

in ancient times, as also the name 'Ṣaṣṭi-tantra' which has been specifically mentioned by Iśvarakṛṣṇa.⁷⁶ But some of the topics like

'pradhānāstitva,' 'ekatva,' 'viprayaya,' 'tuṣṭi,' 'siddhi,' etc. are definitely discussed in the Sam. Pr. Su. as well as in the Sam. Pr. Bh., and hence Vijñānabhikṣṇ was not ignorant in the matter.

⁷⁶ Sam. Kar., 72.

Swami Abhedananda's

ŚRĪ SĀRADĀ DEVĪ STOTRAM

SWAMI HARSHANANDA

INTRODUCTION

THE student, after having finished his long course of Vedic studies, has just approached his revered preceptor to get from him parting advice. After exhorting him to speak the truth and lead his life in accordance with the tenets of dharma as enjoined in the scriptures, the preceptor goes on to advise him regarding the social conduct he has to cultivate. The first thing in this list is, 'mātrdevo bhava' — 'Consider your mother as God' (*Taittirīyopaniṣad*, 1. 11. 2). The great ṛṣi of the *Upa-niṣad* has thus given the earthly mother a precedence over the father and even the preceptor himself, with regard to the respect to be shown. No less is the fervour with which Śrī Śaṅkara, that great king of the world-renouncing monks, declares in his *Devyaparādha-kṣamāpaṇa-stotra*, 'kuputro jāyeta kvacidapi kumātā na bhavati'—'A bad son may be born but never a bad mother!'

It is a well-known fact and also a matter of our direct experience that the influence of the mother on the child is the greatest especially during the formative period of its life. Father stands for power and authority and is merciless in meting out punishment when the child errs. Not so the mother. She cannot bear to see her child castigated, however great may be its transgressions. No wonder that

man casts his God in a human form and that too in a female form adoring it as the Mother of the Universe.

The concept of the motherhood of God is not anything new to the Hindu mind. We see it as early as the *Rgveda* itself, in its *Devī-sūkta*. The *Caṇḍī* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna* is well-known. One whole *purāna* viz., the *Devībhāgavata* is devoted to the exploits of the Divine Mother. As for the hymns on Her, they are just too numerous to be mentioned.

If the efficacy of the worship of the Divine Mother had been taught by Sumedhas and proved by the king Suratha as also the merchant Samādhi (see the *Caṇḍī*) it was demonstrated even more vigorously by Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa in recent times. Worshipping Kālī the Mother with the attitude that She is the Supreme Brahman Itself, he attained the acme of spiritual life.

Today millions of people consider and worship Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa as God Himself who incarnated Himself in a human body to fulfil the need of the age in accordance with his own promise (vide *Gītā*, 4. 7). Hindu theology declares that whenever God incarnates in a human form in a male body, He invariably brings His *Śakti* or power, in a female form as His consort. So it is the belief of the devotees of Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa that Śrī Sāradā Devī, his divine consort, is none other than the Divine Mother Herself. That this belief is not without foundation becomes clear by

* We are deeply indebted to the publishers of *The Complete Works of Swami Abhedananda* for the English translation in verse which has been taken from Vol. VII.

an unbiased and careful study of their noble lives.

Hiding her natural and divine splendour she chose to be born in a poor but noble Brāhmin family full of godly virtues, led her life in such an unostentatious way as to quietly exhibit the highest ideal of womanhood in all its glory and withdrew herself from the stage of the world after being convinced that her self-appointed duties were over and after delivering her final message pregnant with the highest realisation of Advaita to mankind through 'Annapūrṇa's mother'.

As the Mother, so were her spiritual children : Svāmī Vivekānanda, Brahmānanda, Sivānanda, Sāradānanda, Rāmakṛṣṇānanda, Yogānanda, Abhedānanda, Premānanda — each peerless in his own way. Among these, next to Svāmī Vivekānanda, Svāmī Abhedānanda was specially gifted with deep Sanskrit learning and fine poetic genius. He has composed six hymns of exquisite beauty on Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa and two on Śrī Sāradā Devī. Out of these last two, the one chosen here is very well-known and is sung in the monasteries of the Ramakrishna Order.

This hymn is in eleven verses of three different metres (*toṭaka*, *anuṣṭup* and *upajāti*) and is capable of being set to music with accompaniments.

I

This first verse describes the various glorious qualities of the Mother :

प्रकृतिं परमामभयां वरदाम्
नररूपधरां जनतापहराम् ।
शरणागत - सेवक - तोषकरीं
प्रणमामि परां जननीं जगताम् ॥

*prakṛtiṁ paramām abhayāṁ varadām
narakūpadharāṁ janatāpaharām
śaraṇāgatasevakatoṣakarīṁ
praṇamāmi parāṁ janānīm jagatām.*

Translation :

O Prakṛti Supreme in human form,
Bestower of boon and bliss !
Distress of souls removest Thou
And grantest them content and peace.
Thy servants, who surrender all to Thee
Thou makest them contented and
free.
O Great Mother of the world,
Be my salutations ever to Thee !

Commentary :

The last line is the principal sentence. All other words are adjectives to the word *janānī*. Let us consider them one by one.

paramā prakṛti (Supreme Prakṛti): The procreatrix or the material cause of a thing is called its *prakṛti*, of which the thing itself is a *vikṛti* or modification. According to the Vedānta, the Supreme Brahman itself is both the material cause and the efficient cause of this world, *abhinna-nimitta-upādāna-kāraṇa* (*vide* the *Brahma Sūtras*, 1. 4. 23 and Śaṅkara's commentary thereon). Hence Brahman is *paramā prakṛti*. This Brahman is associated with Its special power often designated as *Māyā*, the relation between the two being one of non-difference or *tādātmya*. Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa gives the example of the snake coiled up and the same when moving, the former representing Brahman and the latter *Māyā*. Sometimes he also gives the example of fire and its burning power, or milk and its whiteness to explain the relationship between the two. Consequently, Mother Sāradā Devī, being the consort of Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa who is regarded as verily Brahman, by his devotees, has been identified with him and called *paramā prakṛti* here.

abhayā (the fearless): The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1. 4. 2) says that fear comes from a sense of duality. Since she is the nondual Brahman Itself she is fearlessness itself. Alternatively : This mundane existence (*saṁsāra*) being the root of all fears, can be designated as *bhaya*. Since one goes beyond it by taking refuge in her, she is *abhayā*, the derivative

meaning of which can be given as : *na vidyate bhayam, sarvabhayamūlaḥ saṁsāraḥ, yasyām āśritāyām iti abhayā*. The same Upaniṣad mentioned above designates liberation or *mokṣa* as *abhayā* (vide 4. 2. 4).

varadā (bestower of boons): She is the bestower of all boons asked for earnestly, be it a tinsel or total liberation itself. Since she is *dayāsvarūpā* as depicted later (verse 8) she will give whatever her children pray for. Hence a tremendous responsibility is thrown upon the shoulders of her devotees who should be careful in selecting their boons. They should never ask for such things as will ultimately increase their bondage and make them suffer. Standing before the emperor, it is ridiculous to ask for a brinjal as a boon — so says Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa. So one should always cultivate the habit of asking for the highest and all that leads to the highest.

nara-rūpa-dharā (the wearer of the human form): The ordinary mortals are born here being bound by their previous karma. They are born in spite of themselves whereas the Mother is born out of her own free will, due to her compassion for all. The Lord says in the *Gītā* (4. 6) 'I come into being through my own inscrutable power (*māyā*)'. This applies to her also. The only purpose of an *avatāra* is the protection of *dharma*. Moreover, being the consort of the Lord she has to come down in a human form whenever He comes down as man, to fulfil His divine play.

jana-tāpa-harā (dispeller of the distress of people): The world is full of misery. People are constantly suffering because of physical and mental maladies. They naturally turn towards God after exhausting all the human resources to dispel their distress. It is in answer to such prayers of people in distress that she has descended. If the Lord is busy putting the house of *dharma* in order, she is busy in soothing the parched hearts of people. In fact this is her sole purpose of incarnation.

śaraṇāgata-sevaka-toṣakarī (giver of contentment to those servants of hers who have surrendered): Contentment is a rare virtue. It is due to the lack of it that people are cons-

tantly pestering the Divine for the fulfilment of all their multifarious desires. She will certainly fulfil their desires. But then, there is one condition : they must become *sevakas* and *śaraṇāgatas*. *Sevā* is worshipful service. *Śaraṇāgati* is total surrender. If these devotees surrender themselves to the Divine Mother and offer worshipful service to her, they are sure to get what they want. She will give not only what they want and have asked for, but also that which they have not, viz., *mokṣa* or liberation. This will put an end to their desires once for all and produce total contentment (*toṣa*). Of course, it goes without saying that she will also give ordinary contentment (which also is *toṣa*) by fulfilling their lesser desires.

jagatām parā jananī (the Supreme Mother of the worlds): As already described in the introduction, she is the Universal Mother since she is Brahman, the primordial cause, and also the consort of the incarnation of the Lord.

praṇamāmi (I bow down to): Whether to get worldly desires fulfilled or spiritual progress attained, the Deity is to be propitiated. The easiest and the most efficacious form of doing this is by doing *praṇāma* to Her, by respectfully bowing down to Her. This bowing down is not a purely bodily posture. It must be accompanied by feeling and devotion, a humble mood of self-surrender. The word *praṇāma* itself indicates a feeling of 'not mine' (*namama*), 'but thine'.

The Lord repeatedly asks Arjuna in the *Gītā* (e.g., 9. 34) to bow down to Him and to surrender at His feet.

The dying *ṛṣi* of the *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad* (verse 18) tries to propitiate the Supreme by just *namaskāra*, obeisance, since he is unable to show his adoration in any other way.

Hence obeisance is a very powerful weapon in the hands of a devotee who knows how to wield it!

II

After describing the Mother's higher nature, the secret of her descent and her blessed qualities, the poet now prays to her again with

a view to drawing her attention towards her many luckless children who have acquired the habit of constantly erring :

गुणहीन - सुतानपराध - युतान्,
कृपयाद्य समुद्धर मोहगतान् ।
तरणीं भवसागर - पारकरीं,
प्रणमामि परां जननीं जगताम् ॥

*guṇahīnasutān aparādhayutān
kṛpayā'dya samuddhara mohagatān
taraṇīm bhavasāgarapāraakarīm
praṇamāmi parām jananiīm jagatām.*

Translation :

Through mercy do Thou save
Thy sons bound in Maya's chain,
Who have virtue none to say,
Full of crimes and ever vain.
O, Thou art the only ship,
To ferry them across the earthly
sea !
O Great Mother of the world,
Be my salutations ever to Thee !

Commentary :

These children of hers are *guṇahīna* (virtueless), *aparādhayuta* (full of faults) and *mohagata* (fallen into delusion).

The virtues are those described in the *Gītā* (16. 1 to 3) as *daivī-sāmpat*, the divine qualities like fearlessness, purity of mind etc. Or the word *guṇa* may also mean the virtues like devotion, knowledge, renunciation etc., which Svāmī Vivekānanda describes in the second verse of his famous hymn on Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa (*om hrīm* etc.). These children of hers have never cared to cultivate those great virtues which will enable them to lay claim on the kingdom of God.

Added to this they have committed innumerable errors of omission and commission, mistakes, blunders and crimes, due to their inordinate attachment to 'lust and greed' as Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa used to say, which itself is the greatest *moha* or delusion. Coming under its spell they have practically ruined themselves.

Salvaging such souls is possible only to the Mother of the Universe since her greatest virtue is *kṛpā* or compassion. Nay, she is the very embodiment of compassion, *dayā-svarūpa* (verse 8). She is like a huge ship — *bhavasāgara-pāraakarī taraṇī* — capable of carrying hundreds of people in its bosom. Only, this ship carries them across the ocean of transmigratory existence itself ! One has somehow to get into it or just be picked up ! That is all.

III

Thus has the great composer prayed to the Mother on behalf of her erring children. Now, putting himself in the position of an ordinary aspirant — even though he himself is a perfected being — he shows how one should tackle one's mind in order to control it :

विषयं कुसुमं परिहृत्य सदा,
चरणाम्बुरुहामृत - शान्ति - सुधाम् ।
पिब भृंगमनो भवरोगहरां,
प्रणमामि परां जननीं जगताम् ॥

*viṣayam kusumaṁ parihṛtya sadā
caraṇāmburuhāmṛtaśāntisudhām
piba bhṛṅgamano bhavarogaharām
praṇamāmi parām jananiīm jagatām.*

Translation :

Renounce, my mind-bee,
The sense-flowers of the earth,
Drink the nectar of 'Lotus feet'
Enjoy, thus, in peace and mirth.
In charm of 'Delusion'
Then shalt thou cease to be,
O great Mother of the world,
Be my salutations ever to Thee !

Commentary :

The mind is compared here to a bee. The bee is black. The mind is full of the darkness of ignorance. The bee flies constantly. So the mind, ever fickle, moves from object to object. Hence the comparison is very apt.

This bee of the mind is now engaged in constantly sucking the poisonous juice from

the way-side wild flowers. The objects of the senses are the wild flowers (*viṣaya-kusuma*). Material enjoyments are the poisonous juice. They appear sweet in the beginning, but turn out to be bitter poison at the end (vide *Gītā* 18.38). Thus *viṣaya* becomes *viṣa* ultimately.

An object of sense is called *viṣaya* since it takes away one's mind from the thoughts of the Supreme, *viṣṇāti viyojayati balān manaḥ paramārtha-tattva-vicārād iti viṣayah*. Thus by its very nature it takes the mind away from God and brings misery.

The aspirant has to cajole this mind to give up its habit of alighting on the venomous flowers of the senses and take to the pure lotus of the Mother's feet, full of the nectar of peace and eternal beatitude. Only thus can it be redeemed, the aspirant being made blessed in the process.

It is the mind that causes bondage and it is the mind again — when purified and well-directed — that redeems us. So say the scriptures (vide *Amṛtabindūpaniṣad* 2 and *Gītā* 6.5). Hence it is quite in the fitness of things that the aspirant should try his best to win over his mind to better ways.

IV

The poet now supplicates the Divine Mother to show Her special grace towards Her children who have heeded the advice given before, thus :

कृपां कुरु महादेवि सुतेषु प्रणतेषु च ।
चरणाश्रयदानेन कृपामयि नमोऽस्तुते ॥

*kṛpāṁ kuru mahādevi sutesu
pranateṣu ca
caraṇāśrayadānena kṛpāmayi
namo'stu te.*

Translation :

Pity, please O merciful Mother !
Thy sons bowing to Thee anon.
Grant them refuge at Thy feet,
Take their salutes ever and on.

Commentary :

The Mother has been addressed as *mahā-devī*, the great Goddess. This is but apt since she is believed to be the very personification of the three deities in one, viz., Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī and Mahāsarasvatī.

Before her birth her mother Śyāmāsundarī Devī had a vision of Pārvatī (whose aspect Kālī is) as a little girl entering into her body. Her father Śrī Rāmacandra also had a similar vision, but of Lakṣmī. Śrī Rāmakṣṇa used to say that Sāradā was Sarasvatī Herself (as her very name suggests). Hence the belief.

She is here requested to show her grace towards her children who have specially taken refuge in her. It is but natural for us to suppose that her grace does flow towards all beings who are really her own children, since she is the Universal Mother. But these children of hers who are now bowing down to her are of a special type since they have managed to give up *viṣaya-kusuma* and have chosen to adore her lotus feet. Hence a special grace is to be shown towards them.

What is that special grace? Just this much : *caraṇāśraya-dāna*, giving the gift of refuge at her holy feet. They do not crave for anything else, because they know that they get everything by getting this !

V

Does not the Mother automatically look at these children and bless them? Is a special supplication necessary? Yes, says the poet, since she has covered herself with the veil of modesty !

लज्जापटावृते नित्यं सारदे ज्ञानदायिके ।
पापेभ्यो नः सदा रक्ष कृपामयि नमोऽस्तुते ॥

*lajjāpaṭāvṛte nityaṁ sārade jñānadāyike
pāpebhyo nas sadā rakṣa kṛpāmayi
namo'stu te.*

Translation :

O Sārādā, gracious Mother !
Giver of wisdom, in 'Modest veil,'
Protect us, please, I salute Thee,
Ever since from sin and all.

Commentary :

She wanted to show to the world that modesty is the greatest ornament for a woman and not ear-rings or bangles. Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa himself emphasised this point while training her. Hence she would always (*nityam*) cover herself with a veil. So she is *lajjā-patāvṛta*.

She is *Sārādā*, the giver of *sāra* or essence of all knowledge i.e., supreme knowledge or liberation. Since she is also *Śārādā* or *Sarasvatī*, the goddess of learning and wisdom, she is *jñāna-dāyikā*, the giver of all knowledge including the worldly sciences. A glance from the corners of her eye is enough to transform a shepherd into a *Kālidāsa*.

'We have erred, we have sinned! Protect us from the meshes of these mistakes and shackles of sin!' — cries the poet identifying himself with the ordinary devotees. All sins are the results of ignorance of our real nature. 'Give us knowledge and wisdom and free us from these sins.' That is the only way out!

VI

In this and the next two verses there is a description of the special qualities of the Mother followed by obeisance to her :

रामकृष्ण - गतप्राणां तन्नाम - श्रवणप्रियाम् ।
तद्भावरेजिताकारां प्रणमामि मुहुर्मुहुः ॥

rāmakṛṣṇagataprāṇāṃ
tannāmaśravaṇapriyām
tadbhāvaranjitākārām
praṇamāmi muhur muhuḥ

Translation :

Thy heart to Rāmakṛṣṇa doth remain,
To hear His name is joy to Thee.
O Embodiment of His thought alone,
I salute Thee ever, over again.

Commentary :

She is *rāmakṛṣṇa-gata-prāṇa*. Her life-forces have entered deeply into Rāmakṛṣṇa. Ever since her marriage at the age of five, till her *mahāsamādhi* at the age of sixty-six, her life was one continuous meditation on Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa. Hence this epithet. Or, since she had no separate existence apart from him, being his spiritual consort, she is called thus.

This naturally leads to its corollary that she is *tan-nāma-śravaṇa-priyā*. Ever dear to her heart was the name of Rāmakṛṣṇa, which she liked to hear over and again.

By such uninterrupted, long and loving adoration of Rāmakṛṣṇa, she became *tadbhāva-rajita-ākārā*. Her whole being was coloured by that of Rāmakṛṣṇa. She had become one with him, even like the Gopis of Vṛndāvan with Kṛṣṇa.

VII

पवित्रं चरितं यस्याः पवित्रं जीवनं तथा ।
पवित्रतास्वरूपिण्यै तस्यै कुर्मो नमो नमः ॥

pavitram caritam yasyāḥ pavitram
jīvanam tathā
pavitratāsvarūpiṇyai tasyai kurmo
namo namaḥ.

Translation :

Noble, Thou hast a character,
Pure is Thy life divine.
Ever I bow to Thee, O Mother,
Thou Incarnate Purity fine.

Commentary :

Immaculate purity even as in *Sītā*, was her especial virtue. Her conduct was pure. Her whole life was pure. Nay, she was the very embodiment of purity. That is why she could impart purity to her children just by a wish or a look. Those who came in touch with her were transformed even as iron is transformed into gold at the touch of the philosopher's stone or as dirty water is made holy by contact with the *Gaṅgā*.

VIII

देवीं प्रसन्नां प्रणतार्तिहन्त्रीं,
योगीन्द्रपूज्यां युगधर्मपात्रीं ।
तां सारदां भक्ति - विज्ञान - दात्रीं,
दयास्वरूपां प्रणमामि नित्यम् ॥

devīm prasannām praṇatārtihantrīm
yogīndrapūjyām yugadharmapātrīm
tām sārādām bhaktivijñānadātrīm
dayāsvarūpām praṇamāmi nityam.

Translation :

O Sāradā, Goddess Holy !
Killer of misery in souls resigned,
Saviour of Religion in every age,
By Yogīndra worshipped,
O Mother kind,
Givest love and wisdom Thou,
Grace Incarnate, to Thee I bow.

Commentary :

devī (goddess): The root *div* has several senses, the chief ones being (i) 'to shine' (*dyuti*); (ii) 'to sport' (*krīḍā*) and (iii) 'to desire to conquer' (*vijigīṣā*). She is *devī* since she is resplendent in her divine aspect. Being full of knowledge and wisdom she is resplendent in her human aspect also, since light symbolises knowledge. Or she is *devī* since she sports with the world by creating, sustaining and destroying it. Or again, she is *devī* since as Kālī or Caṇḍī she desired to conquer all the evil forces; or as the Mother of all, she desires to conquer the hearts of her erring children, through love.

prasanna (pleased, gracious): She is *prasanna*, ever pleased, ever gracious. Not a single day in her life on earth did she put on a wry face, even in the midst of grave provocations. She was the personification of grace, *kṛpāmayī* (verse 4).

praṇata-ārti-hantrī (the killer of the miseries of the souls resigned): She kills or destroys the miseries of souls who resign themselves unto her, surrender themselves at her

feet. This misery may be physical, due to diseases etc. Or it may be due to economic stress and strain. Or it may be due to the problems posed by others in social life. Or it may be due to the obstacles in spiritual life. Whatever may be the complexion of this misery, it just disappears into thin air if only the devotees can surrender themselves with intense resignation.

Sometimes it may be that the devotees get the strength to transcend all these worries and miseries in spite of their continued existence.

yogīndra-pūjyā (worshipped by Yogīndra): Yogīndra or Svāmī Yogānanda was her first disciple who served her for thirteen long years, with matchless devotion.

Or, the epithet may mean 'worshipped by the Lord of the yogis', when taken in a general way. She was worshipped by Śrī Rāma-kṛṣṇa himself, the king of yogis as also by other yogis like Svāmī Vivekānanda and others.

yugadharmapātrī (saviour of Religion in every age): Since the Lord comes down in every age for the protection of dharma, the Religion, she too comes as his consort and helps him in the accomplishment of that purpose.

bhakti-vijñāna-dātrī (giver of love and wisdom): *Bhakti* is supreme love of God. *Vijñāna* is the special knowledge which enables one to see the world, not as an illusion, but as God Himself. Both these are the two sides of the same coin. The Mother gives these to those who feelingly ask for them and pine for them.

dayāsvarūpā (incarnation of compassion): As already referred to, the Mother was the very incarnation of compassion. Whether it was the robber couple of Telo-bhelo, the mulberry robber Amzad, the drunkard Binod Behari Som, the sweeper woman being kicked by her husband, the devotees refused by Svāmī Brahmānanda or the cats and calves of her household, — Mother was always all compassion without the least hesitation and with no exception.

IX

The Mother seems to have responded to the earnest entreaties of her devotee-children to show her grace towards them. How exactly she does it, is being described now :

स्नेहेन बध्नासि मनोऽस्मदीयं
दोषानशेषान् सगुणीकरोषि ।
अहेतुना नो दयसे सदोषान्
स्वाङ्के गृहीत्वा यदिदं विचित्रम् ॥

*snehena badhnāsi mano'smadīyam
doṣānaśeṣān saguṇīkaroṣi
ahetunā no dayase sadoṣān
svāṅke gṛhītvā yadidam vicitram.*

Translation :

Through tie of 'Love' divine
Bound Thou hast the heart of ours,
Granting e'er Thy lap benign
O wonder ! how Thy mercy showers !
By grace hast Thou made us holy,
To virtue changed our endless folly.

Commentary :

By giving us a taste for the nectar of your lotus feet, by producing a sense of adoration and devotion in us, you are binding our hearts with your divine love. The result of this bond of love is that all our faults and foibles are being transformed into merits and virtues, even as the base metal is converted into gold by the philosopher's stone.

We, thy erring children, have no virtues worth the name to boast of. And yet you take us into your lap and show us your affection. Is this not wonderful? Such a conduct is possible only for the Mother Divine.

The Mother once said that a child may dirty itself in mud, but it is the duty of the mother to place it on her lap and clean it. This may be remembered here.

X

For ages man has become used to transitory strokes of luck. Can it be that the Mother's grace also is transitory? For a moment a doubt creeps into the mind of the

devotee striking fear into his heart. So he prays again, begging her to show her grace for ever :

प्रसीद मातर्विनयेन याचे,
नित्यं भव स्नेहवती सुतेषु ।
प्रेमैकविन्दुं चिरदग्धचित्ते,
विषिच चित्तं कुरु नः सुशान्तम् ॥

*prasīda mātār vinayena yāce
nityam bhava snehavatī suteṣu
premaikabindum ciradagdhacitte
viṣiṅca cittam kuru naḥ suśāntam.*

Translation :

Be loving and gracious to Thy sons,
O Mother ! I humbly beseech,
Sprinkle in their hearts arid,
A drop of love, to enjoy peace !

Commentary :

'O gracious Mother ! I beg you humbly with all my heart and soul ! Be gracious unto these sons of yours for ever and anon ! Their hearts have grown dry, being scorched by countless worries of the worldly life over millions of births ! But those very hearts will be soothed and bathed in eternal peace if only you can just sprinkle a drop of your immortal love !' — This is the idea.

XI

And now comes the well-known hymn of obeisance :

जननीं सारदां देवीं रामकृष्णं जगद्गुरुम् ।
पादपद्मे तयोः श्रित्वा प्रणमामि महुर्मुहुः ॥

*jananīm sārādāṁdevīm
rāmakṛṣṇam jagadgurum
pādapadme tayoś śritvā
praṇamāmi muhur muhuḥ.*

Translation :

O Rāmakṛṣṇa, the Teacher of all,
And Mother Sārādā, Goddess
Divine !
In bosom holding Their lotus feet
Salutations to both be e'er of mine.

Commentary :

The hymn ends with this verse. Hence the final obeisance.

Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa is the *jagad-guru*, the great Teacher of the world. The word guru may

also mean father. Hence he is the Father of the world. And she is the Mother of all. Salvation lies in taking refuge at their holy lotus feet. So the poet says : 'I bow down to them again and again!'

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST-CONSCIOUSNESS

SWAMI GNANESWARANANDA

ABSTRACT spiritual qualities such as sacrifice of self, purity, renunciation of desires, universality, and so on, are more easily understood and grasped when they are expressed through some gigantic personalities ; a Krishna, for instance, a Buddha, a Christ. In fact, such great spiritual personalities come on earth for the purpose of illustrating the abstract principles of spiritual life.

Unfortunately, the great principles exemplified in the lives of such world-movers are often forgotten. They are sacrificed before the glamour of their personalities. And, as time goes on, people quarrel over the details of their lives and doings, claiming superiority for their own Ideals at the cost of all others. People cling more to the person than to the principles exemplified in his life. Thus, already disunited humanity becomes more so. Narrowness and bigotry take possession of the followers of these great spiritual leaders and their real message is practically lost, or distorted beyond recognition, except to a few really sincere people of deeper understanding.

According to the philosophy of Vedānta truth is the first principle to be grasped ; understanding the personality comes later. Great spiritual leaders are born on earth to illustrate abstract truth. As a matter of fact, such personalities are essentially not 'persons' at all ; they are fundamentally the Principle in manifestation. They are born on earth only for a special purpose. In a way this applies to all of us. We are not born without some reason. Are we not here to fulfil some purpose ? And is not that purpose more impor-

tant than our physical being, greater than our person ? The apparent nature of all men, from the highest to the lowest, is first abstract and then concrete. In fact, there is no doubt that the whole of creation is first abstract. Then (if at all) concrete.

This month the birth of one such great world-mover, Jesus the Christ, will be celebrated. Let us try to understand the significance of his life and of the ideals he lived — and died — for. For instance, what is the significance of the Immaculate Conception ? In the first place, Christ is not to be thought of as the child of any particular parents. Christ is a spiritual consciousness, the divine qualities of the inner soul that remain potential in every being. It is said that Christ was the child of immaculate conception. That is true. That Divine nature is expressed only in an immaculate field. Only the body and mind that are not soiled by worldliness, desire, or greed can express Christ-consciousness. Only the pure, the simple, the unselfish body and mind can manifest Christ-consciousness. Immaculate conception is correct, but we should understand that in its larger sense also. In the life of Jesus Christ this great abstract truth is illustrated by his immaculate birth.

The great spiritual leaders of mankind are rarely honoured and revered during their lifetime by more than a handful of people. They have to suffer at the hands of scoffers, unbelievers and evil-minded people. Spiritual greatness has been more often 'kicked' than garlanded. Christ the man was reviled and persecuted by powerful and worldly-minded