

Prabuddha Bharata

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

Katha Upa. I. iii. 4

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

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CONVERSATIONS WITH SWAMI TURIYANANDA.

5th July, morning.

The Swami was shaving, when a Brahmacharin saluted him. At this one of those present remarked that one should not be saluted when one is shaving, or drinking water, or is carrying fire.

The Swami—That is to say one should be careful not to disturb another on occasions like these.

Noticing that the Brahmacharin saluted him from oneside he said, "One should salute another in front, so that both may see each other. Otherwise one might as well salute mentally. Some say that so many injunctions and prohibitions are not good, they hamper freedom. I also used to think they were right. But the older I grow the

more I find such statements are of no value—utter nonsense. Restrictions are necessary. A thing is simply abused when it is given to those who are not qualified. It does not help towards freedom, rather it fosters license. But the man of realisation is always beyond all injunctions and prohibitions.

5th July—5 p. m.

It is drizzling to-day, but the heat is very oppressing. The Swami is seated in an easy-chair and says, “It is very troublesome to sleep in the verandah—there is not a breath of air.” Then turning to Swami A. he said: Well, what’s the use of taking all this trouble? They are doing so much for this body, but is it any way the better? शरीरं क्षणभंगुरम्—‘The body is but fragile.’

On being asked about the young man of Comilla who had renounced, he said, “He seems to be possessed of Vairagyam. He had initiation from a sage in Bengal and has been living according to his instructions for the last eleven years or so. He seems to be a good man. He came here another day, when I first came to know him. There are Bengali Sadhus of the Ramanuja sect also, at Benares.”

Referring to a boy Swami A. said to the Swami, “Sir, there was a proposal to put him in the Boys’ Home.”

The Swami— Didn’t K— speak to you about another boy who having passed the Matriculation Examination wants to come here for studying in College? What did you say to that?

Swami A.— How can we say before seeing him whether he can be put with young boys or not? But we shall try to do all we can for him, after he comes here.

The Swami— In our opinion, when there is such an institution, it should be allowed to grow. It would be unwise to check its growth.

Swami A.— My idea is that if any real orphans come, they must be provided for in the Home. While those who can afford to pay their own expenses should better arrange elsewhere.

The Swami— The country has taken up the idea of the Sevashrama. Don't you see how many Seva-samitis are being started? Now we can stand by and let the thing be in the background. I had a talk about this with Swami Saradananda. We have not as yet been able to do anything for education. But this is a task that should be taken up now.

Swami A.— Sir, in the verandah of our Boys' Home we can start a class for day scholars, but there arises the difficulty that the boys so much lose sight of their own interests that when they come to understand that they have neither to pay school-fees nor fines, they begin to be very irregular.

The Swami— They should be warned and expelled. D— Babu also wishes that such a school be started. — has offered some land for it, and the girls' school has already been opened. He is now in want of capable teachers for boys.

Well, I don't find really capable men. Now so

many graduates are coming, but one vainly looks for that spirit in them. I am not making any sweeping remark, but the majority are a bit wayward. Their idea is that when they have left home they should by all means avoid exertions. They think of doing their bit of allotted work, and no more. And there is the regular provision for food. But no real progress will be made until they come to look upon all Sri Ramakrishna's children as their nearest and dearest, and have brotherly feeling for all co-workers,—just as they used to do with their parents and brothers at home. It is going on somehow now, but one notices signs that betoken great danger ahead, after the elder generation is gone. Then things will come to a pass. Men are not being trained. Some, again, remark that these are Swamiji's ideas—not Sri Ramakrishna's. Goodness gracious! Are Swamiji's views different from Sri Ramakrishna's? If any has doubts, why doesn't he come forward and have them solved? Discussions are always beneficial.

Do you know — who was in Madras? He also holds the same view. When I was lying seriously ill at the Holy Mother's place in Calcutta, I used to have long discussions with him. He would not be convinced anyhow. Besides, it is useless to talk to such boys. They would refuse to be convinced of anything except what they have taken into their heads. And they would say, "Let us first find out some truth through contemplation, and afterwards we shall work."

Once I spoke strongly against this attitude of

his, and S— gave him his version of the matter. The discourse had greatly appealed to S—, so he put it very strongly, adding things that I had never spoken. Then — wrote me a big imploring letter, to which I replied saying that most part of it I had not said.

Everybody says he would practise meditation and Japam. But does he really do that? And is this the only way to realisation? To be in the Order and not accept its creed is very bad. One must see what the creed is. They would take all the advantages of the Mission but won't accept its creed. The spirit of Swamiji—that he would be born a hundred times simply to serve others,—this is the creed of the Mission, which they should by all means accept. Otherwise why should they be in it? Are there not lots of monks? Beg your food and meditate.

Among the new batch I find S— is the right kind of boy—with plenty of energy, but he has not got a very good physique. He said to Maharaj, "I will do whatever you will order me to,—but if I fail, you will have to go yourself." He took up the work with courage and his latent powers were aroused. If one goes on working in this spirit, there comes a time when the inner powers flash all of a sudden.

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

“THE absorption of life in great cities is really the danger which most threatens modern humanity with decadence.” These poignant words of A. E., the great practical idealist of modern Ireland, are literally true of India—a typically rural country. The unrestricted growth of industrialism is bringing into existence big cities and towns absorbing the best brain and wealth of the land. This dreadful exploitation is impoverishing the village and is threatening to break down the whole structure of India’s economic life. It is creating a homeless proletariat unknown in the India of the past. It is compelling the common villager to forsake the plough, arts and crafts to serve as a wage-earner in the big centres of industry and commerce. It is driving the middle class people out of the village to eke out a miserable subsistence at the office desk as ‘salarariat’—another landless community that is being manufactured by modern civilisation. Besides, the charms and enjoyments of the city life are inducing the aristocracy and the wealthy to quit the homesteads of their forefathers who possessed a living interest in their ancestral villages and liberally contributed to the general welfare. This mad rush from the country to the city is a serious menace to the rural life in India. The town is growing inordinately out of the spoils of the village, little thinking that in so doing it is undermining the very foundation of its own economic life.

This clash of interests between the town and the village is one of the greatest tragedies of the present age of industrialism. The city deprives the village of its resources of men and products, and gives it nothing substantial in return. "Of all thieves," said Mr. E. L. Elmhirst in an illuminating lecture on "The Robbery of the Soil," published in the Modern Review, "the cities are the most ruthless. In the race to satisfy their demands the present individualistic type of Society, with its enslavement of the uneducated masses, its law-suits, its lack of culture and of all finer feelings and ideals, has completely obliterated the old common life in which all, from the Brahman at the top to the labourers at the bottom, were servants of the common welfare. Now-a-days, in the scramble for gold and power, nutritious food, sanitary considerations and civic amenities are sacrificed. The soil is given no chance to do its part, and poverty and disease, famines and fighting in law courts, complete the dismal picture." The townspeople are not yet alive to the grim consequences of their merciless exploitation of the village. But retribution has already set in, and the urban people have commenced to pay heavily for their sins. The abnormal rise in the cost of living, the miseries of unemployment and various other acute distresses prevalent in the towns are the natural effects of the break-down of the rural economic life. And for this the townspeople may, to a great extent, be held responsible.

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A form of aggressive individualism is replacing

the old communal spirit of rural India. It is cutting the villager away from the homestead of his ancestors, and is making him lose all the interests that linked him to the country and its tradition and culture. This implies a great moral and cultural loss to the individual and the community alike. Away from the checks and influences of the communal life, and as it often happens, of also the family life, the labouring and the middle classes fall easy victims to the temptations that surround them in the towns. While the people that are left behind in the villages, especially in those situated near big cities, suffer no less from a disastrous moral break-down proceeding side by side with their economic ruin.

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The picture of a modern village in India is indeed very saddening to paint. Almost everywhere there is found the poverty of food, scarcity of good water, neglect of sanitation, and prevalence of disease. The old spirit of co-operation is gradually dying out in most villages. And the relics of the ancient system are all that proclaim its past beneficence and glory. The caste trade guilds of ancient India are rapidly disintegrating. The bands of religious mendicants who wandered all over the country singing devotional songs are becoming rather scarce. Through their Bhajans and Kirtans they used to disseminate the spiritual thoughts and ideals of the nation, and bring home to the people the highest purpose of human life, individual and collective. The communal Pujas and Yatras, Kathakathas and Sankirtans which instilled

into the minds of the villagers the religious culture and traditions of their forefathers, are becoming rarer and rarer with the flow of time. Jealousy and competition are gradually taking the place of love and co-operation which once made the village life one of peace and plenty, piety and simplicity.

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The break-down of the village community is one of the main causes of national degeneration in India. And in this matter the responsibility of us, the so-called educated classes, is by far the greatest. We have been sucking the life-blood of the 'illiterate' villager without giving him anything in return, have been educating ourselves at his cost wilfully keeping him in ignorance, and have been enjoying the luxuries of the town life by impoverishing him in a most heartless manner. In short, we are shamelessly making the villager subserve our economic interests in every possible way. This reckless exploitation can no longer be carried on with impunity. It is high time for us now to stop the 'robbery,' to realise that the interests of the village and the city are identical, and to take up immediately the question of village reconstruction in all earnestness.

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Grave dangers await us, the so-called upper classes, if we do not put a stop to the present exploitation and oppression of the masses. There is a limit to human patience, and this limit has already been reached in the case of these common people in India. A spirit of revolt has been born in their hearts. And who knows that they will not rise

against us, the oppressors, like the poor and down-trodden in other lands, unless the wrongs are immediately righted? There is still time, and we may yet save ourselves from the great disasters which are sure to overtake us if we do not mend our ways. "Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. But, alas! nobody ever did anything for them..... When the masses will wake up, they will come to understand your oppression on them, and by a puff of their mouth you will be blown off! Therefore, I say, try to rouse those lower classes from slumber by imparting learning and culture to them. When they will awaken—and awaken one day they must—they also will not forget your good services to them and will remain grateful to you." We have not yet paid any serious attention to this warning which the Swami Vivekananda gave us, the so-called upper classes in India, some twenty-five years back.

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At the back of our criminal neglect of the villages lies a narrow mentality bred by the present educational system in India. All the institutions of higher education being as a rule situated in the heart of cities, they create in us an all-absorbing interest in these centres of learning. Besides, there is practically no touch between the university and the village, and we naturally come to lose all interest in the latter. And proud as we are of our literary attainments, we look upon the rural areas as seats of ignorance and superstition, and upon the 'illiterate' villagers as objects of disdain and contempt, although illiteracy does not necessarily mean want of culture and wisdom. Thus our

defective educational system, instead of serving as a unifying factor, is raising great barriers between the city and the village, between the educated classes and the masses. This isolation has so much circumscribed our mental outlook that we are inclined to think that the welfare of India depends primarily upon the improvement of the town, and that the salvation of the nation lies principally in the well-being and prosperity of the so-called educated classes. But nothing can be further from the truth. We are yet to understand that the main problem of India lies in the village, the home of the nation, and that the regeneration of the Indian people depends greatly upon the elevation of the masses and in the awakening of their lost individuality and potential powers. The great task before us then is to help them to stand on their own feet, to solve the momentous problems that are peculiar to them, and also to join hands with the other classes in facing boldly the complex questions lying before the whole country.

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On the communal life of the village rests the edifice of our national well-being. The reconstruction of the village self-government is, therefore, of primary importance to our national regeneration. But before we take up this work in right earnest we should realise in our heart of hearts that the greatest need of modern India as well as of most other countries in the world, is what A. E. thinks to be most essential for Ireland's national well-being—and this is "to create national ideals which will dominate the policy of statesmen, the actions of

citizens, the universities, the social organizations, the administration of State departments, and unite in one spirit urban and rural life." We are to bring home to the people these great ideals by our life and action. The sensations and agitations of our cities have been tried but found wanting. They can never help us to achieve our end. To accomplish this we are to shift now the centres of our activity from the city to the village, and build up our communal life from its very foundation.



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA PUT TO THE TEST.

[*Free rendering from Swami Saradananda's
"Lilaprasanga."*]

AS instances of how Sri Ramakrishna tested his disciple Narendranath, later known as the Swami Vivekananda, we relate the following incidents.

The arrival of Narendranath at Dakshineswar was always hailed by Sri Ramakrishna with intense joy and exaltation of spirit. Even seeing him from a distance the Master's love would flow out toward and, as it were, enfold the disciple. Innumerable times we have witnessed how at the sight of Narendranath Sri Ramakrishna overcome by emotion would stammer, "Here comes Na—, here comes Na—," unable to complete the sentence, and would then enter into Samadhi.

After Narendranath had been coming to Dakshineswar for some time the day came, however, when all this changed and Sri Ramakrishna

began to treat him with utter indifference. Narendranath came one day, saluted the Master and sat down before him. But this time the usual inviting and loving welcome was not forthcoming. The Master neither greeted him nor inquired after his welfare. After looking at him once without a sign of recognition, as if he were a stranger, Sri Ramakrishna sat again silently immersed in his own thoughts. Narendranath, thinking Sri Ramakrishna to be absorbed in a deeper mood, left the room and joining Hazra, a devotee who was seated on the verandah, began to talk and smoke with him. But later when he heard Sri Ramakrishna talk to others he went back into the room. Again the Master did not speak to him. Furthermore, turning his face away from him he lay down on his bed. This attitude of indifference he kept up all day. Toward evening Narendranath after saluting the Master returned to Calcutta.

A week later, when he came again, he found Sri Ramakrishna's attitude toward him unchanged. He spent the day conversing with Hazra and others and before dusk returned home. The third and the fourth time it was the same. But Narendranath without resenting this continued to visit Sri Ramakrishna exactly as before.

In between these visits Sri Ramakrishna sometimes sent someone to his home to enquire after his welfare. But whenever Narendranath came near him he treated him with indifference. This went on for more than a month. Sri Ramakrishna noticing that Narendranath continued to come to him, one day called him to his side and said, "Tell

me, how is it that though I don't speak a word to you, you still continue to come here?"

Narendranath replied, "Sir, it is not your words alone that draw me here. I love you and want to see you, therefore I come."

Sri Ramakrishna, highly pleased with the answer, said, "I was only testing you to find out whether you would stay away when I did not show you love and attention. Only one of your calibre could put up with so much neglect and indifference. Anyone else would have left me long ago and would never have come again."

Another instance will enable us to fully appreciate what stuff Narendranath was made of and also the intensity of his direct God-vision.

Once Sri Ramakrishna calling Narendranath to Panchavati, said to him, "You see, through the practice of severe spiritual discipline (Tapasya) I have long ago acquired supernatural Yogic powers. But what use can I make of them? I cannot even keep my body properly covered. Therefore with the Mother's permission I am thinking of giving them over to you. She has made known to me that you will have to do much work for Her. If I impart these powers to you, you may use them when necessary. What do you say to that?"

Since the blessed moment when Narendranath first saw Sri Ramakrishna he had observed various divine powers in the Master. He had therefore reason to believe Sri Ramakrishna's words. But his natural yearning for God prompted him not to accept these powers without due consideration. After reflecting for a moment he asked, "Sir, will

these powers help me towards God-realisation?"

Sri Ramakrishna replied, "No, they will not do that, but they will be very helpful to you when after realising God you engage yourself in doing His work."

Hearing this Narendranath said, "Then I don't want them. Let me first realise God and then I will decide whether I want them or not. If I accept these wonderful powers now, I may forget my ideal and making use of them for some selfish purpose may come to ruin."

We are not able to say for certain whether the Master really wanted to impart these supernatural powers to Narendranath or whether he simply wanted to test him. But we do know that he was greatly pleased when Narendranath refused to accept them.

A.



OUT OF THE VEIL.

WHOOEVER has stood by the seashore,—of course 'with a heart that welcomes and receives,'—and watched the countless lines of billows, roaring and dancing, dashing and vanishing, may have asked the question within himself—"Where are these mad dancers from, whither do they go, and what is all this roaring and dancing for?" And had he watched a little more closely he might have read his answer, too, in that gigantic phenomenon itself. From the vast ocean they come, to the ocean again they go, and it is the wind that makes them dance and roar like that. Standing on the narrow ridge of life surrounded by the vast ocean of the unknown, man has often asked the very same question, especially when buffeted by waves of misfortunes that blasted

his hopes or snatched away those nearest and dearest to his heart. But vainly has he attempted to comprehend the reality behind the world of phenomena. His proud, rational nature is pained to remain so shrouded in the mist of ignorance. There cannot be any peace for him in darkness. An offspring of Light, he feels an inmost craving after knowledge which really forms the very background of his existence. He feels that he has a right to know, and that he would, only if he could, fathom the whole mystery of nature and be her master. Alas! the poor instruments of his knowledge, maimed and mangled as they are, return buffeted and baffled. He feels that he can know but in fact he cannot. This is the first wing of the mysterious veil of Maya of contradiction in Nature that man is ever attempting to remove:

Again he wants 'to be,' to exist eternally. But capricious Nature only brings home to him the stern fact that nothing can hold permanent existence on her bosom. Despair overpowers him and life seems to be a burden. At such depressing moments a sweet voice from within speaks at times to his soul that he has been existing through eternity, nay, he has a right to exist and nothing on the face of proud nature can debar him from his divine right. He feels that he can exist but in fact he cannot. This is the second wing of the mysterious curtain of Maya:

There is a third wing too, to complete a mysterious triangular fold, as it were, to hold the helpless soul within. He wants to enjoy. Just like the musk-deer his life-long endeavour has been to hunt after pleasure, which he fondly believes he can find in sense-objects. But alas! they are evanescent and slip through his fingers while he tries to get a firm hold of them. He gets only a shadow of what he wants. But can he give up the quest? No, something within urges him to believe that bliss is his eternal, true nature and that all his sorrows and miseries are but things foreign to him. Aye, he is a child of bliss deprived of his rightful patrimony. He wants to enjoy but in fact he cannot. This is another

phase of the painful contradiction in Nature—the Maya of the Vedantists.

Thus is man whom God created 'after His own image' completely bound by the three-winged mystic curtain of Maya. He wants to know all, but he cannot. He wants to exist but is dragged away by all-powerful death. He wants to drink deep of the cup of joy, but it slips off his lips.

Since the very dawn of creation the one end of all human activities has been to remove all the impediments barring the way to Sat-chit-ananda or Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute. In the Upanishads, the earliest records of human thought, we find repeated attempts to pierce the mysterious curtain that veils the Truth. Nachiketa, the young lovely hero of one of the most poetic of the Upanishads viz. the Kathopanishad, makes his adventurous journey to the land of the departed and asks Yama, the king thereof, about the secret of immortality. He enquires:—

“There is this doubt amongst us, as to what happens to man when he dies. Some declare that he exists, others that he does not. I want a solution to this great mystery.”

Yama at first tries to keep from him the secret. But the indomitable young seeker after Truth is determined to have it. So Yama, after testing his capability for receiving the highest knowledge, has at last to disclose the secret of secrets and impart to him the Atma-jnana or Self-knowledge which leads to true immortality.

न जायते म्रियते वा विपश्चिन्नाय कुतश्चिन्न बभूव कश्चित् ।

अज्ञो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥

“The knowing soul is not born, nor does it die. It has not come into being from anything, nor has anything come into being from it. This unborn, eternal, everlasting one suffers no destruction, even when the body is destroyed.”

In another of the Upanishads we meet with a true seer who thunders forth the truth:—

शृण्वन्तु विश्वेऽमृतस्य पुत्रा, आ ये धामानि दिव्यानि तस्थुः ।

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वेदाहमेतं पुरुषं महान्तंमादित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ।

तमेव विदित्वातिमृत्युमेति नान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽयनाय ॥

“Hearken, O ye, children of immortality, and O ye that dwell on high, I have known the Atmam, the mightiest Being who is effulgent like the sun and is beyond all ignorance. By knowing Him alone one can attain immortality. There is no other way.”

The Mundakopanishad has another wonderful record of an attempt to remove the veil that hides absolute knowledge. Therein Shaunaka, the pupil, approaches Angirasa, the Rishi, to know the one fountain-head of all knowledge and inquires :—

“O Sir, what being known everything else is known?” Thereupon the great sage makes an exhaustive and most thorough-going analysis of the different branches of knowledge and classifies them under two main heads—‘Apara’ or inferior and ‘Para’ or supreme. All the Vedas and the sciences connected with external nature, he classes under ‘Apara-vidya’ which cannot lead to knowledge absolute. But that by which the knowledge of the omniscient and omnipotent Self is attained he calls ‘Para Vidya’ or knowledge absolute.

तमेवैकं जानथ आत्मानम् । अन्या वाचो विमुञ्चथ ॥

“Leaving aside all external knowledge, know the Self, the knower of all knowledge.”

Because He is the one source of knowledge, in Him is everything else fixed as the spokes of the wheel are to the nave. That self-effulgent Reality, the revealer of all knowledge, being known, all the knots of the heart are loosened, all doubts vanish and all Karma is destroyed.

For He, the Self, is all-in-all; all kinds of knowledge are but partial knowledge. Just as the secret of electricity being known, all the various manifestations of electrical energy are known thereby, likewise the Self, the one universal intelligence, being known, nothing remains unknown.

Lastly, as regards the third wing of the mysterious curtain viz. that which conceals eternal bliss, we find a highly scientific and subtle analysis as also a wonderful revelation in the sixth

Brahmana of the Chhandogya Upanishad. Therein Narada, a profound scholar who had mastered all the Vedas and other branches of learning, religious and secular, feels miserable in spite of his vast attainments. Finding no way to peace he goes to Sanatkumara and beseeches the sage to lead him beyond all sorrows.

Sanatkumara gives an inward turn to Narada's restless mind and makes him comprehend subtler and subtler truths until the pupil realises the 'Bhuma' or the Unlimited. Declares the sage :—

यो वै भूमा तत्सुखं, नाल्पे सुखमस्ति, भूमैव सुखं भूमा त्वेव विजिज्ञासितव्य इति ।

“That which is unlimited is Bliss, there cannot be any happiness in the finite. The Infinite alone is Bliss, so the Infinite alone is to be known.”

All sorrows, the sage asserts, arise out of the feeling of want. But when a person sees everything in the One, his real Self, all his wants are fulfilled. And the cause of sorrow is removed. So in order to transcend all sorrows he is to know the Atman that pervades everything. He concludes :—

“The Self is below, the Self above; the Self is behind, the Self in front; the Self is to the right, the Self to the left; the Self is all-in-all. He who sees, meditates and realises thus, delights in the Self, plays with the Self and communes with the Self. He finds his bliss in the Self, is freed from all bondage, and all his desires in all regions are fulfilled.”

So we see that when the Atman is realised, all sorrows vanish. Unless and until we know this there will be no piercing of the veil, no cessation from births and deaths, doubts and misgivings, pangs and pains. This Atman is the one goal of our life, our divine heritage, our real nature and our native home. From this Atman we come, to this we return. The present troubles and tribulations of our life result only from ignorance.

Now the question arises—how to realise the supreme Truth? The Vedanta, the most catholic and rational science of religion, allows as many means as there are men on earth.

It is nothing but bigotry to demand that one particular method should suit the taste and capacity of one and all. This unreasonable demand has done incalculable mischief to human society. But if we once look into the Upanishads we shall be astonished to find that the Rishis therein never cared to quarrel with the details. They were eager to discover the general principles, the higher laws that would explain every detail. So the first question they would put to any seeker after truth was, "Are you sincere? Do you really want the Truth? Do you sincerely hanker after it as a drowning man pants for a breath of air? If you are contented at heart with your present life of sense-enjoyments and have come to satisfy your idle curiosity, the Truth will never be revealed to you. Sri Ramakrishna, the prophet of Dakshineswar, truly observes:— "Have that intense hankering for Truth even as the miser longs after gold, the cow pants after her missing calf, and the devoted wife keenly feels for her absent husband. Then the Truth is bound to reveal itself."

The method and means as laid down in the Upanishads may, however, be classified under two main heads, viz. the path of Jnana or knowledge, and that of Upasana or devotion. The path of knowledge, that is the direct path, suits only a few brave souls who, after thoroughly examining all enjoyments, here and hereafter, have been fully convinced of their littleness and futility and feel no attraction for them. Nothing short of the Truth can satisfy them. They struggle hard and stake everything near and dear for its realisation. But we seldom meet with such souls. The majority are attached more or less to the charms and enjoyments of the world. For such, the Srutis prescribe the indirect path of Upasana or devotion.

Whatever may be the detailed working out of the principles, this much is sure that for the realisation of truth, relative or absolute, three processes are always involved, viz. श्रवण, मनन and निदिध्यासन. The Truth is first to be heard from the perceptor and the scriptures, and a conviction should be gained thereof. The next step is to think over it with or without the help of a concrete object. As long as a person requires something

concrete for his meditation he is an Upasaka, but when he can do without it and comprehend the Truth itself he is a Jnani. The third step is Nididhyasana or a constant dwelling on the knowledge. In the case of a Jnani it flows as knowledge itself, of course reflected in the clear mirror of the mind. But in the case of an Upasaka it takes the form of love or devotion. Just as a man engaged in plucking flowers to make a garland for his beloved, feels in his heart of hearts a constant flow of love, nay, he feels himself transformed as it were into love itself, similarly the Upasaka realises his self in the form of the Upasya or object of worship which he has taken up as the symbol of the unembodied Self. So the difference lies only in the detailed working out of the principles, according to the tastes and capacities of the persons concerned.

In conclusion, we must add that whether a person chooses the direct or the indirect method in going beyond the painful contradiction in Nature already referred to, he must, first of all, feel that he is in bondage and must have the eagerness to cut that asunder. This eagerness would give rise to the power of discrimination between the good and the pleasant, and discrimination will tell him to reject the pleasant and embrace the good. Without these all talks would be useless, all endeavours futile. Truly therefore has it been declared by the Sruti :—

नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यो न च प्रमादात् तपसो वाप्यलिङ्गान् ।
एतैरुपायैर्यतते यस्तु विद्वान् तस्यैष आत्मा विशते ब्रह्मधाम ॥

“The Atman can never be realised by him who is weak either physically or mentally, nor by him who is careless or unwilling to practise the necessary external renunciation suited to his position. But to the wise man who tries with these means at hand, the Atman will surely open the portals of the castle of Bliss.”

SWAMI JNANESWARANANDA.

THOMAS A KEMPIS.

I.

(HIS LIFE.)

THOMAS à KEMPIS, the author of "The Imitation of Christ," was born in the year 1379 at Kempen, a small, prosperous town, about forty miles north of Cologne, in a flat, fertile country along the Rhine. His family name was Haemerken. But when he became a monk this name was dropped and he became known as Thomas of Kempen.

His parents, John and Gertrude, were of the labouring class, his father being a worker in metal. They were frugal, hard-working people, fairly well educated, with a great love for simplicity and godliness. His mother was sedulous in the education of her children, attentive to her household duties, abstemious, modest and not given to much talk. She closely watched over the growth of her two children, two boys, John and Thomas, of whom John was the elder by fifteen years. She had for a time kept a little school at Kempen, and she was therefore able to give her sons the rudiments of education.

The training which the boys received at home from their pious parents gave them a strong religious bent of mind. John had been sent to a school at Deventer (in Holland) and in the course of time had joined a monastery near Zwolle. And now, twelve years later, when Thomas was thirteen years old, he also expressed the desire to devote his life to the service of God and his fellow-men by embracing the monastic life.

The parents would have liked to retain him by their side to be their comfort and support during their declining years. But putting aside their own interests they encouraged the boy in his holy resolutions. Offering their child to God and blessing him, they sent him on a long journey of a hundred miles to join his brother at Deventer. They never saw him

again, for Thomas never returned to his native town; and they died before he became famous.

Thomas fared well during his long tramp from Kempen to Deventer, for the country through which he passed was inhabited by hospitable, kind-hearted peasants, who gave him food and lodging. But when he arrived at his destination he learned that John had gone to a monastery at Zwolle. The place, however, was not very far, and cheerfully he continued his journey. At last he reached the monastery, and here the two brothers met after a long time. The meeting was a happy one, for from the very beginning the brothers felt a great attraction toward each other, an attraction which warmed into a tender friendship.

John having been greatly benefited spiritually by the education he had received at Deventer, determined that his brother should have the same advantage. He, therefore, sent him with a letter of recommendation to Florentius, the saintly and scholarly Rector of the Brothers of Common Life at that city.

The revered Father, being moved with pity toward the poor but talented lad, received him very kindly, and kept him for some time in the House of the Brothers of which he was Rector. He prepared him for school, and gave him the books he stood in need of. When Thomas was ready to attend the town-school, he placed him in the house of a devout matron who showed him and other students much kindness.

When Thomas was eighteen years old, Florentius took him back to live in the house of the Brothers who offered a helping hand to poor students, providing them with food and lodging. There were then in the house some twenty priests and three lay-brothers, of whom one was the steward and did the marketing, one was in charge of the kitchen, and the third mended the clothes.

The town-school, although really an independent institution, was connected in various ways with the Brother-House. The Brothers had charge of part of the instruction, and

zealously contributed to the maintenance and advancement of the pupils.

Thomas, while still going to school, took part in the devotional exercises of the Brothers, and was drawn into their pious modes of life which filled him with admiration. Never before—so he tells us—had he seen men so devout, and so full of love towards God and their fellow-men. Living in the world, they were altogether unworldly. They were of one heart and one mind in God. What each possessed was held in common; and being content with plain food and clothing, they took no thought for the morrow.

The Rector of the school was also choir-master of the church, and by his orders Thomas used to sing in the choir together with his school-fellows. He studied grammar, logic, ethics, the Holy Scriptures, and copying of manuscripts. All that he needed was provided for him by the Brothers.

In the serene and simple surroundings in the Brother-House Thomas was happy. His room-mate was a boy of his own age, Arnold of Schoonhoven, a boy of admirable piety and sweet, amiable disposition. The boys became intimate friends and encouraged each other in holiness.

When Thomas was twenty years old he had attained to a degree of scholarship that would have enabled him to take up the specialised work of a university. But his mind was given to God; and moved by a dream and the advice of the saintly Florentius he sought admission to a newly established monastery at Agnetenberg, near Zwolle, of which his brother was Prior.

After six years of probation, during which time he made additional studies to fit himself for the monastic life, he was in the seventh year professed, that is, he received the religious habit. In the following year he took the final vows, and in the year 1413, when he was thirty-three years old, was ordained as priest.

At this monastery, shut in from the noise and strife of the world, Thomas à Kempis spent practically seventy years of his long life. Occasionally his duties called him away on

short journeys, but otherwise he knew only the world within the monastery walls, where he was perfectly contented. It was a life of prayer, study and labour.

The monastery stood on a solitary hill at no great distance from the town of Zwolle. At the foot of the hill flowed the little river Vechte, a stream abounding in fish. With great labour the barren hill was made fertile. The monks planted an orchard and gardens, and laid out paths and roadways. Besides these manual labours, the good monks spent many hours in their religious duties and intellectual occupations. They studied, wrote, and transcribed manuscripts which they sold to secure funds to defray their expenses.

Thomas was a skilful copyist. He transcribed the Roman Missal, a large number of mystical and devotional treatises, and the entire Bible, which took him fifteen years to accomplish. He wrote, besides "The Imitation of Christ," biographies of Groote and Florentius and nine of their disciples. He also wrote handbooks for novices and other religious treatises. He taught the young members of the monastery and was often called upon to deliver sermons.

In addition to these various occupations he wrote the chronicle of the monastery and assisted in the choir for he was an accomplished musician. He loved books, and whenever an opportunity offered he would retire to his cell to read "a little book in a little nook." But most of his spare time was spent in prayer and meditation.

In 1425 he was made Sub-Prior of the monastery, and in 1432 Procurator. But this office was not to his liking as the outward duties connected with it abstracted him too much from meditation and his more profitable labours as an author. He was soon relieved of it and re-elected as Sub-Prior. This post he resigned in 1456 and afterwards he held no particular office in the monastery.

As life passed he became more and more rapt in mystic visions. "His cell was his Paradise, the Church or choir his Heaven, and the Word of God his food." He had given his message to the world and he was now realising this message

in his own life. The only sadness that entered into his life was that one by one he saw most of his brother-monks, including his brother John, laid at rest in the little cemetery near the cloister.

In his old age he suffered from dropsy and in the year 1471, when he was ninety-two years old, he fell asleep in the Lord.

He was a man of somewhat less than average height, inclined to corpulency. His massive features had a healthy, brownish complexion. He had bright, piercing eyes, the sight of which was so good that even in his old age he did not require spectacles. He was a man of quiet, cheerful disposition, not given to argumentation or vain words, but always ready to instruct those who came to him for advice. The love of God and the happiness of unbroken fellowship with Him, was the ultimate object of all his efforts. And this object he attained to a wonderful degree. His whole being was imbued with the love of Christ, and peace and blessedness filled his heart.

* * * * *

SWAMI ATULANANDA.



CHRISTIANISED HINDUISM AND HINDUISED CHRISTIANITY.

THE spirit of reform is by no means foreign to Hinduism as its critics often wrongly believe. On the other hand, it is part and parcel of the inexhaustible vitality of the eternal religion of the Vedas. It asserted itself again and again in the form of various revivalistic activities whenever the necessity arose. At present this spirit is finding its expression in various reform movements helping the people to break down the encrustations and realise the fundamental principles and universal ideals of their religion. The fountain-head of this inspiration lies in the heart of Hinduism itself. The

impact of alien cultures is only an apparent cause of the renaissance. But superficial critics, specially among the Christian missionaries, who are unacquainted with the true soul of Hinduism, and are ignorant of its phenomenal power of assimilation and adaptability, rush in to attribute this reformation solely to the influence of Christianity and the labours of Christian missionaries in India.

The Literary Digest quotes a missionary, Bishop Fred B. Fisher, who after finishing thirty thousand miles of tour in India, is reported to have remarked—"The big reform movements in Hinduism, Mohammedanism, and Buddhism, everywhere to be found in India, are part and parcel of the Christianizing process. From the Roof of the World to the Indian Ocean this new awakening of the old, dead faiths is evident. We hear a great deal about 'modern Hinduism,' 'modern Mohammedanism,' which are, however, contradictions in terms. To modernise Hinduism and Mohammedanism is to destroy them as they have hitherto existed. The Word of Jesus Christ has done that. The ideals and ethics of the Nazarene are the big moving forces in the modernization of Indian religions, which are taking them over unto themselves, incorporating the principles of Jesus into their own beliefs. The Christian competition can be met in no other way. The East must assimilate Christianity or be assimilated by it. It is one and the same thing in result." These words betray both the ignorance and the religious bias of the Bishop. The only redeeming point in the remarks is that they clearly indicate how the Christian missionaries are learning to be less ambitious than before. The saner among them are realising more and more the wonderful vitality and resisting power of the great non-Christian religions, and are giving up the hope of the wholesale assimilation of their followers into the body of the Christian Church. They are now even prepared to be satisfied by Christianising the pagan religions and claiming their followers as their own!

None can gainsay the contribution of Christianity, or to be more accurate, of the Western culture—for they are by no means

synonymous—to the modernisation of Indian religions. But to attribute all the credit for this reformation to an outside impetus is to misread the whole fact. The Bishop confuses the minor with the main cause, and this he does evidently with a view to make a case for organised Christianity which, to quote a Christian writer, “is falling rapidly into the final stages of decay” in its own land.

A new era of synthesis is dawning upon the world. Under its inspiration, religions are influencing one another and are being influenced in return. The so-called Christianised Hinduism or Hinduised Christianity does not imply any loss of individuality, but only the exchange and assimilation of each other's ideals and principles. We see in India a growing appreciation of the life of Jesus and the religion of Love preached by him as distinct from institutional Christianity which passes under that name. Similarly the teachings of the Vedanta are fast penetrating into the Western countries and influencing the life and thought of an ever-increasing number of people. And many Christian missionaries are surprised “to find the extent to which Hindu Pantheism has already begun to permeate the religious conception” of Germany, America, England and other Christian countries. The reason is not far to seek. The loftiest spiritual ideals of the East and the West are fundamentally one. The life and teachings of Christ appeal to the Hindu mind owing to their being akin to those found in the Vedic religion itself. In the same way the universal principles, as embodied in the Hindu scriptures and also in the life and teachings of Hindu saints and sages, touch the soul and satisfy the spiritual instinct of liberal Westerners mainly because these are in perfect harmony with the highest ideals of their religion and spiritual culture. In spite of the strenuous opposition of the conservative and the bigoted, the time-spirit is giving birth to a new synthetic religion and culture, unheralded in the world of the past.

This process of assimilation and inclusion is going on even in the Indian Christian Church itself. It is bringing about

a new development of Indian Christianity along Indian lines and models. Indian Christians have already begun to call in question the propriety of introducing Western denominationalism and modes of worship, and are anxious to give their religion a truly Indian expression. Actuated by the spirit of harmony, characteristic of the soil of India, they have commenced to appreciate and draw inspiration from the Sacred Books of the Hindus as well as from the songs and teachings of many Hindu saints, which, as a Christian missionary puts it, "are in reality more Christian in sentiment than some of the compositions that now find a place in the Indian (Christian) hymnary." Observes an Indian Christian writer in a thoughtful article on the probable lines of the future expression of Indian Christianity in the 'Harvest Field'—

"While the present Old Testament will not be superseded, yet it will be supplemented by some of the Hindu Sacred Books. Why should it not be so? The Gita is to me a more appealing Scripture than the Book of Judges. Some of the Upanishads are more philosophical and rich than the Vanity of Vanities of Ecclesiastes. Prizing as I do some of the great Psalms, I feel there are in the hymnology of the Tamil land more loveable and diviner strains than the imprecatory Psalms of the Old Testament."

The same writer remarks in another place—"The glow of feeling that you are a sinner and that your sins have been forgiven is good, but somehow it does not suffice. The Indian nature is not much attracted by the psychology of sin; it requires, on the contrary, the symbolism of form, colour and music. In the light of these interpretations of the Indian nature the whole field of ecclesiastical forms must change. The Indian structure in our Churches with figures of Jesus and the saints, flowers, incense, bells and lamps, these, and other elements must find a suitable place." These new developments of the Indian Christian Church will be more in accord with the spirit of higher Hinduism than with that of Western Christianity. Religious enthusiasts who are anxious to see in every Hindu reform movement the triumph of Christianity will do well to observe that Indian Christianity itself is taking, as some people call it, a decidedly "Vedantic colouring." It is the spirit of the time that is making the impossible possible.

SRI KRISHNA AND UDDHAVA²

(Continued from page 275.)

उद्धव उवाच ।

विदन्ति मर्त्याः प्रायेण विषयान्पदमापदाम् ।
तथापि भुञ्जते कृष्ण तत्कथं श्वस्रराजवत् ॥८॥

Uddhava said :

8. O Krishna, mortals generally know the sense-objects to be sources of danger. Still how do they run after them like a dog, an ass or a goat ?

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

अहमित्यन्यथाबुद्धिः प्रमत्तस्य यथा हृदि ।
उत्सर्पति रजो घोरं ततो वैकारिकं मनः ॥९॥

The Lord said :

9. In the heart of an undiscriminating man the wrong idea¹ of ' I (and mine) ' naturally arises; then dire Rajas overtakes the mind which is (originally) Sattvika.

[¹ *Idea &c.*—in things that are not the Self.]

रजोयुक्तस्य मनसः संकल्पः सविकल्पकः ।

ततः कामो गुणध्यानाद्बुःसह स्याद्धि दुर्मतेः ॥१०॥

10. A mind under the influence of Rajas cherishes desires with all sorts of cogitation.¹ Then from a dwelling on the good points² (of a thing) the foolish man gets an inordinate hankering, (for it).

[For the idea compare Gita II. 62—63.

¹ *Cogitation*—that this thing is to be enjoyed thus, that thing in such and such a way and so on.

² *Good points*—e. g. Oh the beauty of it!—how expressive are the gestures!—and so on.]

करोति कामवशगः कर्माययविजितेन्द्रियः ।

दुःखोदकाणि संपश्यन्नजोवेगविमोहितः ॥११॥

11. Under the sway of hankering, the man devoid of self-control wilfully commits deeds¹ fraught with future misery, being infatuated by violent Rajas.

[¹ *Deeds*—Here is Rajas in action.]

रजस्तमोभ्यां यदपि विद्वान्विचिन्तयिषीः पुनः ।

अतन्द्रितो मनो युञ्जन्दोषहृष्टिर्न सज्जते ॥१२॥

12. Even though distracted by Rajas and Tamas, the man of discrimination,¹ conscious of their evils, again concentrates his mind, without giving way to inadvertence and is not attached to them.

[¹ *Discrimination*—this saves him.]

अप्रभक्तोऽनुयुञ्जीत मनो मय्यर्पयन् रतैः ।

अनिर्विण्णो यथाकालं जितश्वासो जितासनः ॥१३॥

13. Being alert and diligent one should at the right time¹ control one's posture, and breath, and resigning the mind unto Me slowly practise concentration.

[¹ *Right time*—morning, noon and evening.]

एतावान्योग आदिष्टो मच्छिष्यैः सनकादिभिः ।

सर्वतो मन आकृष्य मय्यद्भावैश्रयते यथा ॥१४॥

14. In order that the mind, being withdrawn from everything, may be truly absorbed in Me, the above process of Yoga has been taught by My disciples, Sanaka and the rest.

उद्धव उवाच ।

यदा त्वं सनकादिभ्यो येन रूपेण केशव ।

योगमादिष्टवानेतद्रूपमिच्छामि वेदितुम् ॥१५॥

15. Uddhava said, "O Kesava, I wish to know

the time when Thou taughtst of this Yoga to Sanaka and others, and the form in which Thou didst do so.''

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

पुत्रा हिरण्यगर्भस्य मानसाः सनकादयः ।

पप्रच्छुः पितरं सूक्ष्मां योगस्यैकान्तिकीं गतिम् ॥१६॥

The Lord said :

16. Sanaka and others, the spiritual¹ sons of Brahmâ, asked their father the subtle and ultimate goal of Yoga.

[¹ *Spiritual*—lit., created by will.]

सनकादय ऊचुः ।

गुणेष्वविशते चेतो गुणाश्चेतसि च प्रभो ।

कथमभ्योन्यसंत्यागो मुमुक्षोरतितितीर्षोः ॥१७॥

17. Sanaka and others said, "O Lord, the mind is attached to the sense-objects, and the sense-objects influence the mind. So for the man who seeks liberation and wants to go beyond them, how do they cease to act and react upon each other ?"

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

एवं पृष्टो महादेवः स्वयंभूर्भूतभावनः ।

ध्यायमानः प्रश्नबीजं नाभ्यपद्यत कर्मधीः ॥१८॥

The Lord said :

18. Being thus asked, the great Lord Brahmâ, who is uncreate¹ but the Originator of all beings, thought and thought over it but could not get to the root² of the question, because his mind was on work.

[¹ *Uncreate* &c.—This shows the difficulty of the problem,—it baffled the understanding of so great a personage.

² *Root* &c.—what exactly troubled them.]

(To be continued.)

REVIEWS AND NOTICES.

Vedanta Darsaner Itihas.—By Swami Prajnanananda Saraswati. Edited by Srijut Rajendra Nath Ghosh. Published by the Saraswati Library, 9 Ramanath Mazumdar's Street, Calcutta. Parts I—III are out. Each Part—Pp. 96. Price Re. 1.

This is a lucid and elaborate history of the Vedanta Philosophy, to be completed in some twelve volumes covering about a thousand pages. Besides a connected history of the highly interesting subject, this learned treatise will contain a discussion on the various systems of philosophical thought, the original Vedanta Sutras, and also a Bengali translation of Sankara's commentary on them. It will be a unique work of its kind, and the three parts before us, reflecting the vast erudition and deep insight of the author, amply justify our expectation.

The Swami ably refutes the Western scholars who hold that the Upanishads as a class are of later origin than the Samhitas, and truly observes that the Jnana Kanda of the Vedas is as old as the Karma Kanda itself. He points out that side by side with the Rishis who were devoted to the performance of Vedic sacrifices, there were others who preferred the path of renunciation, and dedicated themselves solely to philosophical speculation and meditation on Brahman.

Some may find it difficult to concur with the author on all the dates of persons and events as given by him. But we have no doubt that this valuable work of his will be heartily welcomed by all lovers of the Vedanta Philosophy among the Bengali-reading community.

Gitavali.—Compiled and published by Brahmachari Bodhachaitanya. To be had of Sri Ramakrishna Math, P. O. Ramna, Dacca. Pp. 83. Price As. 6.

The book is a beautiful collection of Bengali religious

songs with an alphabetical index. As songs accompanied by music appeal naturally to the heart, it will serve as an excellent medium for preaching religious ideas amongst the people. The special feature of the book is that it contains, within a small compass, a good variety of songs nicely arranged. We recommend it to every Bengali home.

Gitar Abhash.—By Srijut Hari Prasad Basu, M. A., B. L.
Published by Messrs. Chakravarty Chatterjee & Co. Ld.,
1 College Square, Calcutta. Pp. v + 122. Price As. 12 only.

The book contains three essays in Bengali, illustrating the principles and teachings of the Gita. The first essay, covering 68 pages, gives a summary of the Gita lucidly supplying the links between the chapters which are often overlooked by the average reader. People who are unable to go through or understand the Sanskrit commentaries cannot generally realise the glorious synthesis which Sri Krishna has worked out in these immortal teachings of the apparently diverse paths of Jnana, Bhakti, Yoga and Karma. The author has succeeded, to a great extent, in clearly bringing out this synthesis. We hope the book will be appreciated by earnest students of religion.

A Study of Caste.—By P. Lakshmi Narasu. Published by
K. V. Raghavulu, Publisher, 367 Mint Street, Madras.
Pp. 160. Price Re. 1-8.

The book is a plea for “the abolition of caste and the uprooting of all religion whose life-blood is caste.” The author treats his subject with great erudition and vigour. But in his enthusiasm for reform, he sees nothing but evil in the Hindu social system, ancient and modern, and takes a perverse view of some of the modern religious movements in India. The book contains a valuable social history of India, but it is vitiated by virulent invectives against all religious beliefs and social systems. It is impossible to read this destructive criticism of caste without being conscious of some of the flagrant evils of the present day Hindu social system which certainly stands in need of immediate reform.

Principles of Education.—By Chandra Chakravarty. Published by Ramchandra Chakravarty, 58 Cornwallis Street, Calcutta. Pp. 112.

In this little book of fourteen chapters the author deals with the question of education in both its theoretical and practical aspects. He takes a comprehensive view of the subject and observes—“To make the best of life, not simply in the crude sense of the enjoyment of material pleasures, but in its broadest application, should be the aim and object of education.”

Soham-Gita (Bengali) Fourth Edition.—By Soham Swami. Published by Suryakanta Bandyopadhyaya, B. L., Tantî Bazar, Dacca. Pp. 551.

Viveka-gatha—By the same. Pp. 30.

Sambuka-badha-Kavya—Do. Pp. 30.

REPORTS AND APPEALS.

The Annual Report of the Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, 6 A Banka Rai's Street, Calcutta, for the year 1922.

With the lofty ideal of 'plain living and high thinking' this small but unique institution runs on the lines of an Ashrama of old and aims at giving deserving indigent College students an all-round training of the hand, the head and the heart. It is under the direct care and management of two able monks of the Mission and is licensed by the Calcutta University. At the end of the year under review there were nine students, seven free and two paying. As one of the fruits of its useful work it may be mentioned in this connection that under the initiative of a monk of the Mission a number of trained ex-students of this Home have started an ideal Brahmacharya Vidyalaya at Deoghar. The total receipts during the year amounted to Rs. 3124-14-8 and total disbursements to Rs. 2630-5-7½.

The Home is at present situated in a rented house which can accommodate a very limited number of students. It should have a building of its own, which would be sufficient for at least fifty students, with a compound big enough for physical exercise and outdoor games, as also funds necessary for the maintenance of the same. A charitable institution like this

deserves encouragement from the generous public who, we earnestly hope, will come forward with sufficient financial support and put it on a stable basis.

The Twelfth Annual Report of the Ramakrishna Mission Sevasrama, Muthiganj, Allahabad, for the year 1922.

This Home of service has been doing much to relieve the suffering of the people of the locality as well as of the large influx of pilgrims that visit the holy confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna throughout the year. It gives medicines, Homœopathic and Allopathic, as well as medical advice gratis to the sick without any distinction of caste or creed. During the year under review altogether 13,648 patients were treated in the outdoor dispensary of which 6160 were new cases. The total receipts during the year, including the previous year's balance, amounted to Rs. 1574-8-3 and the total expenses to Rs. 1498-3-0.

For the present an indoor hospital with six beds and a surgical room is badly needed, the approximate cost of which is Rs. 10,000. We hope that this noble institution will not be handicapped for want of funds.

Ramakrishna Mission Kapileswar Relief Work, Bhubaneswar.

The public are perhaps aware that the whole village of Kapileswar, containing 280 families and about 1000 houses, was reduced to ashes by a great fire on the 7th May last. In consequence, the people were thrown into a state of great suffering and difficulty. For some days they had to cook their food under the open sky in the sun and in the rain. Relief work was promptly started from our centre at Bhubaneswar. Besides rendering other forms of service, our workers helped a large number of families to rebuild their houses. We are thankful to the Reserve Forest Department for kindly supplying us with timber for the purpose. A detailed account of this work will be published shortly.

Saradananda,
Secretary, R. K. Mission.

NEWS AND NOTES.

Prison Reform in India

The reformation of the Indian penal system has become one of the serious questions of the day. Newspapers and magazines are daily bringing to light the inhumane treatment in the prison. Life there is a hideous thing, a wretched

concern, and the place a scene of horror. Far from having a word of love and sympathy, the poor convict gets filthy language, blows and kicks even for a little breach of the most humiliating prison laws. There is none to give him good counsel and help him to mend his ways. Impelled by previous Samskara he tries to repeat all sorts of heinous things within the four walls of the prison as soon as he gets an opportunity. It is quite natural therefore that most of the offenders turn out worse criminals on their release. "What few people realise," justly observes Mr. Thomas Mott Osborne, an American prison reformer, "is the relation between our prisons and the rising tide of crime."

As a preliminary step towards reform, the present prison administrators are going to introduce occasional religious sermons in some prisons. It is a matter of congratulation indeed if it be well-meaning. But to speak the truth, it would be mostly futile unless and until the whole penal system be revised and there be a change in the mentality of the warders, jailors and superintendents who guide the destinies of the convicts. Power is a good thing if we know its proper use. But as it often happens, we abuse it and it becomes an instrument of torture and cruelty. Let the persons in authority feel that persecution is no less a crime and that they shall have to answer for it before God, if not also before man.

"What man has made of man!" grieved the poet. It is a regrettable thing that there should be so much want of brotherly feeling amongst men and that one should be so inhuman towards another. The underlying cause is not far to seek. We have forgotten our Divine origin. Those who are looked down upon as criminals are our brothers and may turn out saints in course of time. Let the jail authorities unite in themselves high ideals with practical common sense. Let them feel for the miserable persons under their care, and the prison will be a reformatory school, "where men," as Mr. Osborne rightly says, "who have never breathed anything but an atmosphere of crime, may find themselves in a clean and healthy community life, where we can strengthen the weak and divert the strong from the wrong to the right path."

The Gaekwar's effort for the Elevation of the Untouchables

For about the last forty years H. H. the Gaekwar of Baroda has been labouring steadfastly for the elevation of the Antyajias or untouchables in his state. Mr. St. Nihal Singh's valuable article in the "Welfare" for June describes in

glowing terms the Maharaja's laudable efforts to ameliorate the condition of these helpless people. Mr. Singh thus speaks of the education imparted to the untouchables in the free boarding schools established by the Gaekwar—"In addition to ordinary studies, moral and religious education is imparted to the children in these Boarding Schools. Ideas of social service are inculcated in them, by training them to nurse one another. Companies of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides have been organised among them, and physical culture is encouraged. The girls are taught sewing, knitting, embroidery and cooking, in addition to the usual academic studies. The children are induced to take advantage of libraries and reading rooms attached to the institutions, and to participate in the debates which are held."

The Maharaja has been trying to infuse in the Antyaja children the desire to obtain higher education by giving scholarships to the promising students of the community. He is also attempting to elevate the social and economic condition of the untouchables. "In 1910-11, he appointed 242 of them to various departments, at one stroke improving their social and economic status. Later he ordered that the institutions for higher education and for the training of teachers, mechanics, etc. should admit Antyaja boys and girls, and permit them to study along with the high caste students. He also passed orders, from time to time, enabling the people belonging to the depressed classes to enter libraries, dispensaries, hospitals, law courts, and similar institutions."

It is gratifying to learn that many educated young men and women of the community are devoting their lives to raise their less fortunate brothers and sisters. "Some of them have established societies for the social and moral elevation of their people. They have been particularly successful in reducing drunkenness, to which the Antyajjas were peculiarly susceptible."

Sri Ramakrishna Celebration at Baghdad

The birthday of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated on a grand scale at Baghdad, Mesopotamia. A palatial building was rented for the purpose, and all the educated and respectable residents of the place were invited without any distinction of caste, race and religion. Over a thousand people, including Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians, Parsis and Jews, heartily joined in the celebration.

Puja, Arati, Kirtan etc. lasted the whole day. Select passages from the Vedas, Bible, Koran and other scriptures were read and explained. A large number of poor Narayanas were sumptuously fed. Prasad was also distributed among the people assembled.

A public meeting was held under the presidency of Rev. Greg. Alexander, an English Missionary. Rev. Francis Kingsbury, a liberal Madrasi missionary, spoke on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. He quoted extracts of a discourse on Sri Ramakrishna from the diary of a fellow-missionary, which were highly appreciated by the audience. A few young devotees, including Sj. Bimalakanta Niyogi and Sj. Hem Kumar Das, also delivered lectures on the life of the Master. Besides, two workers of the Arya Samaj spoke in Hindi on the Vedas and the Vedic religion. The president brought the meeting to a close with his concluding speech, in the course of which he spoke of India as the land of religion.

Miscellany

Swami Paramananda, head of the Vedanta Centre of Boston (U. S. A.), opened a new Peace Retreat—Ananda Ashrama—at La Crescenta, California on Sunday, the 29th April last. The Ashrama is situated in the quietude of a forest in the arms of the Sierra Madre or Mother Mountains in Southern California. Placed as it is in the National Forest Reserve, it will be safe from the intrusion of the city. It combines perfectly the qualities of remoteness and accessibility, and is only sixteen miles from Los Angeles. The Ashrama will be an extension of the Boston work, and will serve as a home where the workers will be able to express their ideas and ideals under more favourable conditions.

The eighty-eighth birthday of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated on Sunday, the 17th June last at the Ramakrishna Math, Swami Vivekananda Sangam, High Road, Pudur, Vaniyambadi, Madras Presidency. Special Puja, Bhajan, music and procession formed the main items of the celebration. A large number of poor brothers and sisters of all castes were fed on the occasion. M. R. Ry. V. Ramakrishna Naidu Garu delivered a lecture on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. The anniversary came to a close with the distribution of Prasad.

Srimat Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj gave four instructive lectures on the Sanatana Dharma, the Teachings of Krishna, the Progressive Religion and Yuga Dharma in the Public hall and the Brahma Samaj Hall, Darjeeling. He has returned to his Ashrama in Calcutta.

The latest American mail brings us the news that Swamis Prakashananda, Raghavananda and Prabhavananda arrived at Boston on the 2nd June last. They were received at the dock by Swami Paramananda and workers and friends of the

Vedanta Centre at Boston. After a short stay at the Boston Centre the Swamis are to proceed to New York where they will be the guests of Swami Bodhananda. Leaving Swami Raghavananda at New York to assist Swami Bodhananda, the other Swamis will proceed to San Francisco, halting on the way at the Niagara Falls and other places of interest.

Swami Akhilananda, who has been a member of Sri Ramakrishna Math at Madras for the last four years, left for Chidambaram, South India on the 4th of July last. At the request of the authorities of Sri Minakshi College, the Swami has taken over the charge of the moral and religious education of the institution.



MAYAVATI CHARITABLE DISPENSARY.

We beg to acknowledge with hearty thanks the following contributions to the Mayavati Charitable Dispensary fund from May to July, 1923:—

D. K. Natu Esq., Poona City, Rs. 6; L. S. Kalbag Esq., Bombay, Rs. 3; K. K. Marathi Esq., Bombay, Re. 1; Jatindra N. Ghose Esq., Howrah, Rs. 10; Radhomall Esq., Rangoon, Rs. 10; A Sympathiser, N. W. F. P., Rs. 10; M. M. Desai Esq., Nadiad, Rs. 5; S. V. Narasinhachary Esq., Tekkali, Rs. 3; G. D. Khandkar Esq., Sahapur, Rs. 5; T. V. Sandalgekar Esq., Shahapur, Re. 1; Ganesh Hari Kokam Esq., Shahapur, Rs. 20; S. S. Mathur Esq., Sirsa, Rs. 15; Raja Bahadur Esq., Patiala, Rs. 10; Balmaharaj Pandit Esq., Kolhapur, Rs. 10; M. Narsaya Shambhogue Esq., Manjeswar, Rs. 5; Sj. Jitsingh Patwari, Champawat, Rs. 2; A Sympathiser, Manihar, Rs. 5; Pt. Hariram Dhasmana, Champawat, Rs. 5; Sj. Rudramani, Visjula, Rs. 5; Sj. Premballabh, Visjula, in memory of his mother, Rs. 10.

Total Rs. 141/-.

The expenses already incurred for the repairs of the Dispensary and for its general upkeep yet require a much bigger sum. We sincerely hope the generous public will come forward with their kind quota of help to place this humble but useful institution of service on a stable footing. Contributions, however small, will be gratefully acknowledged by the undersigned.

Swami Madhavananda,
President, Advaita Ashrama,
Mayavati, Dt. Almora.