

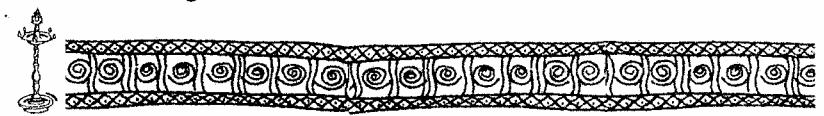
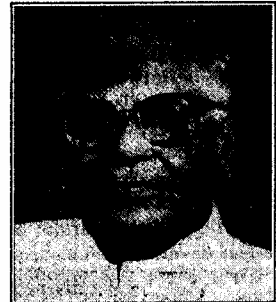
Nov. 15, 01

From the Bhavan's President  
**The Concept of  
Bhakti-I**  
R. Venkataraman




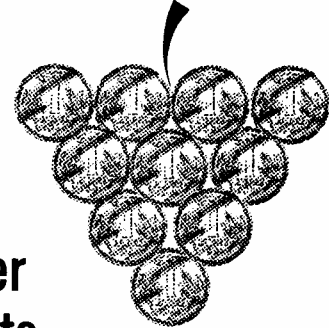
Any society where the core of religion is beyond the comprehension of the vast mass of the people, runs the risk of spiritual decay. But this has not happened in India. This is the unique achievement of *bhakti movement*.

**I** come to Shantiniketan as a pilgrim in quest of Truth. To achieve this triple distinction, it required the genius and sensibility of that poet, scholar and humanist, Rabindranath Tagore. The Gurudev created Shantiniketan as a potter fashions an urn. The clay, of course, was Bengal or, to be exact Bolpur; but the wheel was Tagore's sensibility; its axle, his strong



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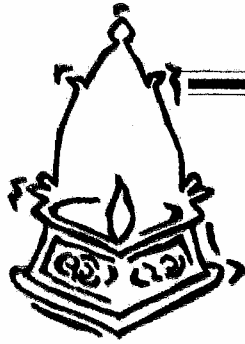
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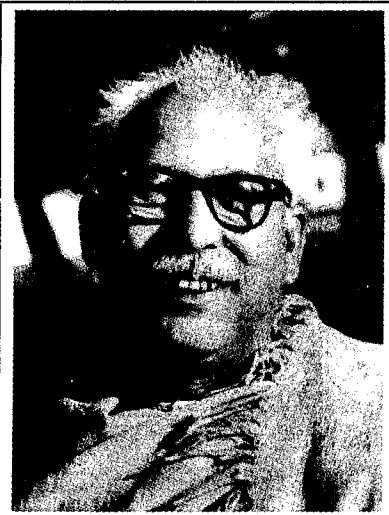
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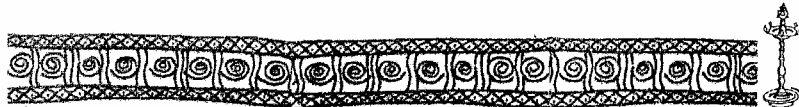
Indian roots. In this sensitive artist's hands, as the wheel moved, the clay took shape—Bolpur became Shantiniketan. After it had acquired spatial features, Gurudev embellished the urn with pigments and inlays drawn from far and near. The completed piece was a terracotta with multiple facets on which the world of Bharat – Vishwa – Bharati – could be seen. One vivid facet was Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, writer, editor and teacher.

Pandit Hazari Prasad Dwivedi was not merely a



renowned scholar of Sanskrit and Hindi but was a pre-eminent literary and linguistic communicator. His translations of Gurudev's works into Hindi, his setting up of the Hindi Bhavan at Santiniketan in 1939, and his carrying of Santiniketan's syncretic culture to the Benares Hindu University made Pandit Hazari Prasadji a powerful navigator in the waters of Indian's linguistic plurality.

Pandit Hazari Prasadji viewed himself and his mother-tongue (which he served so diligently) as bearers of an Indian tradition of writing and scholarship, as against a regional tradition. His indological interests made this inevitable.



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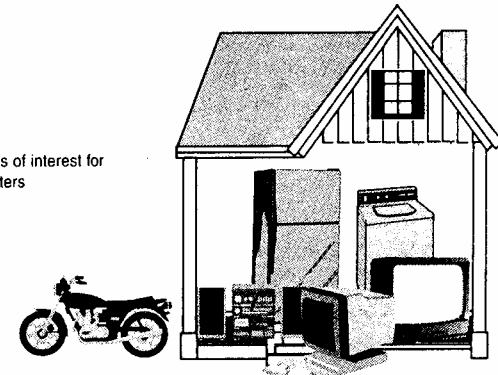


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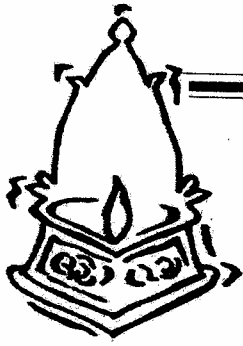
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The Sahitya Akademi Awards that he won and the Padma Vibhushan which was conferred on him in 1957, only served to prove this and his contributions to the development of the Vishwa-Bharati and the Benares Hindu Universities. He interpreted Benares to Bengal and Bengal to Benares and, like the rivers which flow between those two places, brought depth as well as force to his labours.

The surname, Dwivedi, like its companions Vedi, Trivedi and Chaturvedi reflect India's ancient pursuit of Vedic scholarship, in the attainment of which gradations were envisioned. There were those who could drink deep at the waters of one Veda and those at the waters of more than one of the Vedas. Each was welcome to aspire for the next higher plane

of *advaitic* knowledge and each attainment was worthy of respect. And so India's *advaitic* tradition suggested itself as a theme.

But there was to be something more. Professor Tomar's biographical description of Pandit Hazari Prasadji included a reference to the fact that while supervising the construction of the Hindi Bhavan here, Hazari Prasadji has murals commissioned for its walls, the motifs of which were to be the saints and singers of India, representing India's tradition of popular devotion. The way of devotion or *bhakti* has been recognized in our land as a way, no less valid or distinguished as *advaita*. And so, a combined exploration of both *advaita* and *bhakti-marga*, of both the idea and the illustration, fixed itself in my mind as an appropriate subject for this article.

From Bengal there arose one of the greatest of contemporary

Sri Aurobindo anchored himself at the edge of the Bay of Bengal, in Pondicherry, where his gaze could travel over the limitless expanse of the ocean, and, thereby give a geophysical correlative of his vision

*advaitins*, Sri Aurobindo. His vision, as embodied in his immortal *sadhana*, has provided us with a glimpse of the possibility of self-realization. Sri Aurobindo has conveyed this in terms of an evolutionary process. Man's consciousness, Sri Aurobindo tells us, has a seamless unity in which there can be only progress and more progress towards self-realization.

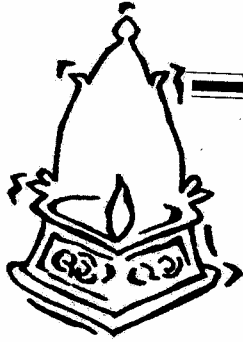
Sri Aurobindo anchored himself at the edge of the Bay of Bengal, in Pondicherry, where his gaze could travel over the limitless expanse of the ocean, and, thereby give a geophysical correlative of his vision. His great works—The Life Divine and The Problem of Rebirth explain the

classic *advaitic* position that the human body is the temporary encasement of a soul which keeps evolving in time towards perfection and, in fact, towards divinity. After repeated reincarnations, the microcosm no longer needs to evolve any further becoming unified, assimilated and inseparable from the macrocosm. Has not the Gita said:

'*Bahunam janmanam-ante-jnanwan mam prapadyate. Vasudevah Sarwamiti sa mahatma sudurlabhah*'.

(At the end of many births, the wise man comes to Me, realising all these are Vasudeva; such a great soul is hard to find).

Of the several paths to



There is an allegorical dialogue between Bhakti personified as a young woman and sage Narada, in the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. When Narada asked the young woman, who she was, she replied that she was Bhakti and the two old looking boys were her sons—Jnana i.e. knowledge and Vairagya—asceticism. She said that, though old, she was looking young and the two boys, though young, looked old.

moksha, anushtana, jnana, dhyana and karma, bhakti or devotion has always held a high position. Adi Sankara in his Viveka Chudamani said: "Moksha Karanam Samamayam Bhaktirev Gariyasee."

(Among the instruments (paths) and conditions necessary for liberation, bhakti alone is supreme).

In Gita it is said: Sreyo hi jnanam abhyasan, jnanat dhyanam visisyate.

(Thus the bhakti marga takes pre-eminence among the several paths to moksha).

Advaita, the monistic philosophy of our ancients, has captivated intellectual thought in India over millenia. Adi Sankara,

who hailed from Kerala, his remarkable heir in our times, the Paramacharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetha and the incomparable Ramana Maharshi, have embodied the doctrine of *advaita vedanta*.

Yet, the fact remains that *advaita*, the belief in limitlessness, has had but a select following. Any society where the core of religion is beyond the comprehension of the vast mass of the people, runs the risk of spiritual decay. But this has not happened in India. This is the achievement of the *bhakti* movement. The common man has neither had the time nor the energy to follow the complicated philosophical texts and



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1 Taste

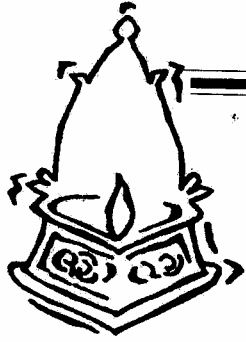


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commentaries. The way of *jnana*, or knowledge is difficult; the way of *karma*, or action is arduous. The way of *bhakti*, however, is the easiest and the simplest, calling for nothing beyond devotion, faith and self-surrender. The *bhakti* movement brought devotion nearer to daily life and a flood of songs and music, at once melodious and devotional, flowed throughout the country.

Let us examine the Movement's genesis in some detail. The noted Hindi writer Ramdhari Sinha Dinkar writes in his monumental Sanskriti Ke Chaar Adhyaay:

It is said that the seed of Bhakti-Marg lies in the vedas. But it seems that this seed quickened to life only when the Aryan and Non-Aryan people met. Confirmation of the beginnings of Rama Bhakti is to be found not in the north but in (The Works Of)

the alvar saints of the south.

Dinkarji goes on to say that when, later, the *bhakti* movement acquired the proportions of a flood in the North, it was after the waves making the flood had reached there from the South. He mentions Ramanuja, Madhawa, and Vallabha – all Acharyas – as being the South's contribution to the nation, and explains that long before Mirabai captured the imagination of the North, Andal had found a niche for herself in every Krishna-Bhakta in the South. Andal, like Mira, is believed in South Indian tradition to have merged finally into Krishna. In Bhagavata Mahapurana, Bhakti says to Narada:

*Utpanna Dravide sa-aham  
Vridhim Karnatake gata  
Kvachit kvachit Maharashtra  
Gurjare jeernatam gata.*

(I was born in the country of the Dravidas, grew up in Karnataka, stayed for some time in Maharashtra and withered away in Gujarat).

(To be continued)



Kulapati Vani

## Manava Dharma

Dr. K. M. Munshi

Manava Dharma rules out competitive society because a society has a natural tendency to stimulate egotism and untruth thereby giving permanency to greed, self-indulgence and untruth as a motive in life.

On the other hand, in a society based on competition as understood under the influence of the West, theoretically the future may be open to all; in fact, however, it is uncertain for all. Employment is uncertain. Breathless pushing about stifles the scope of one's development. Worry and frustration is a life-long companion. When the sense of insecurity is fostered, confusion and tension, mental and social, inevitably follow. The pathway of *dharma*, the Highest Good, is barred to all

but a few isolated individuals.

It is true that each one striving for himself in a competitive society might help the strong individually, but the weak will surely be pushed to the wall, filled with despair or hatred, and a large number of such persons would be a greater drag on society.

The social philosophy of Manava Dharma did not rule out all striving, but only the striving

for individual success, wealth or indulgence. It was for attaining excellence in the discharge of one's duties.

Manava Dharma fully takes in

