded opinions of men who had *viveka*, or traditions and customs founded on an ancient enlightenment."⁵⁶ We must get back to the experience: "The present mould of Hinduism had to be broken and replaced by knowledge and Yoga and not by the European spirit."⁵⁷

As a result, by the beginning of 1910 Aurobindo faced the increasingly tense political situation in Bengal with nationalism as a lower priority. His goal was the promotion of Vedanta in the world which affirmed that Reality was both one and many, that the world was the one in manifestation and, therefore, as real as the One, and that the ideal was the experience of the One through practice of yoga so that there would result a change in the world itself.

When Aurobindo heard from a police official that the office of the *Karmayogin* was to be searched and that he was to be arrested again, he recalls hearing "a command from above, in a Voice well known to me, in three words: 'Go to Chandernagore.'"⁵⁸ Thus, with nationalism no longer of ultimate concern, but with his yoga uppermost in his mind, on February 14, 1910, Aurobindo turned his responsibilities over to others and left British India to pursue his yoga in solitude, to spend his complete time with it and to reject

all attempts to bring him back into the spotlight of Indian political leadership. His yoga and its "realisations" were all consuming.

Pondicherry and the Development of Authoritative Yogic Insights

On April 4, 1910, Aurobindo, in response to inner guidance, reached Pondicherry in French India. The letters sent to those who asked him to return to politics indicate his concern for the development of his yoga. In a letter of January 1920, he answered Joseph Baptista, a prominent Indian nationalist leader, "I came to Pondicherry in order to have freedom and tranquillity for a fixed object having nothing to do with present politics... and until it is accomplished, it is not possible for me to resume any kind of public activity."⁵⁹ He did not view this as a withdrawal from life, however, but as a temporary retreat so as to return with a greater, more effective participation in it.⁶⁰ In a letter to his younger brother he affirmed his commitment to his yogic experiences: "I have been till now and shall be for some time longer withdrawn in the practice of a Yoga destined to be a basis not for withdrawal from life, but for the transformation of human life. It is a Yoga in which vast untried tracts of inner experience and new paths of Sadhana had to be opened up and which, therefore, needed retirement and long time for its completion. But the time is approaching, though it has not yet come, when I shall have to take up a large external work proceeding from the spiritual basis of this Yoga."⁶¹

In 1914 Mirra Richard met Aurobindo and found herself attracted to his spiritual interests and yoga. As "the Mother," whom Aurobindo came to affirm was the incarnation of the descent of the Supermind itself, she came to stay with him in 1920 until his death. She would be in charge of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram from the official date of its founding on November 14, 1926, until her own death in November 1973.

As a yogi at Pondicherry, Aurobindo wrote all of his best known works. Most appeared serially from 1914 to 1921 in the *Arya* a magazine, devoted to the spread of Aurobindo's vision. In this period Aurobindo's complete evolutionary schema appeared, a schema which he believed he had progressively seen in his yogic experiences.

As at Baroda, the highest reality, he said, was *brahman*, best thought of in terms of the Upanisadic formula *saccidananda*. As *sat*, "existence, truth," it is beyond all distinctions, it is "pure existence, eternal, infinite, indefinable, not affected by the succession of Time, not involved in the extension of Space, beyond form, quantity, quality—Self only and absolute."⁶² Though this sounds like the Absolute referred to by monists of the Indian tradition, Aurobindo affirms that *brahman* is also not merely static Being, but also Becoming, or better, beyond the very distinction of Being and Becoming. Similarly, *brahman* is beyond the distinction of unity and multiplicity.⁶³

As *cit*, *brahman* is "consciousness-force." It is pure consciousness, a consciousness which sees identity not in terms of subject and object, but an intelligent movement of energy which manifests its knowing. As *ānanda*, it is absolute bliss of delight, being what it is for its own sport, *līlā*.

Yet to speak of the Absolute as beyond the world is to ignore the very movement of consciousness-force in Becoming which brings it its very bliss. The universe is real, a manifestation of *sat*. It is no illusion, as the Indian thinkers Aurobindo calls *mayavadins* claimed. It is a progressive evolution of *cit*, consciousness, an evolution of the previously involuted Absolute from the nescience of Matter to highest consciousness. The order of the involution, the reverse order of which is the evolution, is: (1) the Supreme *Saccidananda* Unmanifest; (2) *Saccidananda* in Manifestation; (3) Supermind (the Absolute in its active aspect); (4) Overmind or *māyā* (that which "sets up each Truth" of Supermind "as separate force and idea"); (5) Intuitive Mind; (6) Illumined Mind; (7) Higher Mind; (8) Mind (the level of the human being currently); (9) Psyche or Soul (Animal Life); (10) the Vital (the Organic level represented by plant forms); (11) Physical (Matter, the extreme involution and most inconscient).⁶⁴

The key to the evolution of this world is Supermind. It is described as "a truth-consciousness, a consciousness always free from the Ignorance which is the foundation of our present natural or evolutionary existence and from which nature in us is trying to arrive at self-knowledge and world-knowledge and a right consciousness and the right use of our existence in the universe."⁶⁵ It is a consciousness that directly possesses the truth, not merely images of the truth as does the mind. It is described as a unitary con-

sciousness and a "knowledge by identity."⁶⁶ Unlimited by mental consciousness, it exists in what Aurobindo calls three poises or sessions of consciousness. The first, the transcendent, stands above and beyond the process of evolution unchanged or affected by it. The second modifies the unity of the first and involves and evolves the many in its manifestation. The third modifies itself so as to evolve the individual.⁶⁷ Thus, Supermind is above the process, is the process itself, and is also the essence within, the *atman*.

All of humanity exists currently on the level of Mind, a limited and only indirectly illuminated consciousness which is characterized by ignorance because it views reality exclusively from its own standpoint.⁶⁸ It is not a unitary consciousness but a divided and dividing one which takes the division as exclusively real and, thus, over-asserts itself in the midst of the evolution of Reality with an egoism which is the source of all that is evil: "a limited consciousness growing out of nescience is the source of error, a personal attachment to the limitation and the error born of it the source of falsity, a wrong consciousness governed by the life-ego the source of evil."⁶⁹ Mind is, therefore, the location of the human predicament, but it is also the level of consciousness in which nature is first able to participate consciously in the evolutionary process, as well as inhibit the process. "There can be... an evolution in the light and no longer in the darkness, in which the evolving being is a conscious participant and cooperator, and this is precisely what must take place here... There is then no longer any necessity for the slow pace of the ordinary evolution; there can be rapid conversion, quick transformation after what would seem to our normal present mind, a succession of miracles."⁷⁰ Integral Yoga, a combination of the various paths of Indian religions according to Aurobindo's formula, is the means by which the human being can participate. It is "a means of compressing one's evolution into a single life for a few years or even a few months of bodily existence."⁷¹ For all life is yoga when seen correctly and nature's evolution is nature's yoga. By it the Divine moves toward the increasingly manifest expression of the Supermind in the world and, thereby, raises the whole earth-consciousness to that of Supermind.

Since he affirms that this world is real and divine, Aurobindo's yoga does not reject this world but places upon each yogin the duty of raising the world and all its elements together with the yogin to higher stages of consciousness. There is what Aurobindo

calls a "Triple Transformation" along the way.⁷² In cooperation with the fact that the Supermind both descends from higher levels to raise the lower, and ascends from within the lower levels to evolve higher levels, the transformation of the yogin involves both ascent and descent. The first transformation of the individual is a "psychic change." By the practice of yoga, the whole person is changed into an instrument of the true self. The second is a "spiritual change" in which the newly attained consciousness descends into lower levels of one's life and body to prepare them for the third transformation. This third or "supra-mental transmutation" is the "ascent into the Supermind and the transforming descent of the supramental Consciousness into our entire being and nature."⁷³

The individual result is the "gnostic being" whose whole person would be supramental in nature. The gnostic being would attain integral knowledge, "his cosmic individuality would know the cosmic forces and their movement and their significance as part of himself, and the Truth-Consciousness in him would see the right relation at each step and find the dynamic right expression of that relation."⁷⁴ In short, the gnostic being would "be fully."⁷⁵ Action, thought, and intuition would be perfectly harmonized and integrated in the light of knowing reality directly.

Though Aurobindo's ultimate concern begins with individual change, his goal is perfection of the entire world. The individual would join with others to create an atmosphere in which the environment itself would change spiritually, for all is the Absolute in evolution. Thus, Aurobindo rejects ascetic withdrawal; the body, the mind, and the environment are to be affected by Integral Yoga. Auroville, a city founded by the Mother in February 1968, is meant to be an attempt to put the principles of Aurobindo's vision in practice.

Aurobindo did not understand the above as a system which he derived from philosophical speculation: "There is very little argument in my philosophy—the elaborate metaphysical reasoning full of abstract words with which the metaphysician tries to establish his conclusion is not there. What is there is a harmonising of the different parts of a many-sided knowledge so that all unites logically together. But it is not by force of logical argument that it is done, but by a clear vision of the relations and sequences of the Knowledge."⁷⁶ The authority for true knowledge is not mental argument, for Mind is not sufficiently conscious to explain Reality.⁷⁷

The only authority adequate for integral knowledge is obtained by yoga, a higher knowledge than the lower knowledge of "science, art, philosophy, ethics, psychology."⁷⁸ Yogic experience has become the only authority for Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry.

Though Aurobindo believed that he was experiencing the supra-mental levels of consciousness which had been attained by the Upanisadic seers, he continued to find the systems of the later systematizers wanting when judged by his own intuitive knowledge. These later thinkers of the schools of Indian thought "started from Reason and tested the results it gave them, holding only those conclusions to be valid which were supported by the supreme authority... Hence the rise of conflicting schools, each of which founded itself in theory on the Veda and used its texts as a weapon against the others."⁷⁹ The ultimate result of the use of reason as a method of knowing is negativism and the rise of "the great world-negating religions and philosophies."⁸⁰ In India, Aurobindo said, the two main influences in such negation were the Buddha and Sankara, but Aurobindo argues that the analogies used by Sankara and other *mayavadins* to prove the illusory nature of the world, such as comparing it to a dream, fail.⁸¹ To see the world in such an illusory fashion is to make the unbelievable claim that there is a stupendous cosmic illusion "*sui generis*, without parallel."⁸² Instead, Aurobindo argues, if the world is in fact the way he has seen it, as a great evolution of the Divine, then, there is no place for negativism.⁸³ The disagreements of the later thinkers in deviation from Upanisadic experimental truth were caused by their attempts to develop logical constructions in an age of rational knowledge, a time which had left the intuitive age of the Upanisads behind.⁸⁴ The result was the absolutizing of one side of Vedantic truth,⁸⁵ or at best overstating an element of the experience, such as *maya*.⁸⁶ Aurobindo, however, viewed his own system as one based exclusively upon the intuitive and its "supramental logic," and, thus, as a balanced and integral thought system.

Aurobindo refers to his yogic experience during this period as including the final two of his "four great realisations."⁸⁷ The first of these latter two is difficult to relate to precise experiences. He describes it as a realization "of the supreme reality with the static and dynamic Brahman as its two aspects." The second he describes as the realization "of the higher planes of consciousness leading to the Supermind." Feys believes the third realization is reflected in

Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*, written between 1916 and 1920. He calls it "a protracted period of maturing: the gradual harmonisation of the opposite experiences of Baroda and Alipore."⁸⁸ He dates it as the ten-year period from 1909 to 1920, which, unlike the other three, would not, then, be a single experience. He also relates it to a later reference by Aurobindo in 1932 to a period of "ten more years of intense Yoga under a supreme inner guidance," to work out his teaching.⁸⁹ One wishes that there were more evidence to support such an identification, but what is clear is that during this period Aurobindo attempted to develop his yogic practice and to attain realizations which would break through the limitations of his past experience. His complete trust was in these yogic experiences and he was certain that they would reveal the path and nature of perfection. Not surprisingly, Aurobindo regularly stressed persistence, faith, and a "positive inner call" as requisites for those who would embark upon his yoga.⁹⁰

The fourth experience is easier to identify, for it refers to November 24, 1926, the date Aurobindo calls his "Day of Siddhi." On that day Aurobindo believed he directly experienced the descent of the Overmind, which is said to have assured him of the certainty of the coming descent of the Supermind to this earth's plane.⁹¹ Aurobindo claims to have seen the levels of consciousness which relate Mind to all that is above: Higher Mind, Intuitive Mind, Illumined Mind, and Overmind.⁹² It is not surprising, then, that after this experience chapters 24, 25, 26, and 28 were added to *The Life Divine* when it was revised in 1939-1940, chapters which did not appear in the edition printed serially in the *Arya* from 1914 to 1919.

Aurobindo's experiences, however, continued to inform his world-view even after the last revision of *The Life Divine*. He was soon to see that the Overmind itself should be divided into levels (Formative Maya, Overmind Logos, Intuitive Overmind).⁹³ Charts found among his manuscripts and published after his death indicate further elaboration of the evolutionary schema and experimentation with its terminology.⁹⁴ The authority of his yogic experiences would not let his systematizing remain in a completed state and Aurobindo would at times indicate that he had more to see in order to complete his thought, but that in the interim he had to extrapolate from what he had already seen.⁹⁵

At his death in 1950, Aurobindo had not completed his system,

but he had presented a system which he believed was integral, a construction on the level of Mind which was informed by the descent of supra-mental knowing. Because Aurobindo believed in the possibility of returning to lower levels to raise them up by means of the higher consciousness, to "integrate" the lower and the higher, he believed that his system had a validity above all others. It was more complete, he believed, not emphasizing one fact of experience over the other but able to integrate them into a total "integral understanding." He could not accept that this may have been what earlier yogins had done as well, unless they had seen what he had.⁹⁶ His yogic experiences were not without content, though the understanding involved was also not limited to the mental. They revealed truth as well as truths,⁹⁷ and, thus he viewed his writing as an automatic flow from higher levels of consciousness, the descent of the Supramental into Mind.

Conclusions

Central to Sri Aurobindo's developed and most well-known system of thought and practice in the Pondicherry period is the authority of yogic experience. This, he believed, molded all else, determining the validity of other viewpoints of reality in the Indian tradition as well as informing his developing system as a yogi progressively realizing the Absolute. However, the authority of yogic experience itself moved from the authority of the experiences of others in earlier periods to the exclusive authority of his own yogic experiences.

Even before his knowledge of yoga began, he was committed in England to a strong personal attachment to both the reality of the phenomenal world and a harmony within it. When he returned to India he embraced the metaphysics of the Upanisads as he understood them because they were based upon "realisations" of the seers. They affirmed the One *brahman* behind the world as well as the Many, the phenomenal world. In the midst of the Indian independence movement, yogic experience became his own, but the fact that it seemed to negate the reality and importance of the phenomenal world kept Aurobindo from accepting the experience as finally authoritative. His experience of the world's reality was more authoritative than the yogic experience of its vacuity. In the Alipur jail Aurobindo experienced the world as the manifestation of the

divine and, therefore, as real as the Unity itself. After this experience, the pursuit of yoga became a driving passion which ended his relationship with the Indian independence movement and turned him more and more to the searching out of the experiential truth which he believed was no longer just that of the Upanisadic seers, but actually his own. Yogic experience became the medium by which all else would be understood, for it brought him a higher knowledge, the Supramental.

Thus, yogic experience became authoritative when it affirmed his non-yogic aesthetic experience of the world and brought the world into its scope. This, he says, constituted the difficult work of his years of yoga: "The only real difficulty which took decades of spiritual effort to work out towards completeness was to apply the spiritual knowledge utterly to the world and to the surface psychological and outer life and to effect its transformation both on the higher levels of Nature and on the ordinary mental, vital and physical levels down to the subconscious and the basic Inconscience and up to the supreme Truth-Consciousness or Supermind in which alone the dynamic transformation could be entirely integral and absolute."⁹⁸

Notes

1. For example, see H.K. Kaul, *Sri Aurobindo, A Descriptive Bibliography* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1971). This work needs considerable updating, of course.
2. For a more extensive delineation of the various stages in Aurobindo's thought see Robert N. Minor, *Sri Aurobindo: The Perfect and the Good* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1978) For a recent inside biography see Peter Hechs, *Sri Aurobindo: A Brief Biography* (Delhi: Oxford, 1989), Steven H. Phillips, *Aurobindo's Philosophy of Brahman* (Leiden Brill, 1986), is a uniquely worthwhile study of Aurobindo's thought as "mystic empiricism."
3. See Robert A. McDermott, "The Life Divine, Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Evolution and Transformation," in Robert A. McDermott, ed., *Six Pillars: Introductions to the Major Works of Sri Aurobindo* (Chambersburg, P.A.: Wilson Books, 1974), pp. 164-166. John Collins' essay in the same work, "Savitri, Poetic Expression of Spiritual Experience" (pp. 7-33), traces the development of the poem in terms of Aurobindo's spiritual experience.
4. Sri Aurobindo, *Birth Centenary Library* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo

- Ashram Trust, 1971), 3:7, 30. Hereafter this 30-volume set of Aurobindo's complete works will be abbreviated BCL.
5. *BCL*, 3:23.
 6. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
 7. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
 8. *Ibid.*, 5:28.
 9. *Ibid.*, 26:50. Aurobindo often spoke of himself in the third person.
 10. *Ibid.*, 12:1.
 11. *Ibid.*, 26:50.
 12. *Ibid.*, 12:6.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
 15. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
 16. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
 17. *Ibid.*
 18. *Ibid.*, 59.
 19. *Ibid.*, 26: 19-20.
 20. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.
 21. *Ibid.*, 3:345.
 22. David L. Johnson, *The Religious Roots of Indian Nationalism: Aurobindo's Early Political Thought* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1974), p. 64. See also pp. 35-40 and Minor, Sri Aurobindo, pp. 50-67. Johnson argues against the works of Haridas and Uma Mukherjee who have accused Aurobindo of using religion for political goals. See, for example, their *Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1964).
 23. *BCL*, 1:513.
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
 25. *Ibid.*, 17:347.
 26. *Ibid.*, 1:895; cf. 1:653, 364, 414, 729.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
 28. *Ibid.*, p. 639.
 29. *Ibid.*, 26:77.
 30. For example, see Robert A. McDermott, "The Experiential Basis of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga," *Philosophy East and West* 22, no. 1 (January 1972): 15-32.
 31. *BCL*, 26:68 (cir. April 1945).
 32. *Ibid.*, p. 64 (cir. April 1945).
 33. Besides the following quotations, Aurobindo described Lele as "a Bhakta with a limited mind but with some experience and evocative power," *BCL* 26:79, (May 1932). He also called Lele "one who was infinitely inferior to me in intellect, education and capacity and by no means spiritually perfect or supreme" (*ibid.*, p. 80, March

- 1932).
34. *Ibid.*, p. 64 (April 1945).
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 79 (May 1932).
37. *Ibid.*, p. 64 (April 1945).
38. Though this vision does not affirm Aurobindo's later position, or even his discussions at that time, Jan Feys tries to relate the first three "realizations" to the stages of *kṣara brahman*, *akṣara brahman* and *Puruṣottama* in his *Essays on the Gita* (The Yogi and the Mystic: A Study in the Spirituality of Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard De Chardin [Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1977], pp. 38-49).
39. *BCL*, 1:652-53.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 658.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 660: cf. p. 664.
42. Johnson, *The Religious Roots*, discusses the use of yogic conceptions in Aurobindo's political activity, pp. 74-97.
43. *BCL*, 1:665.
44. *Ibid.*, 2:3, 7.
45. *Ibid.*, 26:68 (September 1946); *ibid.*, 27:435 (cr. 1913).
46. *Ibid.*, 2:3.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 4; cf. p. 7.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 4; cf. p. 5.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
53. The term Vedanta, meaning "end of the Vedas," is usually taken as a general name designating those religious positions which trace their views back to the Upaniṣads, the last books of the Vedas. The three major systems, which do not necessarily agree on major points, were *advaita vedānta*, the non-dualism for which Sankara (A.D. 788-820) is best known, *viśiṣṭādvaita vedānta*, qualified non-dualism, whose major exponent was Ramanuja (A.D. 1017-1137), and *dvaita*, dualism, whose thirteenth century A.D. proponent was Madhva.
54. *BCL*, 3:344.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 364.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 439.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 437.
58. *Ibid.*, 26:57. Robert N. Minor, "The Response of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother," in Harold G. Coward, ed., *Modern Indian Responses to Religious Pluralism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), pp. 85-104.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 429-430.
60. Aurobindo's early letters (*BCL*, 27:423-501) written 1912-1920, indicate both his intention to return to the active path within a short

period and his belief that he was withdrawing to practice yoga so as to affect the political situation by means of the accumulated power of a yogi on the basis of his yogic practice. In this he was accepting a traditional idea that the yogi attained powers to affect others. His fourth goal, he tells Motilal Roy in a letter of January 1913 (?), for example is "the determining of events, actions, and results of action throughout the world by pure silent will power" (BCL, 27:429). It would seem to be a misunderstanding to accuse Aurobindo of denying the political struggle of India in his temporary withdrawal to be more effective in the long run. For example, see June O'Connor, *The Quest for Political and Spiritual Liberation: A Study in the Thought of Sri Aurobindo Ghose* (Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1976), pp. 34-40.

61. BCL, 26:435. See also n. 60 above.

62. Ibid., 18: 77-78.

63. Ibid., p. 579.

64. For a discussion of these levels see Minor, *Sri Aurobindo*, pp. 108-113, or Beatrice Bruteau, *Worthy Is the World: The Hindu Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1971), or Robert A. McDermott, "Sri Aurobindo: An Integrated Theory of Individual and Historical Transformation," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (June 1972): 175-76. For a full presentation of Aurobindo's evolutionary theory see Rama Shanker Srivastava, *Sri Aurobindo and the Theories of Evolution* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1968), pp. 57-146.

65. BCL, 16:41.

66. Ibid., 18:272, 135; 215, 318.

67. Ibid., pp. 145-147.

68. Ibid., 21:599.

69. Ibid., 18:623.

70. Ibid., 16:44.

71. Ibid., 20:2.

72. Ibid., 19:891.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid., 19:974.

75. Ibid., p. 1023

76. Ibid., 26:374.

77. Ibid., 18:118, 366, 372.

78. Ibid., 20: 492-493.

79. Ibid., 18:69

80. Ibid., p. 415.

81. Ibid., pp. 419-432.

82. Ibid., p. 432.

83. Ibid., pp. 471-481.

84. Ibid., pp. 67-70.

85. Ibid., 19:635.

86. Ibid., 16: 428.

87. Ibid., 26:64.

88. Feys, *The Yogi and the Mystic*, p. 46.

89. BCL, 26: 78,

90. See Minor, *Sri Aurobindo*, pp. 121-125, and M.P. Pandit, *Sadhana in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*, 3rd ed. (Pondicherry: Dipti Publications, 1971).

91. For discussions of this event see Heehs, pp. 104-105; K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo, A Biography and History*, 3rd ed., (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1972), pp. 987-991, and R.R. Diwakar, *Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo: Life, Discipline and Teachings of Sri Aurobindo* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1972), pp. 193-194, 208.

92. BCL, 26: 369-370.

93. Ibid., 22:261, 263; cf. 17: 32.

94. Ibid., 17: 28-32.

95. For example see BCL, 19:1013.

96. Robert N. Minor, "Sri Aurobindo's Integral View of Other Religions," *Religious Studies* 15, no. 3 (September 1979), pp. 367-379.

97. Eliot Deutsch ("Sri Aurobindo's Interpretation of Spiritual Experience: A Critique," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 4, no.4 [December 1964]: pp. 581-594) critiques Aurobindo's certainty concerning his thought system as a commission of the "fallacy of mis-placed certitude." For another interpretation and a defense see Minor, *Sri Aurobindo*, pp. 174-177.

98. BCL, 26:86.

SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN AND "HINDUISM" DEFINED AND DEFENDED

Robert N. Minor

A study of the history of religious thought and practice in India reveals a diversity of religious positions, not unlike such studies in other large geographic areas with long histories. There are idealists, theists, monists, dualists, materialists, and others. There are also some who attempt to synthesize other positions into a higher stance, especially, though not exclusively, in India in the modern period, with the growth of a "Hindu" consciousness. The resulting modern definitions of "Hinduism" which have appeared have varied with the thinker who interpreted the tradition, but the two thinkers most responsible for well-known definitions are Svami Vivekananda and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) defined, defended, and promulgated a system of thought which emphasized the centrality of a non-dual experience of the Absolute and, which, at the end of this life, he called a "religion of the spirit."¹ This, he believed, was not a new revelation but the essence of all "religion," most faithfully presented in what he called "Vedanta," "Hinduism," or, at times, the essence of "Indian thought." The promotion and promulgation of such a system was necessary in order to attain his ultimate concern: the attainment of perfection in the world by individuals, by all creatures, and by the world order, the manifestation of the "Vedantic Absolute." The purpose of this chapter is to trace the process of definition, defense, and promulgation of this "religion of the spirit" or "Hinduism" in the writings of Radhakrishnan. His thought is not divisible into clearly defined periods which reflect a

changing position, but one can note emphases that develop and lead into his final writings which proclaim that only the "religion of the spirit" will enable the world to attain perfection, solving its profoundest problems.

The Early Defense of "Vedanta" as Ethical

Radhakrishnan was born on September 5, 1888, in a small town northwest of Madras in southeast India. His early life was spent in Tirutani and Tirupati, which were pilgrimage centers. He was educated in Christian missionary institutions, finishing in 1908 with B.A. and M.A. degrees in philosophy from Madras Christian College.

In his later writings he recorded two impressions of his education which bear heavily upon his later work. The first is that he felt a continual criticism of "Hinduism" as a religion by his teachers and Christian missionaries. He took this criticism to heart, agreeing that much he saw around him was not accomplishing that which he believed a religion ought. His recollection in 1936 was:

I was strongly persuaded of the inefficiency of the Hindu religion to which I attributed the political downfall of India. The criticisms levelled against the Hindu religion were of a twofold character. It is intellectually incoherent and ethically unsound. The theoretical foundations as well as the practical fruits of the religion were challenged. I remember the cold sense of reality, the depressing feeling of defeat that crept over me, as a causal relation between the anaemic Hindu religion and our political failure forced itself on my mind during those years. What is wrong with the Hindu religion? How can we make it somewhat more relevant to the intellectual climate and social environment of our time?²

A second impression which he was to remember was the impact of the work of Svami Vivekananda. Vivekananda's speaking and writing brought to him the confidence that "the Hindu religion" was essentially the opposite of its portrayal in the criticisms of his teachers. In 1973 he wrote to fellow Indians: "It is that kind of humanistic, man-making religion which gave us courage in the days when we were young. When I was a student in one of the classes, in the matriculation class or so, the letters of Svami Vivekananda used to be circulated in manuscript form among us

all. The kind of thrill which we enjoyed, the kind of mesmeric touch that those writings gave us, the kind of reliance on our own culture that was being criticized all around—it is that kind of transformation which his writings effected in the young men in the early years of this century.”³

Thus Radhakrishnan remembered both a critique of “the Hindu religion” and a defense of “the Hindu religion.” The issues which remained with him throughout his life were already posed and the important category of “Hinduism,” which treats the variety of positions and practices of the people of India as one, was given to him. Not only was there a critique of it, but there needed to be a defense of it as inspired by Svami Vivekananda. It, an entity called “Hinduism” or “the Hindu religion,” needed defense and a clear definition of the features that were essential to it.

One may not be able adequately to defend what one has not defined, and therefore, his earliest writings, including his Master’s thesis, *The Ethics of the Vedanta and Its Metaphysical Presuppositions*,⁴ evidenced an explicit apologetic motive and systematic definition of Vedanta which would remain unchanged throughout his life. Though he refined it, *the Weltanschauung* with which he early identified himself was the background for his religion until his death.⁵ The first category which he used to designate this position was “Vedanta.”⁶

Radhakrishnan’s ultimate concern was the realization of the Absolute Reality in and by the world and, as a part of that, in and by each individual, a realization which he at times called the attainment of perfection. Both the individual and social goals should be noted, for Radhakrishnan rejected all attempts at a personal realization which ignored the whole phenomenal world. In 1916 he put it as follows: “Thus we see that the function of religion is not merely to pacify the troubled soul but make it enter with faith and hope into the work of God which is to make the earth the visible symbol of God’s law.”⁷ In his earliest writings his defense of Vedanta indicated that he believed it could lead to this end. He was a religious thinker or “philosopher,” and not merely a historian, while he wrote these articles.⁸ Thus, though he did not always indicate explicitly that he was writing about his own beliefs, he argued in these apologetic pieces that Vedanta is able to solve the ethical problems encountered by other philosophers. In “‘Nature’ and ‘Convention’ in Greek Ethics,”⁹ he defined the problem

of egoism and altruism in ethics (How can one want to do the good one ought to do?), as he did in “Egoism and Altruism—The Vedanta Solution,” but in the latter he indicated that Vedanta alone is able to solve the problem, though Plato in his more Vedantic moments suggested the solution. A concluding statement indicates that Radhakrishnan personally affirmed this solution: “The Vedantic explanation is the practical recognition of a positive fact that we are all bound up together as sharers of the same eternal life. The Vedantic formula, (*Tat Tvam Asi.*) (*That Art Thou*), affirms the whole truth.”¹⁰ Radhakrishnan had begun to affirm the Vedanta he defended. Soon this affirmation would completely dominate his writings.

In these early defensive pieces Radhakrishnan as a trained ethicist sought to show that Vedanta was ethical, that it provided a basis for ethics and morality in this life. Not surprisingly, then, most of his early articles center around questions of ethics.¹¹ In doing this he was taking up the Vedantic viewpoint as the definition of the nature of the world’s perfection and the acceptance of that viewpoint as the means by which the world could attain that perfection, though this latter he would emphasize later.

Now Vedanta needed defense against three charges made against it in order to establish that it is concerned with and is a basis for ethics. First, it must be shown that Vedanta is not a mystical flight into other-worldly experience, but a rational system of thought deserving the name “philosophy” and the praise of philosophers. These early articles exalt the importance of reason with little mention of intuitive religious experience. “The universal law of *karma* has nothing to do with the *real* man, if he has once understood what he is in his *real* nature. It is not the ‘senses’ that make a man what he is, for the brutes also possess them. It is only *reason* that is the peculiar characteristic—the *differentia* of man.”¹² That which makes the human being human is reason and only the use of reason will enable one to be truly free from the bondage of one’s past and present.¹³ India is praised as the “ancient abode of an intellectual and philosophical race,”¹⁴ and early Indian thinkers are said already to have dealt with the issues of modern philosophy in the Vedas.¹⁵ This argument for the rational basis of Vedanta culminated in Radhakrishnan’s *The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*, where he summarized and critiqued other contemporary approaches and concluded that Vedanta is the most rational

solution to the human predicament.¹⁶

The reasonableness of Vedanta is an important assertion because reason is the key to the ethical life: "It should be a life of reason. Without reason, man is on a level with the grass that withers and the beasts that perish. Life according to nature is, for man, life according to reason."¹⁷ In addition, the key to a system of philosophy is its ethical doctrine.¹⁸ It is important, then, to see that Vedanta is reasonable and, therefore, capable of ethics. Radhakrishnan quoted Max Müller with favor: "The Vedanta philosophy has not neglected the important sphere of ethics; but, on the contrary, we find ethics in the beginning, ethics in the middle, and ethics in the end, to say nothing of the fact that minds, so engrossed with divine things as the Vedanta philosophers, are not likely to fall victims to the ordinary temptations of the world, the flesh, and other powers."¹⁹

Second, Vedanta needed defense against the charge that its doctrine of *karma* taught that people were not responsible for their deeds and that therefore, the concept results in fatalism. "Thus it becomes essential that we should dissipate the fallacy underlying the charge that there can be no 'Ethics of the Vedanta'; for according to the law of Karma man acts of necessity and not of his free-will."²⁰ *Karma* from past lives, he argued, results in certain "fixed tendencies which are termed the 'likes' and 'dislikes'" which form the predispositions of a human being, but the human being's free-will enables the individual to "make the lower sensuous self yield to the higher rational self" by combating these tendencies.²¹ Thus he anticipates his well-known comparison of *karma* and freedom with a game of cards: "We can use the material with which we are endowed to promote our ideals. The cards in the game of life are given to us. We do not select them. They are traced to our past Karma, but we can call as we please, lead what suit we will, and as we play, we gain or lose. And there is freedom."²² The Vedantic solution he argued, gives one real freedom, for its doctrine of the transcendent self enables the human being to resist one's passions and regulate them by reason. Without the existence of the transcendent self he saw no hope of victory at all. One would remain mired in one's lower propensities.²³

The third argument in defense of the ethics of Vedanta was against the criticism that Vedanta taught that the world was unreal, illusory. If the world were not real in any sense, there would be no reason to advocate living the good life in the world, for that would

be a performance of unreal action. This argument would be reflected again and again in Radhakrishnan's works, though later it would not be as central to his argument.²⁴ Those who argued that according to Vedantic thought the world was unreal criticized Indian teachings as world- and life-negating its aspiration to flee this world altogether rather than confront its problems.²⁵ In his defense of the Vedantic view of reality, Radhakrishnan established the interpretation of *māyā* which he would maintain throughout his life. *Māyā* in Vedanta does not mean "illusion," he declared, but refers to the fact that the world is not independently real. Only the Absolute is independently real; the world's reality depends on the Absolute. The Upaniṣads, the texts of the Vedanta, taught that "everything in the universe, instead of being dismissed as illusory, is thought to be produced by Brahman. But this principle of Brahman is recognized as immanent in the universe."²⁶ The world is an expression of the Absolute though only a partial expression of it; it is "real as a part of the Absolute."²⁷

Radhakrishnan maintained this position throughout his life, but at this early period he did not believe that Sankara, the famous *advaitin*, agreed. Before writing *The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy* in 1920, he attributed the belief in the illusoriness of the world to Sankara. Not only did he believe Sankara was responsible for importing the conception of *māyā* into Vedanta from "Buddhistic teaching,"²⁸ but Sankara was listed as one who held that the world is illusory in his article, "The Vedantic Approach to Reality." The article would be revised as the thirteenth chapter of *The Reign of Religion*, and in the revision all references to Sankara's advocacy of the illusoriness of the world would be removed. For example, in the article of 1916 he wrote, "So a severe logician of the type of Sankara who thinks to the very foundations, with his intellectualist bias, reduces the universe to an opposition of self and non-self, God and the world, the infinite and the finite. Certainly both cannot be real, for the two are exclusive of each other. The finite world is dismissed as illusory and the absolute posited as real."²⁹ The revision in *The Reign of Religion* in 1920 reads: "The universe is reduced to an opposition of self and non-self, God and the world, the infinite and the finite."³⁰ By the time of the writing of *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* in 1918,³¹ Radhakrishnan declared emphatically that Sankara did not believe that the world is an illusion, a view Radhakrishnan held

until his death and argued most strongly in his *Indian Philosophy*.³²

Vedanta Defined

In this early period Radhakrishnan defined Vedanta. This definition and his identification with it remained constant throughout his life, except that he soon came to call it "Hinduism," "Hindu thought," "Indian thought," and later "religion of his spirit." Its most systematic presentation was published in 1932 in *An Idealist View of Life*, based on the Hibbert Lectures given at the University of Manchester and University College, London, in 1929 and 1930.

Where one discovers the Absolute in the philosophical search depends upon where one begins. If one begins with the world about him or her, the objective side of reality, one perceives the necessity of an underlying unity and this unity is the Absolute which Indians have called *brahman*. *Brahman* is not definable, though it may be known in intuitive experience, for "Brahman, which symbolizes the absolute reality, means also holy knowledge, intuitive wisdom."³³ Put in traditional terms, however, *brahman* is *saccidānanda*. *Sat*, "existence, reality," indicates that all that is, is *brahman* and that *brahman* is Being itself: "The Upaniṣads lead us from the imperfect existences in the world to the Supreme and Absolute Being which is on every side, beneath, above, beyond, whose centre is everywhere, even in the smallest atom, and whose circumference is nowhere, as it spreads beyond all measure. The existence of the world means the primacy of Being."³⁴ *Cit*, "consciousness, awareness," affirms that when one experiences this Absolute, one realizes that the key to reality is consciousness. "Consciousness and being are not there different from each other. All being is consciousness and all consciousness being. Thought and reality coalesce and a creative merging of subject and object results."³⁵ The identity of consciousness and being means Radhakrishnan can define *cit* as "absolute reality," and "truth,"³⁶ and in his early works he calls this position "monistic idealism."³⁷ In his later works, such as *An Idealist View of Life*, however, he defined "idealism" more generally as the belief that there are forces within the universe which are moving it to an ideal end.³⁸ In either case the highest reality, the Absolute, is a state of consciousness, and consciousness as a category is thus a key to the understanding of the nature of the universe.

Ānanda, "pure delight, freedom, bliss," attempts to suggest the relationship of Being to that which is, as well as to refer to the joy of the one who experiences *brahman* in an intuitive experience. *Brahman* relates to all else which is produced in a non-reciprocal manner. It undergirds the universe, but as immutable Being the relationship is free; *brahman* is in no manner touched by the real, though temporary, change which is the evolution of the universe. *Brahman* is free from the effects of phenomena, though it is the foundation of all that is. "The real which accounts for the existence of the universe is Being (*sat*), its character which accounts for the ordered advance is consciousness (*cit*) with freedom and joy (*ānanda*)."³⁹

Yet a danger in such descriptions of the Absolute is inherent in the fact that they treat *brahman* as an object like other objects and, therefore, they, if so understood, result in misunderstanding. It is best to speak of the Absolute only in negative terms, *neti...neti*, "not this...not that." "A wise agnosticism is more faithful to the situation. But the logical mind of man is not willing to admit defeat. It cannot rest in the idea that the Absolute is incomprehensible and that the world hangs on it somehow."⁴⁰

Brahman, however, is not an object to us, but subject. In fact the Absolute is our very self, or as traditionally put, *ātman* is *brahman*, *tat tvam asi*, "you are that." Therefore, if one's philosophical search begins with the human being, the Absolute is *ātman*, the true Self, and the reality which is *sat*, the consciousness which is *cit*, and the pure bliss which is *ānanda*, are characteristics of one's own deepest Being. "Being, truth and freedom are distinguished in the divine but not divided. The true and ultimate condition of the human being is the divine status. The essence of life is the movement of the universal being; the essence of emotion is the play of the self-existent delight in being; the essence of thought is the inspiration of the all-pervading truth; the essence of activity is the progressive realization of a universal and self-effecting good."⁴¹ *Brahman* is a state of consciousness which is to be found essentially within, a subject, not an object to us.⁴² To realize this in an intuitive experience is to attain a state of consciousness which is above the phenomena but not a denial of the phenomena. Rather than calling it a "pure consciousness" which no longer recognizes the objects about it, it is better to call it a "universal consciousness." The emphasis is upon the understanding and recovery of the all, not indifference to the many. "The true self is the universal

self, which is immanent as well as transcendent.... There is nothing outside it. It is the real active divine self, which is the life and inspiration of our actual selves. It contains all consciousness of objects implicitly. There is nothing in the universe which is not involved in the infinite self in us. This world self which embraces all is the sole reality containing within itself all the facts of nature and all the histories of experience."⁴³ This identification of the self and the Absolute in the tradition of such thinkers as Sankara enabled Radhakrishnan to proclaim the divinity of the human being as the basis for his ethical stance, for his appeals to those of other religious positions, and for his proclamation in his political speeches of the centrality of the human being in political affairs. Yet it caused those who affirmed an absolute distinction between the Divine and the human being to be less enthusiastic about his metaphysical stance, a cool response which he never indicated that he understood in the terms of his critics.⁴⁴

For Radhakrishnan the personal Divine Being, the Other of the theists, was identical with the impersonal Absolute which he affirmed. Yet the conception of *Īśvara*, the personal "Lord," or "God," is relativized by Radhakrishnan in a manner that the impersonal Absolute is not. *Īśvara* refers to the Absolute in its relationship to the world, whereas *brahman* is the Absolute in itself. God is the Absolute seen imperfectly from a lower level. "God who is creator, sustainer and judge of this world, is not totally unrelated to the Absolute. God is the Absolute from the human end. When we limit down the Absolute to its relation with the actual possibility, the Absolute appears as supreme Wisdom, Love, and Goodness. The eternal becomes the first and last."⁴⁵ Thus Radhakrishnan was able to affirm that the Absolute about which he spoke was the same as that which is called "god" by others, but these others understand it from a lower level: "While the Absolute is pure consciousness and pure freedom and infinite possibility, it appears to be God from the point of view of the one specific possibility which has become actualized."⁴⁶ Though this relegation of the idea of "god" to a second place could not satisfy the theists who believed the Absolute was to be located without, Radhakrishnan believed he was doing no injustice to their religious stance because, in fact, this is the fact of religious experience and the result of a search which understands that Absolute reality is behind all symbols. Those who continued to claim otherwise are

misguided and deficient in understanding. "The monotheists are quite certain that the gods of the polytheists are symbolic if not mythological presentations of the true God, but they are loth to admit that their own God is at bottom a symbol. All religion is symbolic, and symbolism is excluded from religion only when religion itself perishes. God is a symbol in which religion cognizes the Absolute."⁴⁷ The reason some absolutize symbols is that they lack intuitive understanding, they have had "no contact with reality, no insight into truth."⁴⁸ *Īśvara* is the name for the creative function of the Divine and is the conception by which the relationship of the Absolute to the world is understood by many.

Radhakrishnan affirmed the clustering together of three of the personal gods worshipped in India as the *trimūrti*, "the one with three forms." These gods, which were most often worshipped in their own right, were, according to this relatively late and unpopular conception, aspects of the one divine and not three different gods.⁴⁹ Radhakrishnan first used the concept in the first volume of *Indian Philosophy*, published in 1923. Speaking of the *Mahābhārata*, he wrote, "We have now the *trimūrti* conception that *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu*, and *Śiva* are different forms of the One Supreme, fulfilling the different functions of creation, preservation and destruction."⁵⁰ *Brahmā*, who is the cognitive aspect of the Absolute or wisdom, is the creator; *Viṣṇu*, who represents divine sacrificial love, preserves or redeems; and *Śiva*, the divine as omnipotent power and infinite goodness, judges in a final conflagration. In the *trimūrti*, then, Radhakrishnan saw the wisdom, love, and justice of the Divine personified.⁵¹ The remainder of the gods on the Indian scene were accepted by Vedānta as symbols for the sake of the common people.⁵²

Though referred to in his discussion of Upanisadic philosophy in *Indian Philosophy*,⁵³ Radhakrishnan first accepted a third stage, aspect or poise of being of the Absolute as part of his own thought in his lectures printed in 1939 as *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*. The Absolute in relationship to the world may also be seen as *hiranyagarbha*, the "world soul." This is the Absolute as the spirit that pervades and empowers the world. "*Hiranya-garbha* or *Brahmā* is the World-soul and is subject to changes of the world. He is *kārya Brahmā* or effect *Brahman* as distinct from *Īśvara* who is *kāraṇa Brahmā* or causal *Brahman*. *Hiranya-garbha* arises at every world-beginning and is dissolved at every world-ending."⁵⁴ The concept of *hiranyagarbha* affirms that, that which is

inherent in the world, moving it toward the manifestation of its perfection, is the Absolute. It gives the world meaning, denies that it can be said to have an illusory status, and means that ethics relate to the very warp and woof of things. More than this, however, the world is a manifestation of one of the possibilities of the Absolute, for the world itself is divine, though it is incorrect to suggest that the Absolute is only the world, for *brahman* is more than all this and, therefore, also beyond. "For the Hindu thinkers, the objective world exists. It is not an illusion. It is real not in being ultimate, but in being a form, an expression of the ultimate."⁵⁵ It is the world's relationship to *brahman* which is within and without that gives the world the reality it possesses. One must not emphasize exclusively the transcendence of *brahman*. "Thus, everything in the universe, instead of being dismissed as illusory, is thought to be produced by Brahman. But this principle of Brahman is recognized as immanent in the universe. It is not apart from the world, it is the world. The world is the product of Brahman, and, therefore, Brahman. Hence, instead of being an illusion, the world is the sole reality."⁵⁶ The world, then, is divine and because it is *brahman*, it is real.

From this early period, Radhakrishnan understood the world to be in a process of evolution, an evolution guided by and an evolution of the Absolute. "The ultimate reality sleeps in the stone, breathes in the plants, feels in the animals and awakes to self-consciousness in man. It progressively manifests itself in and through these particulars."⁵⁷ Evolution is not merely physical or biological. The facts destroy distinctions between the material and spiritual and insist that it is an evolution of consciousness, a growth to the realization of the Absolute in the world. "The facts of evolution compel us to assume the reality of a single spirit inspiring the whole course of evolution and working in different ways at different stages."⁵⁸

This was Radhakrishnan's definition of Vedanta, and, therefore, his own theoretical stance toward Reality—a stance which he would maintain throughout his life. The world was not in opposition to the Absolute as he defined it, for the world partook of divinity and was even the divine activity as it progressed towards the revelation of that very fact. History, then, is real and purposive. The world is a place for ethical action. Yet behind the world is the Ultimately Real, the Absolute, and this *brahman, saccidānanda*, is

identical with the human self, the Universal Consciousness. Not surprisingly, then, did Radhakrishnan say that the history of the world "can be understood by a study of the underlying spirit of man."⁵⁹

Vedanta as "Hinduism" and the Essence of "Religion"

Beginning in 1922, Radhakrishnan placed Vedanta in a new perspective. He identified it not merely as one school of Indian thought but as "Hinduism" and even as the essence of all "religion." Whereas, in 1908, he spoke of the affirmation of the Absolute *brahman* as only the final stage of Indian thought,⁶⁰ and whereas his articles spoke mostly of Vedanta, beginning with "The Heart of Hinduism" and "The Hindu Dharma" in 1922, there came about a change in the *designation* of the religious position he had previously defended, even though there was no change in the theoretical content of that position. He began to speak of "the faith of the Hindus," "the Hindu religion," "Hinduism,"⁶¹ "Indian thought,"⁶² and "the Hindu view" of various religious doctrines.⁶³

The content of each of these is defined either as Vedanta or as a correlate of it as previously defined. For example, speaking to a Christian audience in "Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine," he defined, "some of the fundamentals of the Hindu faith...those common ideas which have characterised the different forms of Hinduism in their long history, regarding the problems of God, man and his future."⁶⁴ First, God is not comprehensible by the intellect. Yet we think of him as "the unity of wisdom, love and goodness" of the *trimūrti* doctrine. Second, the world is organically related to the divine. "Hindu thought is not afraid of asserting the presence of God in all things." Third, there are no unique revelations but there are people who are *avatars*, who incarnate the divine "in a more striking way and to a greater degree." This relativized a traditional Indian teaching of *avatāra*, "descent," in which the divine is believed to come to earth temporarily to restore the good and destroy evil. Fourth, human beings are given freedom to realize their destiny. Fifth, the goal of life is liberation, *mokṣa*, from the bonds of ignorance which hide the truth of the divine.⁶⁵

This new designation of Vedanta appeared most strikingly in the Upton Lectures of 1926 at Manchester College, Oxford, published as *The Hindu View of Life*: "Hinduism is not to be dismissed as a

mere flow and strife of opinions, for it represents a steady growth of insight, since every form of Hinduism and every stage of its growth is related to the common background of the Vedānta...The germinal conceptions are contained in the Vedānta standard."⁶⁶ Those elements of the tradition which seem not to agree must be understood as representations of "popular theology," less significant, an acquiescence of the "majority of the Hindus," or "outbursts of sectarian fanaticism," "superstition," or "crude beliefs and submerged thoughts which the civilization has not had time to eradicate."⁶⁷ Concerning the views of religious thinkers, the essential teaching is the *advaita*, non-dualism, of Sankara as well. In a defense of his *Indian Philosophy* he confessed that "it is difficult to decide whether it is the Advaita (or non-dualism) of Śaṅkara or the modified position of Rāmānuja that is the final teaching of the parent gospel [of the *Upaniṣads*]," yet he reconciled the two positions of these thinkers in terms of a "duality of standpoints" in which Sankara's position is a viewpoint of the "nature of reality" and Ramanuja's understanding represents "the absolute from the human end."⁶⁸

This definition and application of "Hinduism" as a category continued throughout Radhakrishnan's work. "Hinduism" is *advaita*: "To define the real is to turn it into an object and so to degrade it. Its inwardness of spirit resists division in time or space. We cannot even say that it is one; we say that it is non-dual (*advaita*)."⁶⁹ This is "Hinduism" though the majority of Hindus may not so understand it. "While the thinking few understand the philosophical subtleties of Sankara's *advaita*, the popular religion of India is theism."⁷⁰ The people are incapable of seeing past the symbols which they take as absolute.

In this period Radhakrishnan also identified what he had previously called Vedānta, and now "Hinduism," with the essence of "religions" and "religion." This was not the case, for example, in 1910, when "religion" was defined as belief in a higher power or powers.⁷¹ In 1926, however, he could say, "The Vedānta is not a religion, but religion itself in its most universal and deepest significance."⁷² This identification of Vedānta, "Hinduism," as the essence of "religion" resulted in a two-fold understanding of the "religions": Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, etc. On the one hand he asserted the essential unity of all "religions," a position which he maintained from the early 1920s to the end of his life.

Speaking of Islam in 1923, Radhakrishnan suggested, "If the Indian Moslem combines his inherited tradition [the "Indian tradition"] with his acquired faith and effects a synthesis of the old and the new, he will be led to emphasize these neglected aspects of the truth of Islam which really promoted culture and civilisation and brought to life a dying world and discard those unimportant details which happened to be exaggerated out of all proportion on account of historical accidents."⁷³ Similarly, Christianity, when understood in its essentials, has many "affinities" to "Hinduism."⁷⁴ With the growth of New Testament criticism, in fact, early Christianity would be shown to be Vedānta. "Jesus is the example of a man who has become God and none can say where his manhood ends and divinity begins. Man and God are akin, 'That art Thou', *Tat tvam asi*."⁷⁵ Though it was later corrupted, "Christian teaching in its origin, before it became externalized and organized, was about awakening from sleep through the light shed by the inner wisdom."⁷⁶

On the other hand, there was much in other religions which was misunderstood, over-emphasized, or unconsciously added by their practitioners, which is unessential and, therefore, needs pruning from the main branch. This, of course, included the beliefs and practices of some in the "Hindu" tradition as well. Some of it could be easily removed, he told a Christian audience. "Apparently there is not very much serious difference between Hinduism and Christianity on the question of the nature and means of salvation, if we do not take into account the doctrine of Atonement...But the sacrifice of Christ has no significance for man as a propitiation for sin."⁷⁷ The essential element in all religions, when they are carefully and philosophically compared, is religious experience. The early twenties witnessed a growing emphasis upon the element of intuitive experience in Radhakrishnan's writings. It is this experience, he believed, which must be the test of truth for the "religion," and it is this universal religious experience which is emphasized in "Hinduism." "The Hindu attitude to religion is interesting. While fixed intellectual beliefs mark off one religion from another, Hinduism sets itself no such limits. Intellect is subordinated to intuition, dogma to experience, outer expression to inward realization."⁷⁸ Even though the importance of intuitive religious experience received more emphasis than reason, which he emphasized in earlier writings, Radhakrishnan was convinced that the results of

intuition are not contrary to reason. They actually move beyond it. Intuition and reason ideally complement each other, for the intuitive experience must also be tested in the light of philosophy, or reason, and its application in life: "We can discriminate between the genuine and the spurious in religious experience, not only by means of logic but also through life."⁷⁹

It is difficult to distinguish between those characteristics of the experience which are essential and universal and those which reflect the cumulative tradition of the subject and are mixed with the essential.⁸⁰ However, Radhakrishnan affirmed that the following elements were universal: (1) The experience is self-authenticating: "In the experience itself no question is raised whether the object experienced is real or not."⁸¹ (2) It is an experience which involves the whole person.⁸² (3) It is, of course, intuitive and not intellectual. "The truths of the *ysis* are not evolved as the result of logical reasoning or systematic philosophy but they are the products of spiritual intuition, *dr̥ṣṭi* or vision."⁸³ (4) It is self-satisfying: "The experience itself is felt to be sufficient and complete."⁸⁴ (5) It results in the feelings of "inward peace, power and joy."⁸⁵ (6) It is fundamentally ineffable: "The unquestionable content of the experience is that about which nothing more can be said."⁸⁶ (7) Most important, and most crucial from Radhakrishnan's viewpoint, the experience is non-dual. It is an experience of the universal Self, *ātman*, which is *brahman*. "That the soul is in contact with a mighty spiritual power other than its normal self and yet within and that its contact means the beginning of the creation of a new self is the fact, while the identification of this power with the historic figures of Buddha or Christ, the confusion of the simple realization of the universal self in us with a catastrophic revelation from without, is an interpretation, a personal confession and not necessarily an objective truth."⁸⁷

Even the Buddha, with his doctrine of *anatta* (Skt. *anātman*), non-self, when understood correctly, was not denying the existence of a permanent *ātman*, but only of the permanent reality of the ego. He was merely restating the thought of the Upaniṣads. "The Upaniṣads arrive at the ground of all things by stripping the self of veil after veil of contingency. At the end of the process they find the universal self which is none of these finite entities, though the ground of them all. Buddha holds the same view, though he does not state it definitely."⁸⁸ Since this experience is essential to all religions, it

may be said that there is an essential unity in the "mystic traditions of the different religions" which flows from the universal experience which is emphasized in "Hinduism."⁸⁹

With this experience as the key to religion, i.e., with a Vedantic definition of religious experience, Radhakrishnan was able to distinguish the essential from the non-essential in "religions." The absolute, unchanging essence of "religion" was the non-dual experience of the Absolute, but attempts to express that experience were only relatively true. The different systems are only "tentative adjustments, more or less satisfactory, to spiritual reality."⁹⁰ However, he did not believe that his own expression of the essentials of religious experience in non-dual terms was a result of reflection. Though he stated that "there is no such thing as pure experience, raw and undigested," yet *saccidananda* and *tat tvam asi* represent the fact of the experience, not its interpretation. "The great text of the Upaniṣad affirms it—*Tat tvam asi* (That art Thou). It is a simple statement of an experienced fact. The Biblical text, 'So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him,' asserts that in the soul of man is contained the true revelation of God."⁹¹ Similarly, "The three noteworthy features of spiritual experience are reality, awareness and freedom."⁹²

As the experienced fact these elements of experience were always exempt from questioning. "In living religion there is no subjection to any authority except to the compelling one of immediate spiritual perception."⁹³ Though experience must be tested by reason, such interpretations must not be under bondage to traditions, dogmas, and creeds, and "Hinduism," of all the "religions," understands this best. "The Hindu attitude is based on a definite philosophy of life which assumes that religion is a matter of personal realization. Creeds and dogmas, words and symbols have only an instrumental value. Their function is to aid the growth of spirit by supplying supports for a task that is strictly personal."⁹⁴ The problem is that those who misunderstand, and, therefore, take other elements as essential to their "religion," tend to absolutize those elements, believing them to be crucial and, then, consider others outside of their current religious stance when these others do not accept these so-called important elements. This, for Radhakrishnan, is dogmatic, exclusivist "religion."

In the essential agreement of religious experience and the wide intolerance of "religions" in non-essential elements, Radhakrishnan

is provided with one of the most often discussed themes of his writing and speaking. The essential unity of religious experience should result in a tolerance for other "religions" in the midst of the current world crisis and provide the key to a universal world community.

**The Religion of the Spirit (Hinduism, Vedanta)
as the Solution to the World's Need**

As Radhakrishnan's intercourse with the West became regular and stronger, and as World War II loomed on the horizon, he began to speak of Vedanta with a new emphasis. It was clear to him that the world was at a crucial point in history; threats to humanity appeared on all sides. Therefore, he proclaimed that "Hinduism," which he would often call the "religion of the Spirit," was the only solution to the human predicament and as such must be the religion of the future. He was no longer merely on the defensive as he was in his earlier writings. He now proclaimed a religious position which could bind the world together and prepare it for a great leap forward in its evolution. Though as early as World War I he believed that the West was materialistic, egoistic, and overly possessive, and that the war "revealed to India the soul of Europe,"⁹⁵ his pleas that the world turn to "Hinduism" were unequivocal in the thirties and forties due to the rise of Fascism and the failure of the League of Nations, and in the fifties and sixties in the light of the "Cold War" and the threat posed by atomic weapons.

In the late twenties, Radhakrishnan believed the world was at a time of great transition, a time of spectacular growth in its evolution to the manifestation of the divine. In all areas of human knowledge and intercourse there had been much progress, yet it seemed to him that the growth of the spirit was lagging behind.⁹⁶ "Religions" were suffering because they had not kept up with the changes of the modern world, and therefore people were beginning to question the validity of the "religions." Radhakrishnan spoke of this theme often from the late twenties through the early seventies.

The coming of World War II underlined the crisis of the present age in the mind of Radhakrishnan. There was a threat of increasing disunity in the world which was caused by growing national egoism. "War is really devil's work and cannot be deleted

from the pages of history until national isolation and selfishness are abandoned."⁹⁷ Nationalism is "a pernicious creed" which may have had its purpose in the past world of physical barriers, but which today stands blocking the path to world unity and world community.⁹⁸ War has exposed to all the problems of government, economic structures, and educational institutions, and shows that the weakness of the world is an inward disease of spirit. "We are witnessing today the end of an era, the agony of a whole civilization, the liquidation of forces in which we have all been steeped. This world war which is heaping gratuitous and senseless horrors on the helpless and harmless people is not to be traced to the malevolence of a few individuals, nor is it to be dismissed as the conflict of rival imperialisms. It is the proclamation of the bankruptcy of the present world order which is marked by the decline of spiritual life and the degradation of moral values."⁹⁹ A world community is needed in order to establish world unity, turning the tide against the current evils of materialism, egoism, and the failure of the religions."¹⁰⁰

One must note that the questioning of "religions" by twentieth century minds was not the questioning of "religion." Though science had rightly caused the rejection of many spiritual beliefs, this rejection constituted a preparation for a more spiritual faith. "It is no use repudiating the religious implications of science. I believe that the growing dissatisfaction with established religion is the prelude to the rise of a truer, more spiritual, and so more universal religion."¹⁰¹ Most of all, this was the repudiation of "religions" which appealed to dogma and doctrine instead of experienced fact. "The scientific temper is opposed to the acceptance of dogma. The scientist pursues truth without any bias or presuppositions. He does not start with the idea that his conclusions should square with dogmas. Religion as revelation or dogma has no appeal to the believer in science."¹⁰²

People were not rejecting "religion," but only the formulations and dogmas of traditional "religions." "Those who stand outside organised religions do so because they are persuaded that the vision of God and the impulse of humanity embodied in organised religions are defective."¹⁰³ These religions, then, fail to capture the modern mind for three reasons. First, they are not consistent with the discoveries of science. Second, they are incapable or ineffective in solving social problems. "The unscientific character of religious

beliefs and the unsocial nature of religious practices are responsible for the increasing indifference to religion."¹⁰⁴ Concerning their relationship to social problems the religions have many times capitulated to the status quo. "The truly religious are those who feel dissatisfied with the way in which religions are compromising with worldly values and who demand a transformation of the social order into conformity with the spiritual pattern."¹⁰⁵ The third reason for the failure of the religions is that they are exclusivist and therefore incapable of uniting a world which desperately wishes to unite. "We have to give to the new society a psychological unity, a spiritual coherence. To sustain a world community, we need unity, if not identity of spiritual outlook and aspiration. Unfortunately religions tend to keep people apart. Humanity is broken up into a number of separate worlds each with its particular religious tradition."¹⁰⁶

The issue of tolerance in the religions of the world became crucial in Radhakrishnan's writings, for a spiritual solution, he believed, required a united spirituality, a universal faith. "The greatest of the temptations we must overcome is to think that our own religion is the only true religion, our own vision of Reality is the only authentic vision, that we alone have received a revelation and we are the chosen people, the children of light and the rest of the human race live in darkness."¹⁰⁷ The creation of one world was called "the most significant feature of our time," yet: "The barriers of dogmatic religions are sterilising men's efforts to coordinate their forces to shape the future."¹⁰⁸ This exclusiveness is the result of greed and selfishness, taking one's own symbol of the Absolute as absolute.¹⁰⁹ In short, it is "idolatry,"¹¹⁰ and is found where "intellectualism" has won the day in "religions."¹¹¹ However, theistic views are most often responsible for filling "men's minds with dogmatism and their hearts with intolerance."¹¹² The crucial feature of a "religion" which will solve the human predicament, then, is a universality which embraces all viewpoints. Yet this is not merely indifference to the many "religions" but a tolerance which "follows from the conviction that the Absolute Reality is a mystery of which no more than a fraction has ever yet been penetrated."¹¹³ Thus, it is a tolerance which flows from a certain affirmation about the nature of the Absolute and a tolerance which includes respect and fairness toward those other religions.

A religion is needed, in summary, which is scientific, ethically

effective, and universal.¹¹⁴ Secular humanism will not do either, for it has also failed to meet human needs. "The civilisation built on practical reason, scientific power, industrial efficiency and national patriotism has disclosed its insufficiency in the aggressive ugliness of modern life, its perpetual unrest, its economic chaos, its lack of inner freedom and its oppressive mechanical burden."¹¹⁵

While Radhakrishnan called for the correction of these defects in the religion of the future, he was convinced beyond any doubt that the religion of the hour that fulfilled these requirements was "Vedanta" or "Hinduism," the essence of all religions. Its promulgation will return society to the spiritual foundation which will fill the world's need. "The mystic religion of India which affirms that things spiritual are personal, and that we have to reflect them in our lives, which requires us to withdraw from the world's concerns to find the real, and return to the world of history with renewed energy and certitude, which is at once spiritual and social, is likely to be the religion of the new world, which will draw men to a common centre even across the national frontiers."¹¹⁶

This religion is the "*philosophia perennis*, sanatana dharma," or "Hinduism," the spirit of India.¹¹⁷ In a 1946 article, "The Voice of India in the Spiritual Crisis of Our Time," Radhakrishnan summarized his arguments and more fully identified his position with Vedanta. The Real is within; its reality is non-dual; it is *Īśvara* when understood in relationship to the creation; the world is in an evolution to the highest realization of the Absolute. "The end of man is to recognise that the Divine is his real self, to discover and consciously realise it."¹¹⁸ It is this "eternal religion" which can "help to re-integrate this bruised, battered, broken world and give to it the faith for which it is in search."¹¹⁹

In all of this, it must be borne in mind that Radhakrishnan did not believe that he was proclaiming one "religion" among the others even though he identified it with the essence of a specific tradition. He was convinced that he was promoting "religion" in its very essence. He was so certain of this that even though he spoke against extreme nationalism, he identified this position exclusively with India. So much was this true that before the representatives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, he said, "The fundamental ideas of Indian culture will have a great formulative influence on the world of the future."¹²⁰ More specifically he was referring to Vedanta: "the regeneration of the

world can come only from an idealist view of life and a return to religion. As Indian religion is not entangled in unscientific dogmas or doubtful history, one need not fear for its future."¹²¹ Though sometimes he spoke of this as the religion of the East, the "religion of the spirit" is most clearly found in India.

The fact that India would influence the religion of the world greatly, however, is not to be understood as a new role for that nation. Her influence had been great in the past in matters of spirit. In *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* he preferred to see mystical, spiritual influences from India as an explanation of the spiritual in the West. "There is thus enough justification for regarding the mystic element in the West as Indian."¹²² He believed that Greece, Palestine, and Rome were influenced by the East, and he concluded, "The whole life and teaching of Jesus is so distinctive that it cannot be regarded as a natural development of Jewish and Greek ideas." Thus, even the "heart of Christianity is Eastern."¹²³

Similarly, Radhakrishnan believed that Chinese thought was essentially Vedantic: "While Confucianism stressed the karma aspect, Taoism the mystical or the jñāna side, Buddhism supplied a philosophy and an ethics which dealt adequately with these two sides of religion."¹²⁴ Yet, as he told audiences in China, India's influence on China has been decisive. Taoism probably reflects the influence of the Upaniṣads,¹²⁵ and Buddhism entered from India to produce the appearance of "a new China."¹²⁶

"Religion of the spirit" was what he began to call this position in 1936, for it was a faith which emphasized the deep spiritual essentials of "religions" and, therefore, the essence of "religion." It was a religion also, he believed, to unite the world, providing a scientific, ethical, and universal solution in the current human predicament. Before the World Congress of Faiths held in London in 1936, he affirmed, "It [fellowship of faith] is understanding, insight, full trust in the basic reality which feeds all faiths and its power to lead us to the truth. It believes in the deeper religion of the Spirit which will be adequate for all people, vital enough to strike deep roots, powerful to unify each individual in himself and bind us all together by the realisation of our common condition and common goal."¹²⁷ This it could do because it "regards dogmas as more or less tentative views."¹²⁸ It is also scientific. "A true understanding of science supports a religion of spirit."¹²⁹ Like science it affirms a unity behind and in nature, it is empirical and non-dogmatic, basing

itself upon religious experiences,¹³⁰ and it is universal, showing no boundaries at continents or between races.¹³¹

As vice-president and president of India, Radhakrishnan indicated that he believed that this "religion of the spirit" could and should be the basis for an adequate political philosophy. "Religion, again, correctly interpreted gives value to the individual" and this correct interpretation requires an emphasis upon the divinity of the human being. This is the basis for a democracy.¹³² Similarly, the unity perceived in religious experience is the fact which demands that this democracy also be socialistic: "a universal welfare State where we look upon the whole world as our sacred home."¹³³ For Radhakrishnan this could be called a "secular" state, not because it was against religion or did not take the reality of the Absolute into consideration, but because it did not support sectarianism. "The ideal of secularism means that we abandon the inhumanity of fanaticism and give up the futile hatred of others. In a secular State there will be the spirit of true religion, and the environment necessary for the development of a gentle and considerate way of life";¹³⁴ "Secularism here does not mean irreligion or atheism or even stress of material comforts. It proclaims that it lays stress on the universality of spiritual values which may be attained by a variety of ways."¹³⁵

Accepting this definition of the "secular state" enabled Radhakrishnan to experience no conflict between the espousal of the "religion of the spirit" as he defined it and also the "secularism" of India. India can be "secular," for it does not prefer a dogmatic, sectarian "religion," and yet it can prophetically promote the "religion of the spirit," for that position is on a different level than the "religions." Secularism was non-sectarianism, and Radhakrishnan was convinced that he had transcended sectarian divisions in his own position. When the state "respects all religions," it is merely a practice of the fundamental principle of the Indian genius, of the Indian spirit itself.¹³⁶ The Constitution guarantees freedom of "religion" and even the freedom to propagate one's position, but Radhakrishnan understood one limit upon such propagation. Religions may spread their viewpoints "so long as they don't hurt the conscience of other people."¹³⁷ He offered no clear definition of this limitation nor examples of what propagation might not hurt some one's conscience.

Summary

By the time of his retirement in 1967 and his death on April 17, 1975, Radhakrishnan had spoken and written about his "religion of the spirit" to a wide variety of audiences, both Western and Eastern. He was convinced that at the present time in the evolution of the world humanity needed this "religion" in order to progress spiritually as well as it has materially. He viewed the failures of other "religions" in their refusal or inability to evolve to what he believed was a more spiritual position because these religions were too dogmatic. The "religion of the spirit," however, was identifiable with "the Indian religious tradition," and especially with what he had defined as Vedanta in his earliest writings. There he had already identified Vedanta with a position he believed was held by the non-dualist Sankara. Soon he affirmed that Vedanta was the essence of "Hinduism" or "Indian religion," and, in fact, the essence of all religions. It was not "a religion" but "religion itself." Since it was the essence of all "religions," to promote it was to promote no single "religion" but "religion" in essence. By promoting this "religion of the spirit," by defense, definition, and promulgation of Vedanta, he believed he was participating as best he could in the evolutionary push of the world toward the perfection which is the manifestation of the Absolute, and this throughout his life was his ultimate concern: to bring each individual and the world into perfection as defined by his own view point: Vedanta.

Notes

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1. See, for example, "The Spirit in Man," in *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, eds. S. Radhakrishnan and J.H. Muirhead, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952), p. 483; "Religion and Religions," in *Faiths and Fellowship: Being the Proceedings of the World Congress of Faiths Held in London July 3rd—17th 1936*, ed. A. Douglas Millard (London: J.M. Watkins, 1936), pp. 111, 115; "The Religion of the Spirit and the World's Need: Fragments of a Confession," in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (New York: Tudor, 1952), p. 78; *East and West: Some Reflections* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956), p. 121. Radhakrishnan's use of the word "religion" will be evident in

this paper. As the "religions" it refers to the categories of the "isms" (e.g., Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam), and as "religion" it refers to the essence of "religions" as he defined it. When referring to "religion" or "religions" in this study, the word is being used in these senses when in quotation marks. Otherwise, the word is to be defined as "that which concerns the person or group ultimately."

2. "The Spirit in Man," pp. 475-76. See also "My Search for Truth," in *Radhakrishnan: Selected Writings on Philosophy, Religion, and Culture*, ed. Robert A. McDermott (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1970), pp. 37, 40. This was originally in Vergilius Ferm, ed., *Religion in Transition* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1937), pp. 11-59. See also "The Religion of the Spirit and the World's Need," p. 9.
3. *Our Heritage* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1973), p. 97. This is a collection of Radhakrishnan's speeches from the 1960s. The reference was originally a speech given in Calcutta, January 20, 1963, and published in Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *President Radhakrishnan's Speeches and Writings, May 1962-May 1964* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1964), p. 123. See also "My Search for Truth," p. 37. Radhakrishnan believed that Svami Vivekananda and the Svami's guru, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, were in touch with the essence of "Hinduism." See *President Radhakrishnan's Speeches*, p. 120; "Hinduism and the West," in *Modern India and the West*, ed. L.S.S. O'Malley (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 346; *Fellowship of the Spirit* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 21.
4. Radhakrishnan, *The Ethics of the Vedanta and its Metaphysical Pre-suppositions* (Madras: Guardian Press, 1908).
5. There are a number of important introductions to Radhakrishnan's thought. See especially, Robert N. Minor, *Radhakrishnan: A Religious Biography* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987.) P.A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*; J.G. Arapura, *Radhakrishnan and Integral Experience* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1966); and Robert A. McDermott, "Radhakrishnan's Contribution to Comparative Philosophy," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 10, no.3 (September 1970): 420-40.
6. The term "Vedanta," meaning "end of the Vedas," usually is taken as a general name for those religious positions which trace their views back to the Upanishads, the last books of the Vedic collection. The three major systems which were developed were *advaita vedanta*, the non-dualism for which Sankara (A.D. 788-820) is best known; *viśiṣṭādvaita vedanta*, "qualified non-dualism," whose major exponent was Ramanuja (A.D. 1017-1137); and *dvaita*, dualism, whose thirteenth-century exponent was Madhva. In this paper the term

- "Vedanta" is used as Radhakrishnan uses it, to refer to his own systematization and understanding of the Upaniṣads and these systems.
7. "Religion and Life", *International Journal of Ethics* 27, no.1 (October 1916): 99. Radhakrishnan's use of the term "God" is two-fold: (1) as a popular term for the Absolute generally conceived by non-technical audiences; (2) for the Absolute viewed from the cosmic side (see below). For similar statements which affirm this ultimate concern throughout his life the following are examples: "The Heart of Hinduism," *The Hibbert Journal* 21, no. 1 (October 1922): 9; *An Idealist View of Life*, 2nd ed. (London: Unwin Books, 1937), pp. 165-166; *East and West in Religion* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1933), p. 104; "The Voice of India in the Spiritual Crisis of Our Time," *The Hibbert Journal* 44, no. 4 (July 1946): 304; "The Religion of the Spirit and the World's Need," pp. 43, 45; *Our Heritage*, p. 37; *Recovery of Faith* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1967), pp. 13, 14.
 8. At times, Radhakrishnan explained that he perceived his task as something other than mere description of the positions he discussed. In a defense of the first volume of his *Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin 1923), he said ("Indian Philosophy: Some Problems," *Mind* [New Series] 25 [April 1926]: 154): "The historian of philosophy must approach his task not as a mere philologist or even as a scholar but as a philosopher who uses his scholarship as an instrument to wrest from words the thoughts that underlie them...A philosopher...realises the value of the ancient Indian theories which attempt to grapple with the perennial problems of life and treats them not as fossils but as species which are remarkably persistent."
 9. "'Nature' and 'Convention' in Greek Ethics," *The Calcutta Review* 130 (January 1910): 9-23.
 10. "Egoism and Altruism—The Vedanta Solution," *East and West* (Bombay) 9 (July 1910): 630. Found also in *The Ethics of the Vedanta*, p. 82.
 11. One finds in these early articles such statements as: "The lowest forms of religion are lowest because they have no ethical significance" ("The Relation of Morality to Religion," *The Hindustan Review* [September 1910]: 295); "All the world knows that education has for its aim and object the *ethical* man—the man in whom all the capacities are harmoniously developed" ("Morality and Religion in Education," *The Madras Christian College Magazine* 10[1910-11]: 233). Similarly one need only look at the titles of articles from this period which include other than those mentioned previously: "Karma and Free will," *The Modern Review* (Calcutta), 3 (May 1908): 424-28; "The Ethics of the Bhagavadgita and Kant," *Inter-*

- national Journal of Ethics* 21, no. 4 (July 1911); 465-475; "The Ethics of the Vedanta," *International Journal of Ethics* 24, no. 2 (January 1914), 168-183.
12. Radhakrishnan, "Karma and Free Will," p. 426.
 13. *Ibid.*, pp. 426, 427.
 14. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy: The Vedas and the Six Systems," *The Madras Christian College Magazine* 3 (1908): 22.
 15. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
 16. Radhakrishnan, *The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1920). In the preface (p. vii) he states his purpose as follows: "This book attempts to show that of the two live philosophies of the present day, pluralistic theism and monistic idealism, the latter is the more reasonable as affording the spiritual being of man full satisfaction, moral as well as intellectual."
 17. Radhakrishnan, "The Ethics of the Vedanta," pp. 169-170.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
 19. *Ibid.*
 20. Radhakrishna, "Karma and Free Will," pp. 424-425. Cf. "The Ethics of the Bhagavadgita and Kant," p. 467.
 21. *Ibid.*, p. 425. Cf. Radhakrishnan, "The Ethics of the Bhagavadgita and Kant," pp. 471-474; and "The Ethics of the Vedanta," pp. 181-182.
 22. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life* (London: Unwin Books, 1927), p. 54. For other statements of this analogy, somewhat more developed, see his *The Bhagavadgītā With an Introductory Essay, Sanskrit Text, English Translation and Notes* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1948), p. 49; and his *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 221-222.
 23. Radhakrishnan, "Karma and Free Will," p. 425. Cf. his "Religion and Life," *International Journal of Ethics* 27 no. 1 (October 1916): 99. For a fuller study of his view of karma and rebirth, see Robert N. Minsr, "In Defense of Karma and Rebirth: Evolutionary Karma," in *Karma and Rebirth: Post Classical Developments*, ed. by Ronald W. Newfeldt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 15-40.
 24. Its most well-known later form is as a critique of Albert Schweitzer's claim that Indian thought is world-negating. This is found in Radhakrishnan's *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 64-110. For analyses of their debate see William F. Goodwin, "Mysticism and Ethics: An Examination of Radhakrishnan's Reply to Schweitzer's Critique of Indian Thought," *Ethics* 77, no. 1 (October 1956): 25-41; and Milton D. Hunnex, "Mysticism and Ethics: Radhakrishnan and Schweitzer," *Philosophy East and West* 8, nos. 3, 4 (October 1958—January 1959): 121-136.

25. Radhakrishnan, "The Ethics of the Vedanta," pp. 179-180.
26. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedanta Philosophy and the Doctrine of Māyā," *International Journal of Ethics* 24, no. 3 (April 1914): 436.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 440. Māyā refers, then, to the fact that one cannot know the exact nature of the relationship between the world and the Absolute. See also, his "The Metaphysics of the Upanisads, II," *The Indian Philosophical Review*, 3 no. 4 (October 1920): 349; "The Doctrine of Maya: Some Problems," in *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy*, ed. Edgar Sheffield Brightman (New York: Longman, Green & Co., 1927), p. 688; *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 272. Yet it does indicate that the universe is not independent of brahman. See also Radhakrishnan, "The Vedantic Approach to Reality," *The Monist* 26, no. 2 (April 1916): 226, his *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. 27, 85-86; "Reply to Critics," in Schilpp, ed., *Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, pp. 800-802. Finally, it results in the fact that we misunderstand the nature of the universe. See "Reply to Critics," pp. 801-802; and *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 28. For a helpful study see Donald R. Tuck, "The Doctrine of Maya: Radhakrishnan" *Darshana International* 16, no. 4 (October 1976): 51-62.
28. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedanta Philosophy and the Doctrine of Māyā," p. 432.
29. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedantic Approach to Reality," p. 215.
30. Radhakrishnan, *The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 430. Cf. also his "The Vedantic Approach to Reality," p. 216, with *The Reign of Religion*, pp. 430-431.
31. Radhakrishnan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* (London: Macmillan, 1918).
32. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1927), 2:562-574. Cf. his "Intellect and Intuition in Sankara's Philosophy," *Triveni* 6, no. 1 (July-August 1933): 14; his *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. 86-88, 91; his "Vedanta—The Advaita School," in *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western*, ed. S. Radhakrishnan (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952), 1: 276-281; his *Occasional Speeches and Writings: October 1952-January 1956* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1960 pp. 261-262).
33. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 101.
34. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 79. Cf. his *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 11, 272.
35. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 72.
36. See Radhakrishnan, "The Metaphysics of the Upanishads, I," *The Indian Philosophical Review* 3, no. 3 (July 1920): 214; his *Idealist View of Life*, p. 80.

37. Radhakrishnan, *The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*, p. vii, and *Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1923), 1:31-32, 48. In his "Religion and Life," p. 99, he calls it "immanent or objective idealism."
38. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 10.
39. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 83. Cf. "The Hindu Idea of God," *The Quest* (London) 15, no. 3 (April 1924): 310; his *Religion and Society*, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1948), p. 103.
40. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 50. Cf. "The Vedanta Philosophy and the Doctrine of Māyā," p. 442; "Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine," *The Madras Christian College Magazine* (Quarterly Series) (January 1924): 18; *The Religion We Need*, Affirmation Series (London: Ernest Benn, 1928), p. 22; *Kalki or The Future of Civilization* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1929), p. 59; "Progress and Spiritual Values," *Philosophy: The Journal of the British Institute of Philosophy* 12, no. 47 (July 1937): 273-274. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 24; *Occasional Speeches and Writings: October 1952-January 1956*, p. 130; *East and West: Some Reflections*, p. 124.
41. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 80.
42. Radhakrishnan, "The Metaphysics of the Upanishads, I," pp. 217-219.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 221-222. Cf. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedantic Approach to Reality," pp. 222-210, 4; "The Heart of Hinduism," pp. 8, 9; "Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine," pp. 26, 32; *The Religion We Need*, pp. 22-23; *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 78-83, 162-163, 217; *East and West in Religion*, p. 131; "Spiritual Freedom and the New Education," *New Era in Home and School* 17 (September-October 1936): 235; "The Spirit in Man," p. 484; *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. 32, 125, 300; "The Cultural Problem," in *The Cultural Problem*, Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs, no. 1, ed. A.I.J. Appasamy (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 43; "The Voice of India in the Spiritual Crisis of Our Time," pp. 301-304; "The Nature of Man," in *Creators of the Modern Spirit: Towards a Philosophy of Faith*, ed. Barbara Waylen (New York: Macmillan, 1951), p. 65; *Occasional Speeches and Writings: October 1952-January 1956*, pp. 52, 202, 244; *Occasional Speeches and Writings. Third Series: July 1959-May 1962* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1963), pp. 236, 259; *Religion in a Changing World* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967), pp. 109, 120; *Our Heritage*, pp. 19, 55, 140; etc.
44. His strongest statement of this position is: "The assertion of the self as something other than the true reality of God is the fall or the original sin (*avidyā*)." (*An Idealist View of Life*, p. 87). See

- "Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Religious Pluralism," *Studie Missionalia*, 42 (1993), pp. 307-327.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 273. Cf. "The Hindu Idea of God," pp. 291, 309-310; *The Hindu View of Life*, pp. 23-24; 30-34; *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, pp. 92, 125; "Hinduism and the West," p. 340; "The Voice of India in the Spiritual Crisis of Our Time," p. 303; "Science and Religion," in *Art and Thought: A Volume in Honour of the Late Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy*, ed. K. Bharatha Iyer (London: Luzac & Co., 1947), p. 184; "The Religion of the Spirit and the World's Need," pp. 39-40; *Occasional Speeches and Writings, October 1952-January 1956*, p. 130; *Occasional Speeches and Writings, Third Series*, p. 232; *Religion in a Changing World*, pp. 121-122; *Recovery of Faith*, pp. 85-86; etc.
 46. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 272.
 47. *Ibid.* pp. 85-86. Cf. Radhakrishnan, "Religion and Religions," p. 110; "Hinduism," in *The Legacy of India*, ed. G.T. Garrat (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. 271-272.
 48. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 29.
 49. For a discussion see J. Gonda, "The Hindu Trinity," *Anthropos* 63 (1968): 212-226.
 50. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* 1: 480.
 51. Cf. Radhakrishnan, "The Heart of Hinduism," p. 6; "Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine," pp. 19-20; *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 21; *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 265; "The Voice of India in the Spiritual Crisis of Our Time," p. 303; "The Religion of the Spirit and the World's Need," p. 40; *Occasional Speeches and Writings: October 1952-January 1956*, pp. 257-258; etc.
 52. Radhakrishnan, "The Heart of Hinduism," p. 7.
 53. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, 1:171-172.
 54. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanisads* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), p. 72. Cf. his *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 127; *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 228; "Reply to Critics," p. 797; *Occasional Speeches and Writings: October 1952-January 1956*, p. 259.
 55. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 31. Cf. his "The Vedantic Approach to Reality," p. 224.
 56. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedanta Philosophy and the Doctrine of Māyā," pp. 436-437.
 57. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedantic Approach to Reality," p. 225.
 58. Radhakrishnan, "Evolution and its Implications," *The New Era* 1 (November 1928): 111. Cf. his "The Metaphysics of the Upanishads, II," pp. 348-349; "The Role of Philosophy in the History of Civilization," in *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy*, ed. Edgar Sheffield Brightman (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1927), p. 547; *An Idealist View of Life*,

- pp. 86-87, 165-166, etc.; *East and West in Religion*, pp. 124-125; *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. 91-92; "The Cultural Problem," p. 48; "Science and Religion," p. 183; "The Religion of the Spirit and the World's Need," pp. 31, 44; etc.
59. Radhakrishnan, "Progress and Spiritual Values," p. 261.
 60. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy: The Vedas and the Six Systems," p. 27.
 61. E.g., Radhakrishnan, "The Heart of Hinduism," pp. 5, 19; *The Hindu View of Life*, pp. 11-19, 31, 39, etc.; "Islam and Indian Thought," *The Indian Review* 24 (November 1923): 666, 672; "The Spirit in Man," pp. 475-476; "Introduction to the First Edition," in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1958), p. xxx; *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 338; "The Cultural Problem," pp. 43-44; "My Search for Truth," pp. 41-45; "Reply to Critics," p. 802; *The Recovery of Faith*, pp. 103-105; etc. Radhakrishnan admitted disagreements among those placed under this designation, but these disagreements, based upon his definition of the essential nature of "Hinduism," were insignificant. See his *Education, Politics and War* (Poona: International Book Service, 1944), p. 30; and *The Hindu View of Life*, pp. 13, 25, 91.
 62. For example, in his discussion of "The General Characteristics of Indian Thought" in *Indian Philosophy* 1:24-49, "monistic idealism" is called "the truth of things" (p. 31).
 63. See, for example, Radhakrishnan, "The Hindu Dharma," *The International Journal of Ethics* 33, no. 1 (October 1922): 1-22; "The Hindu Idea of God," pp. 289-310; etc.
 64. Radhakrishnan, "Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine," p. 18.
 65. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-27. Cf. his *Indian Philosophy* 1:24-49; "Hinduism" in *The Legacy of India*, pp. 261-285; "Introduction to the First Edition," pp. xxiv-xxxvi; "Hinduism and the West," pp. 339-344; etc.
 66. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 18.
 67. *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 24, 25, 28, 38, 40. Cf. his "The Spirit in Man," pp. 476-78. Radhakrishnan looked forward to the day when these elements would be eliminated: "It is true that the Hindu religion tolerates some of the forms of worship which are not in accord with the spirit of reason and the demands of conscience in the hope that in the general atmosphere of Hinduism, these forms of worship and practices will fade away" (*Occasional Speeches and Writings, Third Series*, p. 241). Educated Hindus can best further this process: "This work of discriminating between the permanent and the transitory in our tradition can be done only by the educated classes who have sufficient respect for the past and trust in the present" (*Freedom and Culture* [Madras: G.A. Natesan, 1936], p. 56).

68. Radhakrishnan, " 'Indian Philosophy': Some Problems," pp. 157-158. Cf. his *Indian Philosophy* 2:712, where Ramanuja's view of the Absolute is called "the highest expression of the truth." The emphasis is Radhakrishnan's own.
69. Radhakrishnan, "Hinduism and the West," p. 340.
70. Ibid., p. 341.
71. Radhakrishnan, "The Relation of Morality to Religion," p. 293.
72. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 18. Cf. his *Kalki or the Future of Civilization*, p. 68.
73. Radhakrishnan, "Islam and Indian Thought," p. 666.
74. Radhakrishnan, "Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine," p. 18.
75. Ibid., p. 23.
76. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Culture* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1968), p.14. Cf. his "Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine," pp. 23-30; *East and West in Religion*, pp. 57-68; *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. 169, 324, 342; "Reply to Critics," pp. 87-88 *Occasional Speeches and Writings, October 1952-January 1956*, pp. 233-234; *East and West: Some Reflections*, pp. 71-72, 79; etc.
77. Radhakrishnan, "Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine," p. 28. For a full study of "tolerance" in his thought see Robert M. Minor, "Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan on the Nature of 'Hindu' Tolerance," *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 50, No. s, pp. 275-290.
78. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 13, cf. p. 16. Cf. his *An Idealist View of Life*, pp. 70-71; "Intuition and Intellect," in *The Golden Book of Tagore*, ed., Ramananda Chatterjee (Calcutta: Golden Book Committee, 1921), p. 310; *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 21; "Introduction to the First Edition," p. xxiv: "Hinduism" in *The Legacy of India*, pp. 261-263; "The Cultural Problem," pp. 42-43; *Occasional Speeches and Writings. Second Series, February 1956-February 1957* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1957), pp. 50, 245; etc.
79. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 15. Cf. his "Review of *The Interpretation of Religion: An Introductory Study of Theological Principles*, by John Baillie," *The Hibbert Journal* 28, no. 4 (July 1930): 740; "Intellect and Intuition in Sankara's Philosophy," pp. 13-14; "The Spirit in Man," pp. 487, 492; *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. 24-25; "Reply to Critics," pp. 794, 820; etc.
80. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 72.
81. Ibid., pp. 66-67.
82. Ibid., p. 69.
83. Ibid., p. 70.

84. Ibid., p. 72.
85. Ibid., p. 73.
86. Ibid., p. 75.
87. Ibid., p. 78., Cf. his "The Spirit in Man", pp. 492-497; "Religion and Religions," pp. 109-110; *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. viii, 61-62; *Education, Politics and War*, p. 30; "The Cultural Problem," pp. 42-43; "Religion and World Unity," *The Hibbert Journal* 49 (1951): 220-223; "Religion and the World Crisis," in *Vedanta for Modern Man*, ed. Christopher Ishwerwood (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952), p. 339; *Occasional Speeches and Writings, Second Series*, pp. 34-35, 266; *Recovery of Faith*, pp. 133-138; etc.
88. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, 1:388. Cf. his "'Indian Philosophy': Some Problems" p. 158; "The Teaching of the Buddha by Speech and Silence," *The Hibbert Journal* 32, no.3 (April 1934): 348-49, 353-355; *The Heart of Hindustan* (Madras: G.A. Natesan, 1932), p. 129; *The Dhamapada* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 29-32, 44-46; *Occasional Speeches and Writings. Second Series*, pp. 224-226.
89. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. viii.
90. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion*, p. 19. Cf. p. 26; his *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, pp. 301, 316-318; "Religion and Religions," pp. 109-111; "The Cultural Problems," p. 45; "Indian Culture," in *Reflections of Our Age: Lectures Delivered at the Opening Session of UNESCO at Sorbonne, Paris* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 127-128; *East and West: Some Reflections*, pp. 246, 124-125; *Occasional Speeches and Writings. Second Series*, p. 266; *Religion and Culture*, p. 62; *Occasional Speeches and Writings. Third Series*, pp. 223, 232-233, 239-250; *Recovery of Faith*, pp. 133-134; "The Indian Approach to the Religious Problem," in *The Indian Mind*, ed. Charles A. Moore (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1967), p. 180.
91. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 81.
92. Ibid., p. 80.
93. Radhakrishnan, "Religion and Philosophy," *The Hibbert Journal* 20, no. 1 (October 1921): 38.
94. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, pp. 316-317. Cf. his *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 16.
95. Radhakrishnan, "A View from India on the War", *Asiatic Review* 6 (May 1915): 371.
96. Radhakrishnan, *Freedom and Culture*, p. 6; *The Religion We Need*, p.3; *East and West in Religion*, pp. 77-78; *Kalki or the Future of Civilization*, pp. 7, 41-42; *Religion and Society*, pp. 9, 13; "General

- Statement," p. 47; *Occasional Speeches and Writings, Third Series*, p. 211; *Religion in a Changing World*, pp. 7, 28, 138, 155; etc.
97. Radhakrishnan, *Education, Politics and War*, p. 114.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 68. Cf. pp. 111-113; his "Religion and Religions," pp. 104-105; "Silver Jubilee Address," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 24, parts 1-2 (January-April 1943): 3: "General Statement," p. 50; *Records of the General Conference of the UNESCO: Fifth Session* Florence, 1950 (Paris: UNESCO, 1950), p. 95; "UNESCO and World Revolution," *New Republic* (July 10, 1950): 15; etc.
99. Radhakrishnan, "The Cultural Problem," p. 41; *Education, Politics and War*, pp. 188, 205; *Religion and Society*, pp. 40, 42, 221-223; "The Voice of India in the Spiritual Crisis of Our Time," p. 295. After the war, Radhakrishnan lamented that the spirit of the war lives on: "Moral Values in Literature," in *Indian Writers in Council: Proceedings of the First All India Writers Conference* (Jaipur, 1945), ed. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar (Bombay: International Book House, 1947), pp. 88-89.
100. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Culture," p. 115; "Mahātmā Gandhi," *The Hibbe Journal* 46, no. 3 (1948): 197, etc. Promotion of this world community was what he believed was the main purpose of UNESCO. See "Goethe," in *Goethe: UNESCO'S Homage on the Occasion of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of His Birth* (Paris: UNESCO, 1949), p. 101.
101. Radhakrishnan, *The Religion We Need*, p. 10. Cf. his *Religion in a Changing World*, pp. 9-10.
102. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.
103. Radhakrishnan, "The Renaissance of Religion: A Hindu View," in *The Renaissance of Religion: Being the Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the World Congress of Faiths* (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1938), p. 11.
104. Radhakrishnan, "The Voice of India in the Spiritual Crisis of Our Time," p. 296. Cf. his "Science and Religion," pp. 181, 185.
105. Radhakrishnan, "The Renascence of Religions: A Hindu View," p. 14. Cf. his "Religion and Religions," p. 105; *Religion in a Changing World*, pp. 46-47.
106. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, p. 33. Cf. his *Religion in a Changing World*, pp. 51-52.
107. Radhakrishnan, *Occasional Speeches and Writings. Second Series*, p. 269.
108. Radhakrishnan, "Religion and World Unity," p. 219.
109. Radhakrishnan, "Education and Spiritual Freedom," *Triveni* (N.S.) 10, no. 3 (September, 1937): 10, 19. See Minor "Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan on the Nature of 'Hindu' Tolerance."
110. Radhakrishnan, "Introduction to the First Edition," p. xxxi.

111. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion*, pp. 50, 65; "The Spirit in Man," p. 503.
112. Radhakrishnan, *Occasional Speeches and Writings. Second Series*, p. 223. Cf. his *Idealist View of Life*, p. 94.
113. Radhakrishnan, *Occasional Speeches and Writings. Third Series*, p. 250. Cf. p. 223, and his "UNESCO and World Revolution," p. 15; *Our Heritage*, p. 88.
114. See Radhakrishnan, *Occasional Speeches and Writings: October 1952-January 1956*, pp. 192, 228; *Occasional Speeches and Writings. Third Series*, p. 216.
115. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Culture," p. 128. Cf. his "The Nature of Man," p. 64.
116. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society*, p. 49. Cf. his *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. 258-59; "Hinduism and the West," p. 349; "Silver Jubilee Address," p. 5.
117. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society*, p. 43.
118. Radhakrishnan, "The Voice of India in the Spiritual Crisis of Our Time," p. 304.
119. *Ibid.* Cf. Radhakrishnan, *Education, Politics and War*, pp. 184, 196; "P.E.N. Dinner Speech," *P.E.N. News*, no. 142 (March 1946): 8-9; etc.
120. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Culture," p. 115.
121. *Ibid.*, p. 130; cf. p. 132.
122. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 293. Cf. p. 290; his "P.E.N. Dinner Speech," p. 8.
123. Radhakrishnan, *East and West: Some Reflections*, pp. 79, 80. Cf. his *Fellowship of the Spirit*, p. 32.
124. Radhakrishnan, *India and China: Lectures Delivered in China in May 1944* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1947), p. 13.
125. *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 73-79.
126. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
127. Radhakrishnan, "Religion and Religions," p. 115.
128. *Ibid.*, p. 111. Cf. his *Recovery of Religion*, pp. 185-186.
129. Radhakrishnan, *East and West: Some Reflections*, p. 121. Cf. his "The Voice of India in the Spiritual Crisis of our Time," p. 298; *Our Heritage*, p. 20.
130. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.
131. Cf. Radhakrishnan, "The Religion of the Spirit and the World's Need," pp. 25-26, 78.
132. Radhakrishnan, *Occasional Speeches and Writings. Second Series*, pp. 34-35. Cf. "Spiritual Freedom and the New Education," pp. 233-234; *Education, Politics and War*, pp. 8, 14, 31, 39; *Occasional Speeches and Writings: October 1952-January 1956*, pp. 52-53; *Our Heritage*, p. 61; etc. See the discussion in Minor, *Radhakrishnan*, pp. 118-122.

133. Ibid., p. 35. Cf. p. 264; his *Education, Politics and War*, pp. 14, 42; "Clean Advocate of Great Ideals," in *Nehru Abhinandan Granth: A Birthday Book* (New Delhi: Abhinandan Granth Committee, 1949), p. 95; *Our Heritage*, p. 149.
134. Radhakrishnan, *Occasional Speeches and Writings. October 1952-January 1956*, p. 218.
135. Ibid., p. 392. Cf. pp. 72-76; 199-200; his *Occasional Speeches and Writings. Third Series*, pp. 338, 241; *Recovery of Faith*, p. 184; *Our Heritage*, pp. 36, 93, 149.
136. Radhakrishnan, *Our Heritage*, p. 149; etc. Note that it is probably in this manner that his vision of UNESCO could be called a "secular priesthood," for it could promote the "religion of the spirit" and still promote no "religion." See his speech in *Records of the General Conference of the UNESCO, Fifth Session, Florence, 1950*, p. 97; "UNESCO and World Revolution," p. 16. As he told UNESCO in 1947 (*Records of the General Conference of the UNESCO, Second Session, Mexico, 1947* [Paris: UNESCO, 1948] I, 59), "unless we are able to re-educate him [man] to a realization of spirit and freedom, this steady flow, this relentless decline into the abyss, cannot possibly be arrested."
137. Radhakrishnan, *President Radhakrishnan's Speeches and Writings*, p. 145.

SWAMI BHAKTIVEDANTA AND ULTIMACY

Robert D. Baird

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896-1977) is known for having founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). He arrived in New York City in 1965 at the age of 69, and one year later founded the New York temple of ISKCON. Swami Bhaktivedanta was initiated in the Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava movement which traces its heritage from Caitanya (b.1486) and ultimately to Kṛṣṇa himself. Swami Bhaktivedanta was born as Abhay Charan De in Calcutta in 1896, graduated from the University of Calcutta with majors in English, economics and philosophy and worked on and off as a chemist until he finally retired in 1954 to devote himself to the spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.¹

He took initiation in 1933 at the hand of his spiritual master Bhakti Siddanta, who ordered him to carry the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the West. As a result of his success in recruiting among the hippies on New York's Lower East Side and elsewhere, as well as the aggressiveness with which his converts attempted to proselytize, he is known primarily as the leader of a cult or a "new religion." There is nothing new about the tradition of which he spoke, although it was new to the environment in which he spoke it. ISKCON was accused of brainwashing, and families of converts not uncommonly employed, at considerable expense, persons who engaged in "deprogramming" these young converts.

The preponderance of studies of this movement and of Bhaktivedanta are sociological or anthropological.² As a religious