

1  
And  
0

ONE AND ZERO

*Vishnudevyanand*

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# **1 and 0**

by

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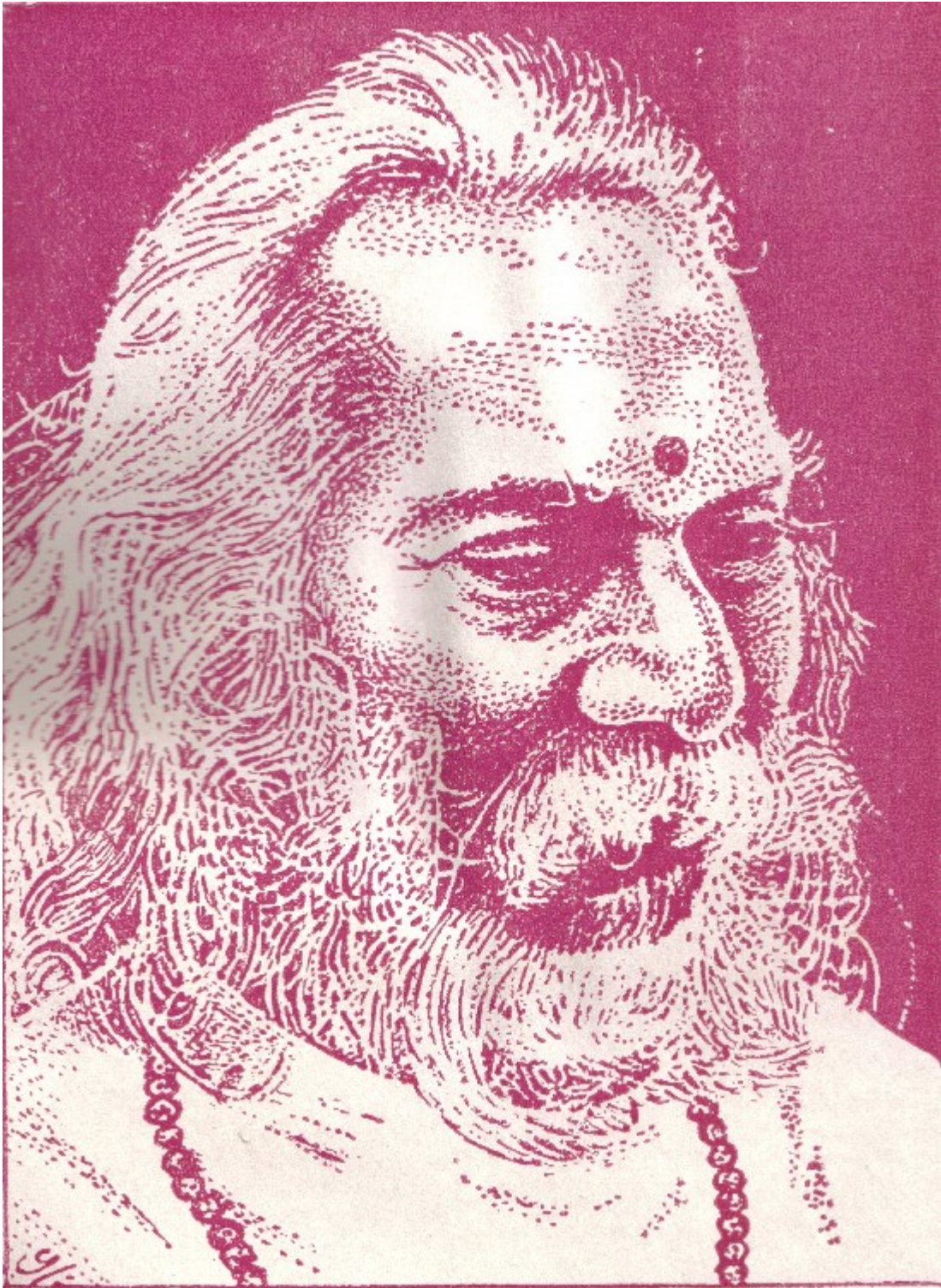
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[Frontispiece]



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## INTRODUCTION

This booklet by my revered Guru, Swami Vishnudevanand Saraswati, is not intended to explore the logical foundations of mathematics but to illustrate the philosophical foundations of the universe using a few simple facts about numbers. Still, as a mathematician turned *sannyasi*, I shall add a few remarks about the mathematical side of the analogy.

Virtually all numeric notations developed by man are based on multiples of ten, and the earlier systems generally used a different letter to denote each multiple of ten. For example, the Roman system used I for one, X for ten, C for one hundred, and so on. Such systems had many disadvantages. The choice of the letters to represent numbers was arbitrary and calculations were difficult. The concept of a number 0 was foreign to these systems.

The system of notation that is most widespread today, using 1 for one, 10 for ten, 100 for one hundred, and so on, has its origins in ancient India. It is called the Arabic numeral system in the West, but the Arabs merely transported it from India to Europe. This system allows numbers of any magnitude to be expressed without arbitrary choices and simplified calculation immensely.

The nature of the 0 was elusive. 1 was recognized as the root of the numbers. It seemed to have reality and solidity. 0 was perceived as different from all other numbers. It was viewed as vacuous and unreal. Alone, it represented

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nothing. Its only function was to enhance the magnitude of another number. Thus the Hindu philosophers developed an elaborate analogy to elucidate matters. 1 was likened to Brahman, the eternal Supreme Being and Underlying Reality, and 0 was likened to *maya*, the mysterious delusive power through which the world is perceived. As the numbers are generated by 1 and 0, so the universe is Brahman seen through *maya*.

Recently, mathematics has been given a rigorous foundation in terms of set theory, which begins from the null set representing 0. This may seem closer to the Buddhist description of the void.

Don't consume your time debating the merits of mathematical systems. Fix your attention on the Ultimate Existence. May the numbers 1 and 0 guide you to the transcendental sphere.

*Paramananda*



HIGH COURT.  
UTTAR PRADESH  
ALLAHABAD  
March 20, 1984.

"1 AND 0", the enigmatic caption of the latest book from the pen of the Venerable Swami Vishnudevanand Saraswati, is pregnant with highest philosophical and spiritual wisdom. It savours of a novel technique of employing mathematical symbols for projecting the highest philosophical truths. Bertrand Russel was keenly sensitive to the beauties of mathematics and asserted that the only thing which prevented him from committing suicide was the "sublime beauty of certain equations in mathematics." Swamiji has pressed into service his background of mathematical knowledge for delineating sublime spiritual truths. Nothing can be more epigrammatic and illuminating than the statement:

"The background of all consciousness is superconsciousness; the background of multiplicities is unity and beyond the unity is the One Brahman, the Immortal Supreme Soul".

According to his treatise, "1" represents Brahman, while "0" represents Maya. "By itself Zero represents nothing; its only function is to enhance the magnitude of another number". Such aphorisms with which this book bristles illuminate the entire pathway of reality and illusion. And they are bound to serve as perennial guides to the discerning who tread the path of spiritual advancement.

*M. N. Shukla*  
(M.N.SHUKLA)  
Chief Justice

## 1 AND 0

1 is the first cardinal number. It is the seed, the supreme, powerful beginning number and no other can compare with its eminence. Without 1 there is no reality in the universe. In the spiritual sense it is the One, Infinite Being, the only One without a second.

If you begin to count, 1 will inevitably stand first with its own glory. It cannot be avoided. If you say 'two' this means  $1+1=2$ ; if you say 'three' this means  $1+1+1=3$  and so on. In this way the universe has been manifested.

1 is singular and all others are plural. One is in many and many in One. To tell the truth, there is nothing except the One. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, all the numbers are in 1 and 1 is latent in every cardinal number. 1 underlies every number. The wise have reached the conclusion that the sense of many is *maya*, illusion.

If you wish to magnify and increase the size of a number rapidly, then you may use the 0 on the proper side of a cardinal number. Although 0 is valueless in the ordinary sense, it has the mysterious power to enhance the value of another number. If 0 comes in contact with 1 and stands on the right, the result is ten (10). By adding another 0 one hundred (100) is produced, and adding another yields one thousand (1000). Understand the enigmatic worth of the 0. If you ponder over this, you will be astonished by the esoteric

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and exoteric power of the 0 while in contact with a cardinal number. But if you separate the 0 from the other numbers, it loses its wonderful significance and becomes nothing, empty and worthless.

According to Indian Vedantic philosophy, 0 represents *maya*; *maya* means illusion which is many in number and full of deception. That is the delusive efficacy of zero or *maya*. *Maya* has no real value and may be compared to a shadow. The substance is apart from the shadow. The substance is reality or Brahman and the shadow is mere appearance and misconception or *maya*. The sense world is superimposed upon Brahman as a snake is superimposed upon a rope or a mirage upon the desert.

There is perpetual flux in *maya*. It is always changing; it appears and disappears. Physically it is misunderstanding and spiritually nothing, except the effulgence of the One Eternal Self which is called Brahman. That One Immutable Being is present forever. The One has neither beginning nor end. It is the primordial cause of the universe or the sense world. According to Vedanta, sense perception is ignorance or *maya* and has both beginning and end. That which has beginning and end is neither reliable nor trustworthy. Everyone should discern this and adhere to the cardinal 1, Brahman, the Innermost Self of all beings and not to 0, the nescience.

The background of all consciousness is superconsciousness; the background of all multiplicities is unity and beyond the unity is the One Brahman, the Immortal Supreme Soul. The background of all individual souls is the Supreme Soul.

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The finite soul is identical with Supreme Soul. The real man is eternal, immortal, peaceful and blissful in his own nature. *Tat twam asi*; That thou art. The Supreme Soul is God or the Supreme Deity. That is the realization of the great men of the world and is the teaching of the ancient seers.

The One is playing as many, just as the one sun is seen in a multitude of water pots as a multitude of suns, while in reality the sun is one and the reflections are many. This phenomenal world is a farce of *maya*.

A man who has realized the One Supreme Self through the practice of concentration and meditation is ever free from mental tension and confusion. A man who leads a disciplined life and is endowed with self-control, patience, perseverance, tolerance and prudence can realize the Self and become free from sensory pleasure which, is the cause of anxiety.

A Self realized person knows the falsity of the enigmatic diversity and deceptive plurality of the sense world. The Innermost Self is the one and only source of happiness, peace and freedom. The Self is the ultimate refuge and is the only reliable entity in the universe. That Self is the human goal; Self-realization is the purpose of life. Your real identity is That Supreme Reality which nobody can accept or reject.

In the Self, there is neither time nor space, neither high nor low, neither left nor right; there is no direction, north or south, above or below; no Sunday, Monday; no second, minute, hour, month or year; neither day nor night.

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There is not this sense world of name and form. It is self-luminous, self-sustaining and self-content. It is ubiquitous, omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. Zero is *maya* that creates this universe with the power of the one Brahman.

*Tat twam asi*; That thou art. Realize your own identity, the infinite Self, and be free from this physical confusion of sensory attraction and repulsion. The Innermost Self is the silent witness of all the activities of the universe, but the physical body neither knows nor can understand this transcendental fact.

A mysterious play is going on between the real and the unreal. It is a maze of *maya*. The Self is the real subject and the universe is the object. The subject is entirely different from the object, as the perishable body differs from the immutable Soul. The subject is the 1, One only,



and the object is the many, the 0. This zero is the enigmatic nescience. This object is a labyrinth and it is a great problem of life. Knowledge of the Self is the only solution to the problem of life. Self-knowledge is the highest remedy for the malady of the world. Self-realization is not only a panacea for human beings but for the divine beings too.

If you run after the shadow, the shadow will run ahead. You can't catch the head of your shadow unless you grab your own head with your own hand. You can't stop the movement of your shadow until you yourself stand still. The One is the all-pervading, unchanging, motionless Unity; the many is changing and impermanent. The many pass

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away; the One remains forever. Without unwavering belief in the existence of God or Self and reincarnation, the problem of human life will not be perfectly solved. Knowledge of divinity is the cause of liberty. The wisdom of the Self is the freedom of the soul. The taste of immortality is the nectar of divinity.

As one seed takes the form of a tree, then flowers, fructifies and ultimately produces many seeds, so the One unseen power appears in many forms. This is *maya*, the cause of ignorance, misery, suffering and affliction. As creation has a cause, so human misery has a cause. This cause or *maya* is composed of the three *gunas* or attributes, namely *sattwa* or purity, *raja* or desire, and *tama* or darkness, represented by Vishnu, Brahma and Siva respectively. Brahma is the Lord of Creation, Vishnu the Lord of Preservation and Siva the Lord of Destruction. Desire is the cause of creation.

Desire may be compared with the zero, a shadow or phenomena. Desire is rapidly multiplied. As scientists are inventing and producing many things, they are producing both constructive and destructive power, but the destructive is more powerful than the constructive. Life is short and the obstacles are many; hence the intelligent man should exert himself to quickly realize the Self. By keeping the mind from desire, the Absolute One will be realized with its divine Illumination. Through this perception of transcendental effulgence you may learn your real identity, the Eternal Existence. Reduce your wants; you will be happy on earth and spiritually sparkling. Be desireless; you will enjoy the eternal life of divine delight. Taste the immortality and perennial tranquility of the spiritual personality.

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The body can be destroyed but the spirit is immortal and ever free from the empirical world of sense perception. Go beyond the mind; then you may discover your essential nature. Through intense meditation and deep devotion, you can realize the Self and be free from the stubborn mind. Control the mind and be master of the senses. Be free from terrestrial temptations, mundane motives, doubt, desire, curiosity and question forever.

"One in all and all in One", this is the supreme conclusion of the world. One is the supreme goal of all beings; all or many are *maya*. Self-knowledge is direct knowledge without any medium. Through Self-knowledge, man obtains *nirvana*. Empirical knowledge is incomplete; it cannot bring perfection in life. Empirical knowledge must kneel down before Self-knowledge. Use reason and go beyond reason; then you may get a satisfactory solution to the problem of life. You must introvert and introspect; you must analyze and scrutinize and then ask within your own self, 'Who am I? What am I really? What is my real identity? Am I this mortal body, made of flesh and bone, or something else?'

Search within your own being; you will find the Supreme Refuge, the Ultimate Reality that is Self-realization, the consummation of knowledge and the culmination of all practices. With this knowledge there remains nothing more to know. Realize your own self; recognize your own identity and be free from this recalcitrant mind.

It is true that nobody can jump out of his own self. Something cannot come out of nothing. We cannot get out

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of us what is not already within us. The unseen leads to the seen and the seen to the unseen. The finer is always the primordial cause and the grosser, the effect. The mind is the mediator between body and soul. By controlling the activities of the mind, you can realize your Innermost Self.

The different schools of Indian philosophy give different significance to 1 and 0. Some say that 1 is male and 0 is female; 1 is the seed and 0 is the field. Some say that 1 has no qualities or attributes but that 0 has extraordinary power. Some say that 1 is Siva, the Supreme Lord, the Eternal Existence while 0 is the supreme source of energy and creative power, Sakti. Siva is male and Sakti is female. According to Sankhya philosophy there are two infinite eternal powers, 1 the *purusha* and 0 the *prakriti* and every particle of the universe is a combination of *purusha* and *prakriti*. In India the Saivites take the male side and worship the Father and the Saktites take the female side and worship the Mother. Each has unflinching faith in its ideas.

According to the Saktist view this universe is nothing, but all its appearances are reflections of the Supreme Mother. Sakti means energy, strength and power. He or She is manifest or unmanifest, with quality or without quality. Siva means existence, peace, being and substance. Without Sakti, nothing can be created in this universe. The male, Siva, is dormant and *nirguna*, that is without quality or attributes. Siva lacks the ability to create the universe, but Sakti creates the universe by touching Siva. Therefore Sakti is the primordial cause of the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe.

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The Vedanta school of philosophy differs. Vedantists say neither 'He' nor 'She'. Vedanta does not care about this sense world or believe in its existence. It recognizes only the Ultimate Reality, the One Self. Vedanta boldly declares freedom for the soul and always emphasizes the liberation of the soul.

There are different conceptions of the Supreme Existence of the universe. Some say it is one in number, some say it is two, others say three and others say many; 'many men, many minds.'

Vedanta takes 1 to be Brahman and 0 to be *maya*. Brahman is Absolute Existence and *maya* has no existence. This sense world is *maya*, transient and merely appearance, as is dreamland. Brahman and *maya* in another sense are called *vidya* and *avidya*, that is, knowledge or wisdom, and ignorance or nescience. *Avidya* is compared to a mirage or a dream. *Vidya* brings freedom and liberation; *avidya* brings bondage and misery. The Self is the Eternal Existence of universe; this is the perennial philosophy of the world. The universe is full of enigmatic perception and deceptive illusion. Worldly life, rising and falling, is a mixture of happiness and misery. Spiritual life is full contentment and freedom.

When a man gets nectar, he will not drink water; when a man gets a golden pot, he will not use an earthen pot; when he gets sunlight, he will not use candlelight; when he gets perennial joy, immortal life and divine wisdom, he will give up transient happiness and abandon sensory pleasure. So embrace the Innermost Immortal Self and enjoy perpetual

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peace, immutable life, unchanging wisdom and eternal freedom. Don't expect permanent value from impermanent sources; don't run after fleeting happiness; take shelter in the Self. Increase your sagacity and enter into the eternal realm of Divinity. May you attain celestial serenity and dance in ecstasy in the eternal luminous field of felicity. The self is the source of life, happiness, peace and freedom.

*Hari Om Tat Sat*

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