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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

(From the 'Oakland Enquirer')

Tuesday, March 13, 1900

IN WORK AND LOVE

*Says the Swami, Lies the Way of
Salvation*

*Final Address by the Exponent of the
Religious Philosophy of the Hindoo*

Wendte Hall of the First Unitarian Church was crowded last evening with a large audience to hear the “Way of Salvation” from the standpoint of the Hindoo priest, Swami Vivekananda. This was the last lecture of a series of three which the Swami has delivered.

He said in part: “One man says God is in heaven, another that God is in nature and everywhere present. But when the great crisis comes we find the goal is the same. We all work on different plans, but the end is not different.

“The two great watchwords of every great religion are Renunciation and Self-

sacrifice. We all want the truth and we know that it must come, whether we want it or not. In a way we are all striving for that good, and what prevents our reaching it? It is ourselves. Your ancestors used to call it the devil, but it is our own false self.

“We live in slavery and we would die if we were out of it. We are like the man who lived in total darkness for ninety years and when taken out into the warm sunshine of nature, prayed to be taken back to his dungeon. You would not leave this old life to go into a newer and greater freedom which opens out.

“The great difficulty is to go to the heart of things. These little degraded delusions of Jack So-and-So’s, who thinks he has an infinite soul, how small he is with his different religions. In one country, all as a matter of religion, a man has many wives, in another one woman has many husbands;

so some men have two gods, some one God and some no God at all.

“But salvation is in work and love. You learn something thoroughly; in time you may not be able to call that thing to memory. Yet it has sunk into your inner consciousness and is a part of you. So as you work, whether it be good or bad, you shape your future course of life. If you do good work with the idea of work, work for work’s sake; you will go to Heaven or your idea and dream of Heaven.

“The history of the world is not of its great men, of its demi-gods, but it is like the little islands of the sea, which build themselves to great continents from fragments of the sea drift. Then the history of the world is in the little acts of sacrifice performed in every household. Man accepts religion because he does not wish to stand on his own judgement. He takes it as the best way of getting out of a bad place.

“The salvation of man lies in the great love with which he loves his God. Your wife says, ‘Oh, John, I could not live without you’; some men when they lose their money have to be sent to the asylum. Do you feel that way about your God? When you can give up money, friends, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, all that is in the world and only pray to God that He grant you something of His love then you have found salvation.”

March 14, 1900

MORE LECTURES BY THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

The great popularity of the course of lectures just finished by the Swami Vivekananda has been a matter of surprise to those who have been familiar with the almost empty houses that have greeted some of the lecturers that have appeared here.

At the earnest solicitations of those who have had the pleasure of listening to him, he has consented to give another course of three lectures. They will take place at Wendte Hall, Fourteenth and Castro Streets, on successive Monday evenings, beginning with March 19. The subjects are: The Manners and Customs of India; The Arts and Sciences in India; and the Ideals of Quakers.

As no more tickets will be sold than enough to comfortably fill the hall, persons desiring to hear these lectures will do well to apply to the sexton at the church during the mornings of this week.

March 21, 1900

INDIA’S PEOPLE

The Swami Vivekananda tells of His Countrymen

The lecture which the Swami Vivekananda gave Monday night in his new course on “The People of India”, was interesting, not only for what he had to relate of the people of that country, but for the insight into their mental attitude and prejudices which the speaker gave without really meaning it. It is apparent that the Swami, educated and intellectual man that he is, is no admirer of Western civilization. He has evidently been a good deal embittered by the talk about child widows, the oppression of women and other barbarisms alleged against the people of India, and is somewhat inclined to resort to the *tu quoque* in reply.

In commencing his talk he gave his hearers an idea of the racial characteristics of the people. He said that the bond of unity in India, as in other countries of Asia, is not language or race, but religion. In Europe the race makes the nation, but in Asia people

of diverse origin and different tongues become one nation if they have the same religion. The people of Northern India are divided into four great classes, while in Southern India the languages are so entirely different from those of Northern India that there is no kinship whatever. The people of Northern India belong to the great Aryan race, to which all of the people of Europe, except the Basques in the Pyrenees, and the Finns, are supposed to belong. The Southern India people belong to the same race as the ancient Egyptians and the Semites. To illustrate the difficulties of learning one another's languages in India, the Swami said that when he had occasion to go into Southern India he always talked with the native people in English, unless they belonged to the select few who could speak Sanskrit.

A good deal of the lecture was taken up in a discussion of the caste system which the Swami characterized by saying that it had its bad side, but that its benefits outweighed its disadvantages. In brief, this caste system had grown up by the practice of the son always following the business of the father. In course of time the community came thus to be divided into a series of classes, each held rigidly within its own boundaries. But while this divided the people, it also united them, because all the members of a caste were bound to help their fellows in case of need, and as no man could rise out of his caste the Hindoos have no such

struggles for social or personal supremacy as embitter the people of other countries.

The worst feature of the caste is that it suppresses competition, and the checking of competition has really been the cause of the political downfall of India and its conquest by foreign races.

Respecting the much-discussed subject of marriage in India, the Swami said that his people did not believe in matches being made by a couple of young people who might be attached to one another, without regard to the welfare of the community, which is more important than that of any two persons. "Because I love Jennie and Jennie loves me," said the Swami, "is no reason why we should be married."

He denied that the condition of the child widows is as bad as has been represented, saying that in India the position of widows in general is one of a great deal of influence, because a large part of the property in the country is held by widows. In fact, so enviable is the position of a widow that a woman or a man either might almost pray to be made a widow.

The child widows, or women who have been betrothed to children who died before marriage, might be pitied if marriage were the only real object in life, but, according to the Hindoo way of thinking, marriage is rather a duty than a privilege, and the denial of the right of child widows to marry is no particular hardship.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN INDIA

BY THE EDITOR

I

Recent investigations go to show that the low standard of the physique and the bad health of the Indian women are deplorable; the rate of literacy among them is only 3%; in Behar there are only five literate women in every thousand of the people; even in Madras Presidency which has the highest average of literacy there is only one educated girl for every six educated boys. The efforts for the progress of women's education in India have been quite unsatisfactory. Mrs. Margaret Cousins observed in the middle of 1935 in a bulletin in the *Indian Press* published by the International Committee for India that the present position of Indian women "represents a condition of improvement as compared with thirty years ago, though held to be below the average of the time of the Buddhist and Vedic eras when women seem to have had entire equality with men and were held in the highest honour".

The Women's Associations, namely, the Poona and Bombay Sevâ Sadans, the Saroj Nalini Dutt Nâri Mangal Samiti of Bengal, the Women's Indian Association, the Mahilâ Sevâ Samâj of Bangalore, the Arya Samâj of the Punjab etc. are carrying on adult education among women in various parts of India. The All-India Women's Conference has started the Lady Irwin College in Delhi, the first Home Science College in India. The aim of the College is said to be the orientation of girls' education to the needs of their home life. The Indian Women's Uni-

versity of Poona, the Sister Nivedita Girls' School of the Ramkrishna Mission, Sri Sri Sâradeswari Âshrama and Bâlikâ Vidyâlaya of Calcutta, and several other institutions have been trying, in their own way, to give Indian women an education which would be truly national in type, practical and industrial to a certain extent according to necessity, and productive of character and strength, by combining the modern Western methods with what are purely Indian. All these attempts are too meagre to cope with the existing conditions and to meet the requirements for the great work of uplifting Indian womanhood. The well-wishers and organizers of women's institutions in India are seriously handicapped for want of sufficient funds for the purpose.

The need for a proper women's education and its spread throughout the length and breadth of India can hardly be over-estimated. None can gainsay the fact that the work of nation-building in India has enormously suffered because of the want of proper care in improving the condition of Indian women by a healthy and vigorous education. The chronicles of all nations acknowledge their debt to mothers of great men and women. Bonaparte asked Mme. de Staël in what way he could best promote the happiness of France. Her reply was: "Instruct the mothers of the French people." The precept of Mme de Staël can be followed to the greatest advantage by the Indians with a view to promoting the happiness of India. It is said that a little boy, after reading Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, asked his mother

which of the characters she liked best. She replied, "Christian, of course; he is the hero of the story." The child said, "Mother, I like Christiana best, because when Christian set out on his pilgrimage he went alone, but when Christiana started, she took the children with her." The lesson of this popular story is too true and it has been too much neglected in the work of nation-building in India.

II

Women's education in the Vedic period was much advanced, and the upper classes gave maidens a very liberal education equally with the boys, which could win for them a dignified position in society. The women of that age held a high place in their husbands' houses which they ruled like queens. In the *Rigveda* we find: "Though she loved fine dress, it alone could not satisfy her. She was noble, independent-spirited, and fearless. She was not only a mother of heroes, but she was also herself heroic." Vispalâ, the queen of King Khela had lost her leg in a war and had it replaced by an iron one. Indrasenâ, wife of the sage, Mudgala, helped her husband in fighting their enemies. She became a charioteer, entered into the enemies' camp, and defeated them. Among the *Rigvedic* composers 26 were women. There were women who used to perform sacrifices, offer hymns to the Gods, and excelled in music and other fine arts.

The immortal names of Gârgi, Maitreyi, Ghosâ, Lopamudrâ, Mamatâ, Apâlâ, Suryâ, Indrâni, Sachi, Sârpârâjni, Visvavârâ and others remind one of the remarkable wisdom and spiritual height to which Indian women in those times attained. The rare intellectual and spiritual attainments of the Buddhist nuns were sufficient to prove that women's education in the Buddhist

period was no less advanced. The *Theri Gâthâ* was composed by 73 Buddhist abbesses. It is only in the neo-Brahmanical revival after the Buddhist era that we find that women as a class became degraded in education and culture and that they ceased to make any remarkable progress.

III

Some of the modern movements in India have set themselves to the task of achieving for Indian women the identical emancipation that the Western women of today have achieved. There are men and women in modern India, who feel the stirrings of a new life in the radical feminist movements that are going on all over the world. They are in favour of importing downright occidentalism in the work of regenerating the women of modern India. Some time ago, an Indian lady while writing on the women of modern Russia and appreciating them very much observed at the very outset: "Woman throughout the ages has allowed herself to be kept in subjection by man and used more or less as a chattel for his convenience and pleasure. Personal liberty of thought and action has lain dormant in her and thus she has been reduced to mere brute existence. It is not until this century that woman, by placing more confidence in her own intelligence has gradually begun to throw off the shackles which have hitherto bound her and has begun to use this intelligence for her own advancement and advantage. Everyone desires freedom for self-expression. Woman wants and needs recreation just as a man does. Yet, this very freedom—the birthright of every individual—is denied her. Under the capitalistic and other social orders, she is regarded as a domestic drudge and it is considered that child-bearing and rearing and family house-

keeping should be the aim and end of her existence. In the labour market, her position is no better. Bernard Shaw says, 'Under the capitalist system women found themselves worse off than men because as capitalism made a slave of the man, and then by paying the woman through him, made her his slave, she became the slave of the slave, which, is the worse sort of slavery.' What has Soviet Russia been endeavouring to accomplish for her women-folk today? So far she is the only European State that is making an honest effort to obtain the complete emancipation of woman." Those who hold such views strongly advocate for women's complete freedom of action and demand for their social, political, legal, and economic equality with men. They refer to the rapid progress of women in those matters in the advanced countries of the world. Now, what is the Western ideal of woman's emancipation and how far that ideal has been realized by the women of today? Richard Chinnathamby observes in an article on the feminist movement in India, published in the last March issue of the *Twentieth Century*: "What is the emancipation that the Western woman has achieved after such long and sustained struggle? She inherits and holds property of her own. She divorces her husband at the least sign of aggressiveness on his part. She has children if and when she likes. She appears on turf, track, court and field. She takes an active part in the Legislature of the country. She is a spoke in the wheel of constitution. She enters into every walk of life, and does man's work with equal efficiency. She acquits herself better in, and even monopolises, some departments as nursing and telephone. She votes and smokes; goes out with men friends to talkies, or for rides in the car, or grows giddy with jazz. This

is the freedom that the Western woman has achieved! This emancipation which is a social lie! The finer instincts of women and the endowing virtues of the fireside have been plucked by the roots and thrown into the street. She finds no need for them in the new order of society where everything has been reduced to a formula or mechanised. To be frank, she has moved away from emancipation in the real sense." It would be utterly unjust to say that Western women have everything bad and rotten in their endeavours for and achievements in the movement of emancipation. There have been some really great women both in Europe and America, who have uplifted womankind by dint of their talents and character, and some Western women have done honour to their sex in some of their activities for the emancipation of women all over the world. Now, the question is whether the revolutionary changes of radical feminist movements of the day are really necessary for the uplift of womankind in India, whether the ideals set up by Western womanhood would suit the environment, racial heredity, and cultural tradition of Indian womanhood. Many people in India anticipate that the radical feminist movement will be an impediment in the path of an Indian Woman's development along the lines of the glorious culture she has inherited from the hoary past. It will bring in chaos and disorder in her home and in the society to which she belongs. It will lay axe at the very root of the Indian ideal of womanhood. The virtues of the hearth will be destroyed by it and the integrity of the family unit will be lost for ever. The movement is not at all sound and sober, it will not import Western virtues, but will destroy at the same time what are best in the tradi-

tional ways of living in the history of Indian womanhood.

Sister Nivedita who thought and did much for the right education of Indian women wrote long ago : "Indian hesitation, however, about a new type of feminine education, has always been due to a misgiving as to its actual aims, and in this the people have surely been wise. Have the Hindu women of the past been a source of shame to us, that we should hasten to discard their old-time grace and sweetness, their gentleness and piety, their tolerance and childlike depth of love and pity, in favour of the first crude product of Western information and social aggressiveness? On this point India speaks with no uncertain voice. 'Granted', she says in effect, 'that a more arduous range of mental equipment is now required by women, it is nevertheless better to fail in the acquisition of this, than to fail in the more essential demand, made by the old type of training, on character. An education of the brain that uprooted humility and took away tenderness, would be no true education at all. These virtues may find different forms of expression in mediæval and modern civilisations, but they are necessary in both. All education worth having must first devote itself to the developing and consolidating of character, and only secondarily concern itself with intellectual accomplishment.' "

IV

Any movement for the uplift of Indian womanhood will certainly fail, if it does not begin with, and end in, promoting the national ideals of Indian womanhood as embodied in the history and literature of ancient India. Indian women can boast of Umâ as the grand ideal of maidenhood, of Sitâ, Sâvitri, Sati and others as the perfect ideals

of wifehood, of Gândhâri and others as the matchless ideals of motherhood, of Meerâbai etc. as the glowing ideals of saintliness and love of God, and of Padmini, Chândbibî, Jhânsî Râni, Ahalyâbâi etc. as so many ideals of strength, heroism, and resourcefulness. These ideals should be the perpetual lights for the guidance of Indian womanhood. Suited to the conditions of the modern age, Indian women must undoubtedly be made efficient as housewives and citizens too. They must have knowledge of modern arts and sciences, at the same time they must fulfil their duties in life as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers. The moral and spiritual ideal of womanhood must under all circumstances be raised high as it was done in ancient India. It is said in the *Rigveda* X. 109.8 that the chastity of a woman was protected like the throne of a mighty king. The *Râmâyana* and the *Mahâbhârata* are replete with stories of noble and virtuous women. Vâlmiki describes in immortal lines the sentiments of a faithful wife, matchless in their expression in the history of the world's literature :

"If the righteous son of Raghu wends
to forests dark and drear,
Sita steps before her husband wild
and thorny paths to clear!
Like the taster refuse water cast thy
timid thoughts aside,
Take me to the pathless jungle, bid
me by my lord abide,
Car and steed and gilded palace, vain
are these to woman's life,
Dearer is her husband's shadow to the
loved and loving wife."

Then again, when the faithfulness of a chaste lady is questioned, Sitâ's words must inspire women of India for all time to come :

"If unstained in thought and action
I have lived from day of birth,

Spare a daughter's shame and
anguish and receive her, Mother
Earth!

If in duty and devotion I have
laboured undefiled,

Mother Earth! who bore this woman,
once again receive thy child!

If in truth unto my husband I have
proved a faithful wife,
Mother Earth! relieve thy Sita from
the burden of this life!"

V

After much deliberation, Swami Vivekananda asked his countrymen not to modernize the Indian women but to allow them to develop in the footprints of Sitâ. Studying the present needs of the age he wished also that the Indian women should be taught arts and sciences which would be of benefit not only to themselves but to the country

as well, at the same time they should keep up the glorious traditions of their history and culture. He said, "To the women of this country I would say exactly what I say to the men. Believe in India and our Indian faith. Be strong and hopeful and unashamed, and remember that with something to take, Hindus have immeasurably more to give than any other people of the world."

Considering the fact that the greatness of the Hindu mother is writ large in the history of Indian culture, the exponents of women's education and the advocates of feminist movement in India should first of all remove the causes of physical decline and appalling ignorance among Indian women, and then lead them along the national lines of education with the efficiency needed for the exigencies of the twentieth century.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

BY DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

"They call Him by a multitude of names, Who is but One"; "A single Fire that burns on many altars"; "Even as He sheweth, so is He named"; these are affirmations taken from the sacrificial hymns of the *Rigveda*. "As He is approached, so He becomes"; "It is because of His great abundance,—or because He can be so variously participated in,—that they call Him by so many names." By way of comment, we cite St. Thomas Aquinas, "The many aspects of these names are not empty and vain, for there corresponds to all of them one single reality represented by them in a manifold and imperfect manner" (*Summa*, 1, 13, 4 and 2). Nothing, perhaps, so strangely impresses or bewilders a Christian student

of Saint Ramakrishna's life as the fact that this Hindu of the Hindus, without in any way repudiating his Hinduism, but for the moment forgetting it, about 1866 completely surrendered himself to the Islamic way, repeated the name of Allah, wore the costume, and ate the food of a Mussulman. This self-surrender to what we should call in India the waters of another current of the single river of truth resulted only in a direct experience of the beatific vision, not less authentic than before. Seven years later Ramakrishna in the same way proved experimentally the truth of Christianity. He was now for a time completely absorbed in the idea of Christ, and had no room for any other thought. You might have supposed him

a convert. What really resulted was that he could now affirm on the basis of personal experience, "I have also practised all religions, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and I have also followed the paths of the different Hindu sects. . . . The lake has many shores. At one the Hindu draws water in a pitcher, and calls it *jala*, at another the mussulman in leather bottles, and calls it *páni*, at a third the Christian finds what he calls 'water'".

Such an understanding may be rare, but is absolutely normal in the East: as the *Bhagavad-Gitá* expresses it, "There is no deity that I am not, and in case any man be truly the worshipper of any deity whatever, it is I that am the cause of his devotion and its fruit. . . . Howsoever men approach Me, even so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine". Similarly the *Bhakta Mála*: "No one is ignorant of the doctrines of his own religion. . . . Therefore let every man, so far as in him lieth, help the reading of the scriptures, whether those of his own church, or those of another." And similarly also in Islám, "My heart has become capable of every form. . . . it is a convent for Christian monks, a temple for idols, the place of pilgrimage at Mecca, the tables of the Torah, the book of the *Quran*: I follow the religion of Love, whichever way His camels take".

Such an understanding is rarer still, and one may say abnormal to the Western type of humanity. If the modern Christian does not quite endorse the conduct of Charlemagne's heroes at Saragossa,—“The synagogues they enter and the mosques, whose every wall with mallet and axes they shatter: they break in pieces small the idols . . . the heathen folk in crowds to the font baptismal are driven, to take Christ's yoke upon them. . . . Thus out of

heathen darkness have five-score thousand been redeemed, and be now true Christians", it is at least quite certain that for every man that has died by religious persecution in India, ten thousand have died in Europe, and equally certain that the activity of Christian missions still quite frankly endorses a programme of conversion by force,—the force of money, not indeed paid out in cash, but expended on education and medical aid bestowed with ulterior motives. "Force", as Lafcadio Hearn once wrote, "the principal instrument of Christian propagandism in the past, is still the force behind our missions". No greater offenders are to be found than missionaries against the commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour". I do not however at all wish to dwell upon this point of view, but rather to point out that although religious tolerance in Europe has never as in Asia been founded upon the belief that all religions are true, but rather founded on a growing indifference to all religious doctrines, an intellectual basis for a willing tolerance of other forms of belief is by no means wanting in Christianity. John indeed speaks of the "True Light that lighteth every man". Even St. Thomas admits that some of the Gentiles who lived before Christ's temporal birth may have been saved. For as Clement of Alexandria had long since said, "There was always a natural manifestation of the one Almighty God, amongst all right-thinking men." Eckhart speaks of "One of our most ancient philosophers who found the truth long, long before God's birth, ere ever there was Christian faith at all as it is now", and again much more boldly, "He to whom God is different in one thing from another and to whom God is dearer in one thing than another, that man is a barbarian, still in the wilds, a child."

Note that "Merlyn made the round table in tokenyng of the roundenes of the world for by the round table is the world sygnefyed by ryghte. For all the world crysten and hethen repayren unto the round table . . . (that) by them which should be felawes of the round table the truth of the Sancgreal should be well knowen." (Malory, XIV. 2). The truth is with Blake when he says, "The religions of all nations are derived from each nation's different reception of the poetic genius* which is everywhere called the spirit of prophecy. . . . As all men are alike (though infinitely various), so all religions, and as all similars have one source." The Vedic and Christian traditions are never tired of employing "Truth", "Being", and "Beauty", as preeminently fitting essential names of God. Now we are well aware that in this human world there cannot be a conceptual knowledge or expression of truth except in some way; just as there can be no perceptible beauty except of some kind. What is true in all truths, or what is beautiful in all beauties, cannot itself be any one of these truths or beauties. As Dionysius says, "If anyone in seeing God understood what he saw, he saw not God himself, but one of those things that are His." Belief in Revelation or Audition does not mean that the very words in which the truth is expressed in any case contain the truth but rather that they point to it, for as St. Thomas says, "Everything has truth of nature according to the *degree* in which it imitates the knowledge of God", "Our intellect considers God *according to the mode derived from creatures*", and finally "The thing known is in the knower *according to the mode of the knower*." All concepts of God, even the most nearly adequate, are thus man-made; as we say in India, "He takes

* Vedic *Kairtva*.

the forms that are imagined by His worshippers". Very surely He is not to be thought of as confined by or fully expressed by any of these forms, Who is Himself the single form of every form, and transcendent with respect to each and every form; it is from this point of view that many a Christian teacher has affirmed that "Nothing true can be said of God". The value of concepts, of any expression verbal or visible, *per verbum in intellectu conceptum*, is one of use; the concept is of value not as a thing in itself, but as dispositive to an essential vision, *not* in any likeness. The beauty of the formula, the verbal or visual icon, poignant as it may be in Christian gospel or Vedic liturgy, is not an end in itself, but referred to him who uses it, is an invitation. The purpose of any art, and no less of that highest art of theology, in which all other arts, whether literary or plastic subsist *per excellentiam*, is to teach, to delight, and above all to move (Augustine's *docere, delectare, movere*). An exclusive attachment to any one dogma, any one group of verbal or visual symbols, however pertinent, is an act of idolatry; the Truth itself is inexpressible.

If the image is His whose image it is, the colours and the art are ours. Whoever claims that his own manner of understanding and statement is the only true one, is moved not by the vision of God, but by spiritual pride. Such a believer, as Ibnu'l 'Arabî says, "praises none but himself, for his God is made by himself, and to praise the work is to praise the maker of it: its excellence or imperfection belongs to the maker. For this reason he blames the beliefs of others, which he would not do if he were just. . . . If he understood the saying of Junayd, 'The colour of the water is the colour of the vessel containing it', he would not interfere with

others, but would perceive God in every form and every belief. He has opinion, not knowledge: therefore God said, 'I am in my servant's opinion of Me', that is, 'I do not manifest myself to him save in the form of his belief'. God is absolute or unrestricted as He pleases; and the God of religious belief is subject to limitations, for He is the God who is contained in the heart of His servant". The Oriental Gnostic has no fault to find with any Catholic doctrine; judged by Vedic standards, one can say that Christianity is true and lovely, true so far as any formulation can be true, lovely in so far as any thing, as distinguished from One who is no thing, can be lovely.

Moreover, it can be positively affirmed that every notable Christian doctrine is also explicitly propounded in every other dialect of the primordial tradition: I refer to such doctrines as those of the eternal and temporal births, that of the single essence and two natures, that of the Father's impassibility, that of the significance of sacrifice, that of transubstantiation, that of the nature of the distinction between the contemplative and active lives and of both from the life of pleasure, that of eternity from aeviternity and time, and so forth. Literally hundreds of texts could be cited from Christian and Islamic, Vedic, Taoist and other scriptures and their patristic expositions, in close and sometimes literally verbal agreement. To cite a trio of instances at random, whereas Damascene has to say that "He Who Is, is the principal of all names applied to God", in the *Katha Upanishad* we have "He Is, by that alone is He to be apprehended": whereas St. Thomas says, "These things are said to be under the sun which are generated and corrupted", the *Satapatha Brâhmana* affirms that "Everything under the sun is in the power of death";

and whereas Dionysius speaks of That "Which not to see or know is really to see and know", The *Jaiminîya Upanishad Brâhmana* has it that "The thought of God in his by whom it is unthought, or if he thinks the thought he does not understand." All traditional teaching employs side by side the *via affirmative* and the *via remotionis*, and in this sense is in agreement with Boethius, that "Faith is a mean between contrary heresies." Sin is defined by the Thomist and in India in one and the same way as a "departure from the order to the end." All tradition is agreed that the last end of man is happiness.

On the other hand, while there can be only one metaphysics, there must be not merely a variety of religions, but a hierarchy of religions, in which the truth is more or less adequately expressed, according to the intellectual capacities of those whose religions they are. Nor do I mean to deny that there can be heterodox doctrines, properly to be condemned as heresies, but only that any and every belief is a heresy if it be regarded as the truth, and not merely as a signpost of the truth. Pantheism, for example, is equally a heresy from Christian, Islamic, and Hindu points of view; a confusion of things as they are in themselves with things as they are in God, of the essence of the participant with the participated Essence, is an egregious error, and yet not so great an error as to assume that the being of things as they are in themselves is altogether their own being. The distinction of essence from nature of the Sâmkhya system is true from a certain point of view, and yet false when regarded from the standpoint of a higher synthesis, as in the Vedânta, and similarly in Christianity, where from one point of view essence and nature are the universe apart, and yet in the

simplicity of the First Cause are one impartite substance.

It is perfectly legitimate to feel that a given religion is more adequately true than another; to hold, for example, that Catholicism is more adequately true than Protestantism, or Hinduism than Buddhism. Real distinctions can be drawn: Christianity maintains for example that metaphysics, though the highest of the other sciences, is inferior to the sacred science of theology; Hinduism is primarily metaphysical, and only secondarily religious, hence the controversies as to the true significance of "deification", and hence it is that however much a Hindu may find himself in enthusiastic agreement with the angelic and celestial doctors (Thomas and Bonaventura), he is more at home with certain giants of Christian thought whose orthodoxy is suspect, I mean Erigena, Eckhart, Behmen, Blake, and more at home with Plotinus than with the representatives of exoteric Christian orthodoxy; more at home with St. John than with St. James, more in sympathy with Christian Platonism than with Christian Aristotelianism, scarcely at all in sympathy with Protestant theologies, and far more in sympathy with Qabbalistic interpretations of Genesis and Exodus, than with any historical approach. So that we do not for a moment mean to maintain the impropriety of all dogmatic controversy. We must bear in mind that even within the framework of a presumably homogenous faith it is taken for granted that one and the same truths must be presented in various ways suited to the audience, and that this is not a matter of contradictory statement, but of "convenient means". What we do maintain is that all paths converge; that the Wayfarer, having already trodden a given path, will under all normal circumstances sooner reach that point at which all

progress ends,—“On reaching God, all progress ends”,—than if he retrace his steps and start afresh.

What we must *not* forget is that no one can finally pronounce upon the truth of a given religion, who has not lived it, as Ramakrishna lived both Christianity and Islam, as well as Hinduism; and that once convinced that only one's own truth is true, "It is", as Professor Briggs of Drew University lately remarked "the easiest thing imaginable to take the concepts of other faiths, abstract them from their contexts, and demolish them." For example, how easily the Islamic definition of Christianity as a polytheistic religion could be deduced from the considered statement of St. Thomas, that "We do not say *the only God*, because deity is common to several." (*Summa*, I, 31. 2c, Dominican Fathers' translation). In the same way a pantheistic definition of Christianity could easily be deduced from St. Thomas' "A thing has being by participation. . . We must consider . . . the emanation of all being from the universal cause, which is God." (*Summa*, I. 44. 1 ad 1 and 45 1c, Dominican Father's translation).

What is then in the last analysis the value of comparative religion? Certainly not to convince us that one mode of belief is the preparation for another, or to lead to a decision as to which is "best". One might as well regard ancient or exotic styles of art as preparations for and aspirations towards one's own. Nor can the value of this discipline be thought of as one conducing to the development of a single universally acceptable syncretic faith embodying all that is "best" in every faith; such a "faith" as this would be a mechanical and lifeless monstrosity, by no means a stream of living water, but a sort of religious Esperanto. Com-

parative religion can demonstrate that all religions spring from a common source, are as Jeremias says, the "dialects of a single spiritual speech". We cannot therefore take the formulæ of one religion and insert them in another without incongruity. One can recognize that many formulæ are identical in different religions; confront for example St. Thomas, "Creation, which is the emanation of all being from the not-being, which is nothing." (*Summa*, I, 45. 1c) with the Vedic "Being is engendered from non-being." (*asatah sad ajâyata*, RV. X. 72. 3), and such comparisons can be validly employed (even by the most orthodox) as what St. Thomas calls "extrinsic and probable proofs" of the validity of a given dogma.

But of greater value than this is the clarification that results when the formulæ of one tradition are collated with those of another. For as we have already seen, every tradition is necessarily a partial representation of the truth intended by tradition universally considered; in each tradition something is suppressed, or omitted, or obscure which in another may be found more extensively, more logically, or more brilliantly developed. What then is clear and full in one tradition can be used to develop the meaning of what may be hardly more than alluded to in another. Or even if in one tradition a given doctrine has been definitely named, a realization of the significance of this definition may lead to the recognition and correlation of a whole series of affirmations in another tradition, in all of which the same doctrine is implicit, but which had previously been overlooked in their relation to one another. It is thus a great advantage to be able to make use of the expression *Vedic exemplarism*; or conversely, to speak of Christian *yoga* immediately brings out

the analogy between St. Bernard's *consideratio*, *contemplatio*, and *raptus* with Sanskrit *dhâranâ*, *dhyâna*, and *samâdhi*.

To many a Christian, no doubt, Sri Ramakrishna's primary attachment to the cult of the Great Mother gives offence. Nothing is indeed more usual than to consider that Christianity, whether for better or worse, adheres to purely masculine interpretations of divine being; the Christian speaks of a Father, but not of a Mother in Heaven, whereas in India the ancient love of the Magna Mater maintains itself at the present day on equal terms with that of the Propator. And yet the doctrine of the maternity of the divine nature is repeatedly, however reservedly, affirmed in Christian theology, fundamentally in that of the "two natures", more explicitly in that of the temporal and eternal natures and in that of the Generation of the Son as a vital operation from conjoint principles,—*Procession Verbi in divinis dicitur generatio . . . quae est operatio vitae . . . et propter hoc proprie dicitur genitum et Filius.*" (St. Thomas, *Summa*, I. 27. 2, cf. I. 98. 2c "In every act of generation there is an active and a passive principle"). It is inasmuch as "Eternal filiation does not depend on a temporal mother" (*ib.* III. 35. 5 ad 2) that Eckhart can speak of the "Act of fecundation latent in eternity", and say that "It is God who has the treasure and the bride in Him", that the "Godhead wantons with the Word", and that "His birth in *Mary ghostly* was to God better pleasing than His nativity of her in the flesh". One sees that when St. Thomas speaks of "that Nature by which the Father begets" (*Summa*, I. 41. 5) the reference is really to the Magna Mater, the Vedic Aditi, not to mention other names of the One Madonna, and sees what is really meant by the otherwise

obscure assertion that notwithstanding primary matter "recedes from likeness to God, yet . . . it retains a certain likeness to the divine being" (*ib.* I. 14. 11 ad 3). *Natura naturata* indeed "retains" a certain likeness to "Natura naturans, Creatrix, Deus": Mother Earth to Mother Nature, Mary in the flesh to Mary ghostly. One need only consider Genesis I. 27 "To the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" in connection with Galatians III. 28, "According to the image of Him that created him, where there is neither male nor female" to realize that whereas Essence and Nature *in divinis* are one simple substance without composition, the very fact that the conjoint principles can be separately exemplified is proof that the Supreme Identity can be truly spoken of either as Father or as Mother, or as Father-Mother, just as in the Vedas the Divine "Parents" are indifferently "Fathers" (*pitará*, du. masc.) or "Mothers" (*mátará*, du. fem.), or as "That One, spirated, despirated" (*tad ekam ânât avátam*, RV. X. 129. 2, where no gender is implied, cf. Eckhart's "Where these two abysses hang, equally spirated, despirated, there is the Supreme Being").

Thus we may go so far as to assert on behalf of a true "comparative religion", that however a religion may be self-sufficient if it be followed to the very end to which it is directed, there can hardly be supposed a way so plain that it could not here and there be better illuminated by other lights than that of the pilgrim's private lantern, the light of any lantern being only a refraction of the Light of lights. A diversity of routes is not merely appropriate to a diversity of travellers, who are neither all alike, nor start from one and the same point, but may be of incalculable aid to any traveller who can

rightly read the map; for where all roads converge, there can be none of them that does not help to clarify the true position of the centre of the maze, "short of which we are still in a duality". Hence we say that the very implications of the phrase "religious tolerance" are to be avoided: diversity of faith is not a matter for unwilling "toleration", but of divine appointment. And this will hold good even if we sincerely believe that other faiths are inferior to our own, and in this sense relatively "evil": for as Augustine says, "The admirable beauty of the universe is made up of all things. In which even what is called evil, well-ordered and in its place, is the eminent commendation of what is good" (*Enchir XIII*), whom St. Thomas quotes with approval, adding that "The universe, the present creation being supposed, cannot be better, because of the most beautiful order given to things by God." (*Summa*, I, 48. 1 and I, 25. 6 ad 3). As Augustine also says, "There is no evil in things, but only in the sinner's misuse of them." (*De Dod. Christ III. 12* As to the sinner's "misuse", who can assure us of that, with respect to which it has been said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged"?)

In the matter of direction towards the Kingdom of Heaven "within you"*, the modern world is far more lacking in the will to seek, than likely to be led astray by false direction. From the Satanic point of view there could hardly be imagined a better activity than to be engaged in the "conversion of the heathen" from one to another body of dogmas: that, surely, was not what was meant by the injunction, "Go thou and preach the Kingdom of God",—or was He mistaken, when He said "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you."?

* Sanskrit *hrdayâkâse*, *antarbhütasya khe*.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE MODERN WORLD

BY SIR S. RADHAKRISHNAN

It is not necessary to speak of the great influence of Ramakrishna on modern thought. It has become a part of India's history, and there is no necessity to emphasize Ramakrishna's achievements. But it is out of a sense of self-respect that we are gathered to celebrate the centenary of that great saint who has given the message, "Truth is one, sages call it by various names." The holding of the Parliament of Religions is most significant. It was not unknown in ancient times.

EXAMPLE AND PRECEPT

In these days of communal differences, which are due not so much to religious motives as to economic and political causes, the Parliament of Religions is an important step to bring about a better understanding. The special contribution of Ramakrishna was that he put to the test the religious views by the logic of life, and established the equality of all religions by example and precept.

The idea of Parliament of Religions is consistent with the spirit of mutual appreciation and toleration which is associated with the great mystic traditions of Hindu religion.

The concepts of religion is sought to be explained by various persons according to their views and experiences. Those who worship ignorance are described, in the Upanishad, as entering darkness and those who worship knowledge as entering greater darkness. There are people who are conceited in their ignorance just as there are persons who are conceited in their knowledge. At present, though people find satisfac-

tion of their physical and psychological needs, though they have wealth, they have still a hunger within, which they cannot satisfy. The happenings in the world, the victory achieved by the sword, the great calamities that have visited mankind, must make men think seriously, whether beneath all these there is any fundamental spiritual assurance, whether there is anything Real behind the apparently transient.

So long as human beings are composed of the perishable and imperishable, they cannot but ask themselves the question whether the transient is the only reality, whether the temporary is the only permanent.

There are others conceited in their knowledge, claiming to provide a solution for all problems, claiming to dispel the great mystery, thinking that they possess omniscient knowledge. Neither group is capable of seeing reality. For there is something beyond ignorance and knowledge. After all their intellectual discoveries and rational explanations, men are at one time or other inescapably confronted with the question: "Is there not something beyond all these? Is there no other power or purpose behind these passing clouds?"

When such questions are raised, men cannot be satisfied with such explanations as that the relative is the absolute, the transient is the permanent and similar expressions. The wonder of existence is a puzzle that confronts man for ever.

THE FAILURE OF REASON

The results of reason, have been great, but greater have been the

failures of reason. We are today more enlightened. The barbarians of old received solace and consolation from the thought of the 'mystery of the divine'. Science has put an end to that. But our life has become dull and prosaic.

But a world perfectly understood is no world at all, a problem completely solved is no problem at all. Likewise, a God that is fully understood is no God at all. The fundamental difference between the Eastern and Western outlook is that the East recognizes the mystery that is divine and admits man's inability to fathom that mystery. It has contented itself with efforts to explore that mystery. The West thinks it is possible to explore all realities, but it is puzzled when certain realities do not offer a solution.

For a correct approach to reality, it is necessary to abandon the conceit of ignorance and the conceit of knowledge. The proper attitude is that of the mystical tradition of the East. One might grasp reality through revelation, through intuition, but not through the method of the intellect. It cannot be reached through a sharpening of the intellect by mere learning. Mere individual development can never take men to the heart of reality.

MAN'S STUPIDITY AND SELFISHNESS

One of the speakers have referred to the affront to civilization that has been perpetrated in Africa. That is a question that has occurred to me many times. How is it that in spite of the great intellectual attainments and scientific advance made by men it has not been possible to translate their great aspirations and higher ideals into actuality? The answer to that question lies in the mistaking of true religion for dogma.

When I ponder over this question I have always been reminded of the statue of Rodin—a physical and intellectual giant, perfect in every respect, but bending down his head in a thoughtful mood. What was wrong with that colossal man? It spoke of the utter impotence of man, because of his split personality. Man still has in him the germs of stupidity and selfishness. The world needs eradication of these germs. So long as they exist, wars are inevitable. There is division in the world, because there is division in the soul of man. He is still some kind of uncontrollable animal, a clever animal, but nothing more than that. The intellectual progress has not touched the fundamental weaknesses of mankind. He has not the courage to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan!"

People care for the hygiene of the bodies. They seem to care little about the hygiene of the soul.

So long as these germs are there wars are inevitable. Wars take place in the world, because, there is war in the soul of man himself. There is dissension in the inner self. The split-self continues to exist. Mankind remains no more than a horde of clever animals.

RAMAKRISHNA'S CONCEPTION OF RELIGION

Ramakrishna's conception of religion was practice of the presence of God. It is this mystical tradition with which ancient religion was associated. There are the religious scriptures. They are to be understood. Their meaning and comprehension is an experience in itself. The Divine Music of these scriptures cannot be translated into words, which will express the inexhaustibility of truth. The silent worship when one is in communion with God is an experience which provides a negative

explanation of the existence of the Supreme Power. But man being human, must find a logical embodiment of that supreme truth. This truth is transcendental and refuses to be defined by formulas and categories. To this extent, the existence of God is proved,—only in a negative way.

Critics again may say that mere non-being is nothing. That only proves the intellectual inefficiency of such critics. Simply because one does not find an empirical embodiment for the Fundamental Reality, it appears altogether non-existent to the feeble-minded.

Then the critics might attempt to translate the Reality in the highest terms of human intelligence. Life can understand life. Spiritual matters can be comprehended by Spirituality. Every one has the divine spark in him. If he cannot comprehend the Supreme Truth, he can at least apprehend it. If man's highest category is 'Purusha' (Person), then the Supreme Reality can be described as the 'Uttama Purusha' (Supreme Person). This Uttama Purusha supplements the characteristics of the human being.

Thus, though the Reality cannot be conveyed through the medium of language, these may be considered the means of doing that: First there is the austerity of silence. Then there is the method of negative description, and finally the apprehension of God through the divine in one's self.

RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

All these are ways of expressing one and the same truth. All the religions of the world take their stand on the supreme truth. But this kind of toleration is not to be mistaken for a dislike of dogma. It is not a revolt against conservatism. It is to be regarded as a positive course of nature, a spiritual

development which recognizes the rootedness of religions in one and the same fundamental truth.

It would be untrue to say that God revealed himself exclusively to any one person or sect. The greatness of the teaching of Ramakrishna lies in the fact that he was able to appreciate and recognize the essential background and unity in all the different faiths and religions.

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF INDIA

As regards the present-day conditions of India the question arises, why in spite of our pretensions to spirituality, we are in such conditions as obtain all over the country?

Upto the age of Renaissance and Reformation in the West, the East kept pace with the West on the path of progress. Thereafter the East lagged behind while the West continued on its march. This is due to the resistance to change, offered by the East, and the readiness to change which characterizes the West. This has resulted in the progress of the West and the stagnation of the East. The difference between the East and the West is the same as the difference between the old Egyptian and the young Greek of ancient times. The Greek kept an open mind, without shutting out ideas, whereas the Egyptian priest represented orthodoxy, represented a long memory of the past pressing down on him.

IN THE NAME OF ORTHODOXY

At present in the name of orthodoxy the Indians close their minds, shut out new ideas which have contributed towards progress. When religion in the country was progressive, the Indians possessed mental resilience, and flexibility and elasticity of temper.

In every age there were reformers, who were repudiated by orthodoxy ;

the great Rishis and teachers of the past who had contributed towards progress, were denounced by others. Sankaracharya, who is today claimed to represent orthodoxy, was in his days, denounced as a heretic by Mandana-mishra. That very heretic at present has become the champion of orthodoxy.

If today the Indians find themselves in a condition of stagnation, it is because they have given up that attitude of instinctive challenge to authority, a sort of rebellion against things repugnant to reason. Such an outlook would have carried them forward on their march.

PRIESTS v. PROPHETS

Today, some people believe that a "parliament of no religions" would solve the problems of the world, because religions have failed to solve them. But such a solution, is impossible. No doubt the organized religions are the outcome of the efforts of priests who have no real insight at truth. The religion as organized by the priests is not the same religion as founded by the prophets.

But the absence of religion will not solve the problems. People cannot be mere contented cattle, even if all their

worldly needs were satisfied. In every human being, there is the dream of a higher life, and if this dream is not operative, man cannot call himself a human being. So long as higher aspirations exist in man, so long as there exists a perpetual endeavour, a ceaseless striving for something higher, nobler and better, man cannot but be a religious being.

THE GREATEST PRAYER

God never addresses congregations. It is a private communion which each individual has to establish with God, in his own way. Beneath all different variations and details, Religion has one authentic Voice calling for universal compassion. Great religious teachers never said that if a man did not accept their respective teachings, he would be doomed. The basic truth was laid down in every religion that the performance of good to humanity constituted a true religious life.

True religion must establish Universal Brotherhood. The greatest prayer is :

"May all cross the difficult places of life,

"May all see the face of happiness,

"May all attain the Wisdom,

"May all rejoice everywhere."

EASTERN TOLERANCE AND CHRISTIANITY

BY REV. WENDELL PHILLIPS

I am sure that some of you are saying, "Well, what is a Christian Minister doing here?" Not that this is a strange place for a Christian Minister at all, but many people think it is.

Do you know, I had to tell Swami Nikhilananda not to announce too widely in New Rochelle the fact that I was going to be here, for some of

my good friends who heard about it came and said to me, "Well now, here, what are you doing? Are you quite all right?"

I am glad to be here. I am very happy to say that I believe that Christianity has still a great deal to learn from the Orient.

Now, I have good authority for say-

ing that, for when Christian missionaries went out into India some years ago, Phillips Brooks, perhaps our greatest Christian preacher, said, "I am very happy to see Christianity going into India, not so much because Christianity will mean a great deal to India, but because India will give a great deal to Christianity."

It would be well for us to consider for a few moments what the Orient, and what Ramakrishna in particular has brought and is bringing and will bring to Christianity. In the first place, I believe the Orient is bringing us a sense of the reality of the unseen world.

Now, I am not a mystic. I wish I were. Like the great disciple of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, I have both my feet on the ground, and I am not carried away by ecstasies. I do not put much stock in visions which one man can see and which no other man can see. I don't understand a man like this, who for twelve years can go off and wander about and let his mind wander and then come back on the earth. My religion does not quite understand a man who can teach another man and have him go from one form into another, and have that second man changed. That to me is a strange religion.

But these things are real. I don't understand them. I don't understand radio; I don't understand hypnotism; I don't understand mathematics; I don't understand many things, but these things are real. I believe that the Orient is going to show us of the West how real they are. I believe Jesus is being revealed more clearly for us through the eyes of the East. I believe Jesus had more of the spirit of this man (Ramakrishna) in him than we realize. We speak of a man having psychic qualities, of having some energy flow from him into other people and

healing them. Jesus had that, and we are just beginning to realize it.

How did He work these miracles? Because He had this same power which we are just beginning to look into; He was clairvoyant; He knew beforehand what people were thinking; He knew, as these men knew, what was going to happen. These things are strange; we hear nowadays of levitation and of a man who in a room is seen to rise off the floor and then go back again, and then we think of Jesus walking on the water. What connection is there?

We read of the materialization of bodies, of men who leave this body and go into another body, pass through doors, pass through walls, and obstructions. Jesus, we read, did that. Men in our days are discovering scientifically that these things are possible. Strange things are happening which I do not understand, but which have long been happening in the East, and which we now are seeing for the first time.

Just last week the wife of Sir Conan Doyle, who died some years ago, was trying to reach him, and she went to a medium and asked if she could reach her husband, and the medium tried to get the spirit of Sir Conan Doyle. And he got his spirit. Mrs. Doyle was very, very ill of a serious disease, and the spirit of Sir Conan Doyle, who had been a doctor when he was on this earth, a medical doctor, came through and said, "Take down carefully what I am going to tell you. I am going to give you the full description of my wife's illness," and he gave the illness word by word. The woman had been taken to a hospital, where the doctors made a careful study, a careful diagnosis, and various tests and then wrote down their results, the results of their findings. And after all that had been done, the son of Sir Conan Doyle who had a

message from the medium carried it to the doctors, and the doctors said, "Where did you get this? It is exactly what the trouble is with your mother."

Those things are happening. I don't understand them, but they are real and we today are learning of these things which have been coming to us in echoes out of the East. Science today is telling us that these things are true. Matter and mind are now being discovered. What is matter? What is mind? What is the spirit? We do not know. We are just beginning to find out. I am told that the physicists have lately invented a machine which can spin a wheel, at the rate of, I believe, twenty-five thousand revolutions a minute, or a second, or some such preposterous speed—it doesn't matter—they can build a machine to spin that wheel, but they cannot build a wheel which will stand it. The very speed on that wheel will break it, and it will float off into thin air, not in a piece by itself, but simply that the wheel disappears and cannot be found. It goes off into energy, into mind, into spirit—I do not know.

Strange things are happening in the world today, and science is now telling us so.

What is matter? If I sound a note, you hear my voice. We hear about eight octaves of sound, eight or ten of them on the piano, or on the organ, but there are dozens of octaves of sound or of light, which we, with our poor human eyes and ears, cannot see or hear. What is that matter? Spirit? Mind? Do men like this have the key to those hidden octaves which we do not understand? Think of the octaves of sight! There are sixty-four octaves of sight. We have just one. Our little pitiful human eyes can see but just one octave. The photographic plates are sensitive to six of these oct-

aves of ultra-violet rays, they are sensitive to ten of these octaves of infra-red rays, and to seventeen of X-rays, and the rest of the rays which are made up of gamma rays, wireless rays—sixty-four of them, and we only see one!

If we know so little of the physical world, how little then do we know of the spiritual world even those of us who are Christians?

Now, in the second place I believe we can learn from the teachings of Ramakrishna not only the mysteries of the unseen world, but we can learn once again that great truth that God is a universal God; He is not the God of the Christians, Jews, of the Mohammedans—He is the God of all. You remember the word of Ramakrishna himself when he sent out his disciples. He said, "Above all let there be no barriers."

No barriers! The Christians must learn that. I spent three years in the Orient, in the Mohammedan world. There they have less barriers than we Christians. There is no barrier of colour there. It is a beautiful thing to see a world that exists with no barrier of colour. All men are brothers. Oh, we Christians surely have something to learn of this beautiful experience of Ramakrishna, and to gather from that experience the principles of Christianity, the teachings of our Christ. We have the teachings, but this man has had the experiences of the Christ. How blind we are! How blind we are! Christ, the Oriental, why should he come to us? Who are we? Anglo-Saxon, Western people. What does Christianity have to do with us?

I think one of the most beautiful things about this man was the fact that on an occasion the disciples were gathered around that fire fifty years after the birth of Ramakrishna, and there Vivekananda was telling of the

story of Christ; and these men, the disciples, took vows that they, like Christ would go out into the world and serve Him as they served their God, and after these vows were taken, the disciples discovered that it was Christmas Eve, the night before the birth of Christ.

Oh, we Christians, must learn that God is universal. We have been too tribal; we must learn that God wishes well to no single group, no single race, no single tribe, but that He loves all people. There is a legend of Katamabutka, who was just about to enter Nirvana, to eternal rest. He stopped just before he got there and said, "Wait, there are others who are not here. I shall not enter into my eternal rest until the very devils themselves are walking in the paths of peace."

There is a legend also that Jesus in

those hidden years when we lose track of him between the period of his boyhood and his manhood went out into the Orient, into Persia, India, and into Tibet, and learned a great deal from the wisdom of the men he found there. And this legend tells us that in Tibet in a certain monastery there is an inscription on the wall that says; "Here lives Saint Jesus, best of the sons of men." And then there is a description of what he did there during the years. I believe, of course, it is legend, but it is a beautiful legend that our Lord turned to the Orient, that he might more fully understand God and man.

We here tonight, all of us, we Christians especially, can turn once more to the Orient to gain there a clearer vision of the truth, to gain there a clearer vision of God, of God the Father of us all.

A LITANY TO RAMAKRISHNA

BY HENRIETTA HOLMES EARLE

Master of song and joy Thou art
—A very Krishna Incarnate—
Master of wisdom's deepest heart
To Thee our love we consecrate.

Master of knowledge limitless
—A very Buddha Incarnate—
Master of heaven's gifts, nothing less,
To Thee our love we consecrate.

Master of love and tender ways
—A very Christ Incarnate—
Master of Truth that always stays
To Thee our love is consecrate.

Master of joy, wisdom and love
—A very God Incarnate—
Master who comes through our life from
above
To Thee our life is consecrate.

THE APPEAL OF THE GITA TO THE INDIVIDUAL

BY R. RAMAKRISHNAN, M.A., L.T.

The *Bhagavad-Gitâ* is regarded on all hands as the *Bible* of Hinduism. Every Hindu, to whatever sect he or she may belong, to whatever particular system of philosophy he or she may owe allegiance, regards the *Gitâ* as his or her spiritual guide. The daily study of the *Gitâ*, and ceaseless meditation on its teachings are thought of as the primary duties of the Hindus. It is not uncommon even now to find persons who, as they return home after a bath or are on their way to a shrine, recite the *Gitâ* from beginning to end, believing that such recitation will confer great religious merit by attuning the mind to noble thoughts. The saint who has reached the very last plane of spiritual practice and the novitiate who is just on the threshold of the spiritual path, both alike resort to the *Gitâ* for light and guidance. The Monist, the Qualified Monist, the Dualist, and the Pluralist all quote the *Gitâ* in support of the theological and philosophical positions taken by them. Even persons and societies working for mere material ends take a quotation from the *Gitâ* for their motto. The appeal of the *Gitâ* is thus universal; age does not wither it, nor does custom stale its infinite variety. It denies help to no one; according to the needs of each and in consonance with the capacities of each, it confers solace, and bestows bliss.

In view of this comprehensive nature of its appeal, it is rather surprising to note the fact that the *Gitâ* is not an independent treatise in itself. It is not a book written at the table with the object of elucidating philosophical principles to the populace. It is a small

production, consisting of only seven hundred verses, and can easily be read from cover to cover in an hour and a half. It is in the nature of a conversation between a wise person and a disciple. The elucidation of the *Gitâ* has vital connections with the circumstances of its exposition. It owes its exposition to particular circumstances—and curiously enough they were certainly not ideal for any philosophical intercourse or spiritual teaching. We must remember then that the *Gitâ* is a part, and a very infinitesimal one, of the famous epic the *Mahâbhârata* which contains in main an account of the long animosity between two branches of a royal family. The peculiar circumstances which led to the teaching of the *Gitâ* are quite well known. When the Pândava brothers assembled on the battlefield in order to defeat the Kaurava hosts who denied to them their legitimate possessions and turned a deaf ear to all missions for a peaceful settlement, Arjuna, the bravest and the manliest (in its widest sense) of the Pândavas, suddenly refused to fight, being unwilling to acquire even kingship as a result of immense bloodshed. Sri Krishna, 'the villain of the piece', then instructed him as to what his duties were, and persuaded Arjuna to agree to fight. The *Gitâ* is merely the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna on the field of battle and on the eve of war. It is really astonishing that a series of teachings expounded in such a very uncongenial atmosphere should have become an object of reverent study in *Âshramas* and *Tapovanâs*. There must be something then in the *Gitâ*

which transcends the limitations of the physical environments of its original utterance, something which in addition to solving very satisfactorily the thorny problem that was the immediate cause of its appearance has deep significance to the struggles of different human beings in different stages of evolution. It is as if Sri Krishna did not expound the *Gitâ* to Arjuna alone, for the specific purpose of making him perform his duty, unpleasant certainly, but nevertheless a duty, but uttered it separately to each individual, then living and yet to be born. It will be an interesting study to examine in what manner the *Gitâ* satisfies a felt want, in what way it fills a gap in, how it fits into, the life of every human being.

Some day in his life every man will find himself on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, and what is more, find himself placed in the same dilemma as Arjuna. Arjuna then is symbolical of man, and we may add, of the man who is out to secure his birthright that he has been disinherited of. Divinity is man's native state, but owing to several causes, man has been banished from his motherland and is now an inhabitant of an alien land peopled by beings with whom he has cultivated close acquaintance and whom he loves dearly. The urge for returning to the original home is never absent in him, though the pleasures and attractions of his present abode sometimes repress that urge and make it dormant. And a day comes when the urge grows mutinous and irrepressible and turns into a burning passion. Man sets off towards his distant home, but the ties that he has created and the bondages that he has brought on himself are too strong to be snapped by a mere wish of the mind, and he finds it well-nigh impossible to tear himself away from his associations. He gives way to melancholy and despair.

Like the Lotos-eaters, he would rather not return to his native land. The trouble of renouncing pleasing companionship seems to him not worth while. The great warrior who decides to go on a long journey cannot but cast wistful glances on the familiar things and scenes which contributed to his happiness till now. The prisoner longs for freedom, but a long association with the glittering chains of bondage has made him love them, and his heart melts in pity at the thought of breaking them. The bird in the cage longs for the freedom of the sky, but it has accustomed to the cage so much that it would rather not abandon it. In other words, the bound soul in search of liberation has first to cut himself free from all associations which cheered his life till now. He can build the structure of divine plenty only on the foundations of extreme renunciation. He has to consign to the flames all his pet fancies and thoughts, all his favourite companions and mates, and only after thus stripping himself naked of all that hitherto encumbered him can he hope to be clothed in heavenly robes. Home, family, wealth, power, fame, everything that makes earthly life colourful and worthwhile—all these have to be thrown away before the blessed state can be realized. But it is not without a wrench of the heart that the aspirant after liberation can consent to sacrifice these sweet old things. All the things that man has been wedded to till now stand like an army before him, obstructing his march towards his golden goal, and before he can take one forward step he must slay these hosts. True, he has the ability to slay them, but he also has soft feelings and tender emotions, and as he sees the erstwhile companions arrayed before him, and notices the tears of sorrow in the eyes of one, and

the prayerful glances of another, and also remembers how each has been tied to him by warmth of affection only till recently, a great pity enters his heart, and he drops down his bow and arrow, refusing to kill the loving and beloved relatives for the sake of a doubtful gain and a problematical profit. This pity, though seemingly a virtue, is really a weakness, for it obstructs the inevitable growth of the individual. Arjuna is thus symbolical of the human soul at the parting of the ways, at the point where he has to sacrifice his all and enter a new phase of life.

Someone must needs lift the despondent soul, teach him the true wisdom, and enable him to see things in true perspective. This duty of illuminating the dark front is performed by the Merciful Lord, and He becomes the Teacher and Guru. Sri Krishna who fulfils the rôle of the Guru to Arjuna is really the Guru of every human being in all stages and circumstances of life. Hence is the *Gîtâ* capable of affording light to all beings and of affording satisfactory solutions to all the thorny problems of life.

There is another reason why the *Gîtâ* is capable of such wide appeal. It must always be remembered that human life is one indivisible whole and a unitary entity; it can never be divided into compartments. Now, religion to be genuine and satisfactory must embrace the whole life; in all its aspects. We cannot have a separate code of life for the hour of meditation and the precincts of the shrine, and another different code for the working hour and the premises of the workshop. A religious-minded person must be able to reflect his religious-mindedness in the smallest of his actions. Religion is not to be confined to special hours of the day and to particular localities. Will it suffice for instance, if a man keeps his

body pure only when he enters the temple or does his ablutions? The body must be pure throughout the day. So there is nothing really strange in the *Gîtâ* having been preached on the battlefield. The battlefield is the scene of the fiercest activity, but even that place must admit of the practical application of true religious principles. Life itself is a great battlefield. So when Sri Krishna did not remove Arjuna to the quietness of a hermitage, but chose to preach to him the highest philosophical truths amidst the din and tumult of war, He only demonstrated that philosophy was not meant for forests and shady retreats, and that it was not the sole monopoly of sages and people who have retired from the toil of life, but that it was meant for application in the busiest quarters of the globe and that the soldier and the labourer, the very hewers of wood and drawers of water had every right and every possibility to draw inspiration and solace from it. The vision of "the Charioteer of Arjuna, standing on His chariot between the contending hosts, His left hand curbing the fiery steeds, His eagle glance sweeping over the vast army, and as if by instinct weighing every detail of the battle-array of both parties", and at the same time, as it were, thrilling the awe-struck Arjuna by expounding to him most marvellous secrets of work is a glorious vision indeed, but it is a vision containing a mighty truth also. The truth is that life cannot be divided artificially into the spiritual and secular, that the man of spirituality will be spiritually endowed not merely in the hour of contemplation, but also in the hour of activity.

Apart from this broad, general similarity between the situation in which Arjuna found himself on the battlefield and the situation in which the aspirant after realization finds himself placed,

there are passages in the *Gitá* which touch the reader most intimately. Such passages have a direct and a very irresistible appeal to the individual. Here and there in the *Gitá* are verses wherein Sri Krishna makes deeply personal references to Arjuna, verses which show extraordinary solicitude, and which are capable of affording great consolation to the struggling human being in the mire of despair. But these verses are so uttered that they appeal with equal force to all persons listening to them. It is as if when we study the *Gitá* Arjuna recedes into the background, and we stand face to face with Sri Krishna; and the Eternal Teacher talks to us the same words which He has been repeating to thousands of beings, which nevertheless never become monotonous, but ever keep a freshness and original charm. These individualistic notes therefore serve to transform the *Gitá* into a dialogue between any and every reader on the one hand, and the Great Lord on the other. A review of such personal references will clarify this point still further.

While bringing to the notice of Arjuna the hoary and imperishable nature of the Yoga preached by Him (Sri Krishna), the Lord says, "I have this day told thee that same ancient Yoga, for thou art my devotee, and my friend . . .". How consoling it is for the aspirant to be told by the Lord Himself that he is His friend and devotee! Such an assurance gives rise to self-confidence and courage.

Again and again in the course of the *Gitá* we find Sri Krishna addressing Arjuna by names which reveal unique intimacy between the two. Often does He address His hearer as 'Scorcher of foes', 'Tiger among men' etc. Such epithets unconsciously rouse in the hearer's being a confidence in his being

able to accomplish great things; it is as if they induce the coiled-up serpent of energy to stretch itself and act with vigour.

"Whenever there is decline of Dharma, and rise of Adharma", says Sri Krishna, "then I body Myself forth. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of Dharma, I come into being in every age". This statement refers not merely to the operation of a Law in the functioning of the cosmic universe, but also to the working of a principle in the development of the individual soul. Whenever in the human constitution evil dominates, then the Lord takes immediate steps to enthrone good in its proper place. Evil can never permanently conquer man. Evil itself is not a final entity; it is but a phase of life; evil too has to march on and turn into good and also into that which is beyond good. These verses bring us an assurance that in the war between good and evil which goes on in man, the Lord's forces are arrayed on the side of good which in consequence is bound to succeed. The fight for progress of the human soul is never unaided, never lonely, never a losing concern. The Lord is always at our back pushing us forward. He is more eager than even we for the establishment of equilibrium in our being.

But lest this assurance be misunderstood and misconstrued as supporting the needlessness of any effort on the part of the individual, the Lord says, "A man should uplift himself by his own self, so let him not weaken this self. For this self is the friend of oneself, and this self is the enemy of oneself." Hence personal effort is indispensable. It is true that while we place one step forward towards God, God comes towards us by tenfold the distance we traverse. It is true that

where man extends one hand to God He lends him support with both His hands. But the initiative must come from man. Often when darkness and lethargy oppress man, this exposition of Sri Krishna of the possibility of man being his own friend or foe gives him strength to shake off himself free from the impediments to his vision of light.

Spiritual development, like all other fields of progress, is not an even march, not a continuous pushing-on. Its motion is wave-like; it has its boom and its slump, its ups and downs. And nothing worries the young aspirant so much as these frequently recurring falls. A fall unnerves him to a great extent and makes him feel that all the strain he subjected himself to and the energy he expended in order to achieve a small instalment of progress have been a huge waste in the face of the subsequent fall. How often have aspirants been perplexed by the sudden descent of the mind into gross sensuality after a prolonged soaring in the high heavens of contemplation! But in such moments of despair come to us the words of the *Gitâ*, "The doer of good never comes to grief"—words which teach us that no effort in the spiritual world is ever lost, no good thought ever goes to waste, that the seed sown will not wither, but will surely sprout some day.

Inferiority-complex of any sort is a great enemy to spiritual progress. The spiritual aspirant has to fight against heavy odds, and unless he possesses strength born of an intense consciousness of his noble heritage and supreme destiny, he cannot make much headway. While pride must be avoided on the one hand, because it makes us rather tipsy and clouds our vision, a feeling of helplessness and despair, a sense of smallness and unimportance must also be kept afar. The spiritual

aspirant is a rare man, and the consciousness of his being out of the ordinary and the common place, of his being poised high above the trivialities and the narrowness of the everyday world will give him great vigour and energy in his march towards the goal. Sri Krishna says, "One, perchance, in thousands of men, strives for perfection." But the spiritual path is so hard and such a long process that failures in the initial stage are quite common, and immediate spectacular results are out of the question. Patience is needed in this field more than in any other, and failures are more truly stepping stones to success in this sphere than in any other. So the Lord adds, "And one, perchance, among the blessed ones, striving thus, knows Me in reality".

The Preacher on the field of Kurukshetra again speaks to every individual on earth and not merely to His immediate disciple when, for instance, He says, "Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest in sacrifice, whatever thou givest away, whatever austerity thou practisest, do that as an offering unto Me." In this way alone can one have ceaseless communion with the Divine Entity. Whether we know it or not, we always live and move and work in the bosom of the Universal Being. Not for a second can we be free from contact with that Being. But a knowledge of this truth is what is required. It is through connecting every small detail of our life with the Lord that we can ultimately realize Him.

Very often we hear ignorant men saying that the Lord has been favouring one and been particularly unkind to another. We feel at times that the Lord is far away from us, and that though to a Christ or a Chaitanya He was dear and near, He may not really

care a brass farthing for us. How comfortable indeed it is in such moments of despair to remember the words of the *Gitá* which say, "I am the same to all beings : to Me there is none hateful nor dear. But those who worship Me with devotion are in Me, and I too am in them."! Complaints of partiality against God are as absurd as saying that fire is hot in one house and not so in another.

Spiritual life is like a second birth, and when one enters it, nothing oppresses one so much as the memory of past misdeeds. This memory unnerves the aspirant a good deal. To such those as are worried by thoughts of the enormity of past wickedness come the reassuring words of the Lord, "Even if the very wicked worship Me, with devotion to none else, he should be regarded as good, for he has rightly resolved. Soon does he become righteous, and attains to eternal peace : boldly canst thou proclaim that My devotee is never destroyed."

Again, what a mighty healing touch of intimate personal appeal the following advice of the Lord has! "Having obtained this transcendent joyless world, worship thou Me. Fill thy mind with Me, be My devotee, sacrifice unto Me, bow down to Me, thus having made thy heart steadfast in Me, taking Me as the Supreme Goal, thou shalt come to Me."

The spiritual aspirant has to be born anew before he can advance a step; he has to cast off his old garments and don new ones; he has to forget the very memory of his past life, and acquire a new vision. The material world in which he was wallowing till now has to be deserted by him. He must enter a new world of different values and different ideas. One cannot live in both the worlds. What is dark and non-existent for the common people

has to become to him radiant and solely true. But the Lord in His eternal kindness bestows on us the Vision Divine even as we enter the path. The Lord's words to Arjuna, "I give thee supersensuous sight; behold My Yoga Power Supreme" give expression to this fact.

The Vision Supreme is said to be of such great brilliance that the devotee who beholds It is almost overpowered with excess of light. And in the deeply felt presence of the Supreme Being which exists supporting this whole world by a mere portion of Itself, the individual soul trembles at the ineffable glory he witnesses, and feels awkward to remember how till then his conception of God was very crude and narrow. His comprehension of God till then was determined by the extent of his own humble knowledge. But now after seeing the Universal Form of the Lord he realizes how tremendous Its dimensions are. This truth is most poetically expressed in the *Gitá* by Arjuna when he says to the Universal Form of Sri Krishna, "Whatever I have presumptuously said from carelessness or love, addressing Thee as 'O Krishna, O Yâdava, O friend,' regarding Thee merely as a friend, unconscious of this Thy greatness—in whatever way I may have been disrespectful to Thee in fun, while waking, reposing, sitting or at meals, when alone with Thee, O Achyuta, or in company—I implore Thee Immeasurable One, to forgive all this."

Yet another instance wherein Sri Krishna comes very near the individual soul studying the *Gitá* is found in these simple, but profoundly moving utterances of His wherein He unfolds as it were great spiritual secrets : "Fix thy mind on Me only, place thy intellect in Me : thou shalt no doubt live in Me hereafter. If thou art unable to fix

thy mind steadily on Me, then, by Abhyâsa-Yoga, do thou seek to reach Me. If also thou art unable to practise Abhyâsa, be thou intent on doing actions for My sake. Even by doing actions for My sake, thou shalt attain perfection. If thou art unable to do even this, then taking refuge in Me, and being self-controlled abandon the fruit of all action."

In the course of His preaching, Sri Krishna distinguishes between the qualities of a person born for a divine state and those of a person born for a demoniac state. Therein He says, "The divine state is deemed as mature for liberation, the demoniac for bondage; grieve not, thou art born for a divine state." These words again are meant not for Arjuna alone, but for every seeker after truth who goes to the *Gîtâ* for light. How strengthening it must be for the immature struggler on the Path of Light to be told at the very beginning, and by no less a person than the Lord Himself, that he is born of divine qualities and is bound to reach the divine state!

It is however towards the end of this celestial song that Sri Krishna's heart melts in sympathy and kindness, and He draws the disciple nearer and nearer to Him by words that eternally soothe and refresh, words that assure the realization by the disciple of divine beatitude. Sri Krishna says, "Fixing thy mind on Me, thou shalt, by My grace, overcome all obstacles , The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing all beings, by His Mâyâ, to revolve, as if mounted on a machine. Take refuge in Him with all thy heart; by His grace shalt thou attain supreme peace and the eternal abode."

"Thus has wisdom, more profound than all profundities, been declared to thee by Me," says the Lord, reminding the disciple that he has been a highly

privileged hearer of the greatest mystic truths. Again and again is he told how he is a beloved of God: "Hear thou again My supreme word, the profoundest of all; because thou art dearly beloved of Me, therefore will I speak what is good to thee. Occupy thy mind with Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, bow down to Me. Thou shalt reach Myself; truly do I promise unto thee, for thou art dear to Me."

And here are words which haunt us in moments of darkness and give us the power to peep into light and get glimpses of the luminous Beyond: "Relinquishing all Dharmas take refuge in Me alone; I will liberate thee from all sins; grieve not."

Spiritual aspirants are a holy community by themselves; they stand to gain by communicating their experiences to one another, by comparing notes, by constant companionship. But they have nothing in common with the worldly-minded. The Lord refers to this fact when He says, "This (the great Sâstra taught by Me) is never to be spoken by thee to one who is devoid of austerities, nor to one who does not render service, nor to one who cavils at Me." But of him who hands down the Sâstra to a fit person, the Lord says, "Among men there is none who does dearer service to Me; nor shall there be another on earth dearer to Me, than he."

Sri Krishna's solicitude for the welfare of His student is nowhere seen in greater degree than when, unlike an imperfect teacher who utters some truths and does not care whether his pupil has understood them or not, He asks Arjuna at the close of His discourse, in words full of deep affection, "Has this been heard by thee, O Pârtha, with an attentive mind? Has the delusion of thy ignorance been destroyed?"

Arjuna's reply to this question of the

Lord is as significant and awe-inspiring as the question itself. This warrior filled with an aggressive self-consciousness was, if anything, himself a lecturer to the Lord at the commencement of the episode leading to the exposition of the *Gitá*. After having been enabled, by his divine Charioteer, to have a look at the armies standing ready for battle, the warrior's heart was filled with an ignoble pity, and he began to lecture to the Omniscient Lord on the futility, the inadvisability and the horror of the impending fight. He even preached to the Lord on the 'evil due to the decay of families', tracing how the decay of a family, in consequence of the massacre on the battlefield, led to the death of immemorial religious rites, the preponderance of impiety, corruption of women, intermingling of castes, and the fall of ancestors, and finally he resolved that it would be far better for him to be slain without resistance. To this great fighter in the throes of an unworthy melancholy, the Lord said with a smile, and in quite a good-humoured manner, "Yet thou speakest words of wisdom." Arjuna who was thus prone to giving out an oration to the Lord Himself on the pros and cons of the situation he was in undergoes a thorough change before the Lord has finished His teaching. And to Sri Krishna's question as to whether he grasped the full import of His teaching, Arjuna just utters two lines by way of answer, "Destroyed is my delusion, and I have gained my memory through Thy grace. I am firm; my doubts are gone. I will do Thy word." He has passed through the fire of wisdom and has been purged of all that was mean, untrue, and ignoble in him. How forcefully do these few words of Arjuna, marvellous for their brevity and profound meaning, bring home to us the truth of the law of what is called 'poetic restraint', the law which

says that when the heart is full, and the soul is bathed in perfection, then is not the time for words, words, words! In fact it is said that when sages in supreme moments of intuition and understanding find themselves in at-onement with the Universal Existence they are unable even to speak out their joy.

The *Gitá* ends with a few observations of Sanjaya, the messenger who narrates to King Dhritarâshtra the happenings on the battlefield. And Sanjaya gives expression to what is the feeling of every devoted student of the *Gitá*, when he says, "Thus have I heard this wonderful dialogue between Vâsudeva and the high-souled Pârtha, causing my hair to stand on end I have heard this supreme and most profound Yoga, direct from Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, Himself declaring it. As I remember and remember this wonderful and holy dialogue between Kesava and Arjuna, I rejoice again and again." Which one of us can study the *Gitá* and yet escape being thrilled even as Sanjaya was thrilled!

The very last verse of the *Gitá*, again an utterance of Sanjaya, reassures wavering minds and strengthens the faith of all aspirants. Sanjaya says, "Wherever is Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, wherever is Pârtha, the wielder of the bow, there are prosperity, victory, expansion, and sound policy; such is my conviction." The union of Krishna and the wielder of the bow is what is required. Krishna is everywhere, in our inmost hearts too, ever vigilant, ever responsive, ever solicitous; if spiritual realization is not yet an accomplished fact with us the fault is not Krishna's, but ours. The magnet of Krishna is always active. But the iron in us needs to be cleansed of the dirt covering it that it may be drawn by the magnet. The Universal Being is there for us to have a vision of Him

at any time. Only the Arjuna in us must be aroused. We must take the bow of resolution in our hands and fight our way through. The Lord is ever willing to open the door; we have but to knock.

Thus very profound and unchanging indeed is the appeal of the *Gītā* to the individual. To one who is a constant reader of this Celestial Song, it is a common experience to hear its still

small voice in odd moments and unexpected corners, sweetening dreary hours, strengthening the irresolute heart, offering solution to knotty problems, and never failing to give light. Hence the *Gītā* is regarded as the quintessence of all philosophy, as the nectar-like milk drawn from the cows known as the *Upanishads*, by the milkman Krishna who was induced by the calf Arjuna, for the lasting benefit of humanity for all ages.

SAMKARACHARYA'S IDEA OF THE ABSOLUTE

BY DRUPAD S. DESAI, M.A., LL.B.

As with Hegel¹, so with Samkara, we will try to set out, in what follows, his views on the problem of the nature of what is ultimately Real.

Here, however, the discussion pertaining to the nature of the Unity constituting the Absolute will have to be touched upon incidentally and just in the beginning of the summary we append below.

Samkarâchârya's views on the nature of ultimate Reality have been very succinctly summarized, and admirably expressed in one single line of that famous and oft-quoted verse² :—

श्रीकार्हेन प्रवक्ष्यामि यदुक्तं ग्रंथे कीटिभिः ।

ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवी ब्रह्मैव नापरः ॥

The ideas underlying the second line of the verse may be expanded as under³ :—

¹ See my article on "Hegel's Idea of the Absolute" published in *Prabuddha Bharata*, April, 1936.

² The verse is traditionally attributed to Samkara himself, but in none of his works can it be traced out.

³ In drawing out this summary, we have derived material assistance from M. N. Sircar's "The System of Vedantic Thought and Culture".

1. *Reality is one eternal homogeneous substance; neither a system nor a process.*

This, again, can be analyzed into the idea

- (i) That ultimate Reality is Being, Existence (in general),
- (ii) That it is eternal Being, not a process, and
- (iii) That it is One—no duality, no multiplicity.

Being alone is the fundamental concept in philosophy. We can think away anything and everything, but how can we think away *that we think away*? All constituents of our thinking, all forms of existence, presuppose Being. This is the pure universal Being, the Brahman of Samkara.

In this sense, again, it can never be negated; for even negation and opposition themselves imply "being". The pure Being with which philosophy starts, then, cannot lead to non-Being.

This universal Being, we know, is not an object of our immediate experience. For it is always a particular being that forms the subject matter of our immediate experience. There is

nothing like existence in general in our experience. But universal Being is existence in general.

Such a concept of Being means that it is eternal existence. This Being, therefore, cannot be identified with *Becoming* or a process. For "becoming" is not "complete being", it is only an attempt to attain the fullness of existence, whereas the idea of the universal Being, the Brahman, the Absolute, implies the perfection of existence. The conception of growth may be consistent with the conception of a finite being, but never with that of Reality.

Such Being, again, is Oneness. Duality or multiplicity cannot be conceived in it. It passes our understanding to think of the possibility of reconciling the co-existence of a plurality of the reals with the notion of Absolute Existence. Co-existence implies a plurality of existences, existing in such a way that every one is dependent upon another, implying mutual action and reaction. Can this system of the reals be regarded as the Absolute? Surely not. For, none of the related terms is the Absolute, as it has its significance only in so far as it is related to the other. Neither can the system be the Absolute, as it is always complex, and depends for its existence as a system mainly on the terms in relation. The Absolute, therefore, in contrast to this, must be an all-pervasive oneness. The hypothesis of a multiplicity of different and independent realities, as being the Absolute, is out of question altogether, and need not detain us any longer. As a matter of fact, we may conclude that in talking of the Absolute, the idea of "system" must be abandoned. A system must have parts. Either these parts will be identical with the system, or different from it. If they are to

be taken as identical, their individual existence becomes lost; if as different, it becomes difficult for us to conceive of any relation between them. In any case, the Absolute must be conceived of as being free from all kinds of differences.⁴ It must be, in short, one eternal homogeneous substance.

2. Reality is Consciousness

The description of Reality, as outlined above, is a bare statement of fact. Its nature has yet to be further determined. For that, however, we have just to appeal to the inmost being of our own existence; for there alone may we be said to be aware of what Being exactly is.

In the inmost nature of ourself, we find that we cannot make any distinction between our Being and our Consciousness. Being is identical with Consciousness. To think of Being as ultimately Real, and yet as something quite different from Consciousness seems to be metaphysically untenable. Just as the concept of Being can never be thought away, so we can never think away Consciousness also. We may think away its objects and its states, but we can never think it away; for, in our very attempt to do so, it asserts its existence. Consciousness, therefore, is the most positive of facts, the datum of all other experiences. As such, it transcends all limits of space, time, and causality.

⁴ The kinds of differences that the Vedānta recognizes in general are three:—स्वगत, सजातीय, विजातीय. A tree differentiated into its trunk, branches, leaves, flowers, fruits, etc., is the स्वगत type of भेद. One tree, as being differentiated from the other of its kind,—e.g. a mango-tree as being differentiated from a nimb-tree—is the सजातीय type of भेद. A tree, again, as being differentiated from a stone, say, is the विजातीय type of भेद. The Absolute, the Brahman, the एकमेवाद्वितीयम् must be free from all these sorts of differences, indeed.

This Consciousness must not be confused with *Self-Consciousness*. It is, rather simply, *Awareness*. To be self-conscious, on the other hand, means to be modified in a certain way. It would, therefore, imply a mode of "becoming" in the integrity of "being", which is contradictory to the very nature of "Being".

. Now, "Brahman is Consciousness, as Awareness" does not imply that outside it something must exist as its object. It is only in the case of empirical cognition that we need subject and object. The analogy cannot be extended to the Absolute which knows itself without any process of knowing. Consciousness is absolute intelligence, self-luminous.

Psychological evidence is also brought forward to support this view of the identity of Being and Consciousness. All through the different states of waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, swooning, and so on, the Self remains there as the *irreducible minimum* of Consciousness, a witness to all these. Unaffected, unaltered, it remains in its Purity, as the constant element there. Ultimate existence, therefore, may be identified with this Consciousness, not with Self-Consciousness. If we identify Reality with Self-Consciousness, it would lose its impersonal character and self-luminosity.

3. *Reality is Bliss*

Samkara did not lay his finger on this characteristic of Brahman as quite so firmly fixed as the other two already described.⁵ Yet it is not difficult to understand how this characteristic has come to be read into the ultimately Real.

Being, ultimate existence, is the perfection of existence. Bliss also indicates the perfection of existence. To speak of Bliss as pleasure, and as depending upon an agreeable stimulus, is only a crude way of speaking, and cannot be accepted. The consciousness of Bliss is in proportion to the growth and expansion that we feel in the conscious being of ourselves. The concept of Being, therefore, may be identified with the concept of Bliss.

Thus Samkara maintains the oneness and unchangeableness of Being in which no modification, no transformation, is conceivable.

The nature of the Unity constituting the Absolute, as is apparent from the discussion that has preceded already so far, is *Identity*.

Besides Brahman, nothing else is Real. That is the meaning of the fact that the world is false. The world-process appears as Real because it appears on the background of something which is essentially Real.

⁵ Cf. I, 1, 19 to III, 3, 13 of his commentary on the *Brahma-Sutras*.

DIEGO DE ESTELLA, A SPANISH MYSTIC

BY WOLFRAM H. KOCH

While pondering over the different religious truths and paths to the Divine the thought strikes a critical student again and again that one of the principal factors more or less common to all is

true devotion in some form or other, and that this devotion, rightly understood and practised without the exclusiveness generally found among the followers of the different religions,

might serve as a link for a better understanding between them all, widening and deepening their religious outlook as well as their conceptions of the Divine.

All the great religions of the world have taught devotion and self-surrender to the Divine; so on this point there could be no quarrel nor any fighting between them. But it is a great pity that, owing to a lack of deeper insight and some very human element in the devotee's love for the chosen ideal, the name and form given to that particular ideal came to be stressed more than the truth standing at the back of all the different names and forms of the Divine. At the same time, unbiased study of other scriptures has always been more or less discouraged by the followers of certain religions and, even when allowed, it was so rare and so shallow that for many people it had become almost an impossibility to realize the essential unity underlying all the different approaches to the Divine through love in almost all the great religions and systems.

The very human and sometimes even touching element in the devotee's heart, that makes him love the Divine form he has chosen more than any other, very often blinds his eyes to the truth that the Divine he is worshipping with his whole heart and being is one and eternally the same whatever name one may choose to give It, or whichever of Its manifold forms may be dearest to one's heart. So the devotee comes to stress more and more a certain limited aspect of the Highest Truth, forgetting Its eternal oneness hidden under the veil of manifold conceptions and forms. And this has brought about no end of fighting and quarrels and misunderstanding between the followers of the different religions of the world to the great detriment of true Religion, giving a handle to the destructive criticism and ridicule

of the out-and-out materialist and sceptic.

So the devotee should try to be as devoted as possible to the ideal he has chosen, but, at the same time, never lose sight of the fact that none can limit the Divine to a particular form or aspect, and that in doing so, he only brings in the idea of "I" and "mine" in a subtle form which is very harmful to spiritual growth. We may be devoted to the Divine in any form that appeals to us, but we should always understand that the Divine in all Its glory is infinitely more than we can conceive of, possessing infinite aspects and attributes and transcending them all. Limiting the Divine means a form of blasphemy, means bringing It down to our very human level, to the level of bias and prejudice and personal likes and dislikes.

And very often we find that the more a person stresses his chosen ideal outwardly, the less of real faith and devotion he has got in his heart of hearts. It is nothing more than one of the many forms of the outgoing tendencies of the mind and serves as a distraction preventing the devotee from reaching his goal.

What is the common factor in all true devotion? Certainly unconditional love for the Divine and perfect self-surrender to the Divine. And wherever we find this, we can be sure that the devotee will attain to his goal no matter what religion he follows.

True devotion means to have one's whole being, all one's feelings and thoughts centred in the Divine, giving one's whole mind to the Divine and renouncing the fleeting pleasures of the senses and the manifested world.

The true devotee never cares for the created so much as for the Divine out of Whom all this created in all its manifoldness has come into being, and longs for union or communion with That alone. This attitude is found in all true devo-

tees whether they belong to the East or the West. To them the Divine alone is the one thing to be desired, the one thing worth having and possessing, the only resting place in a world of shadowy pleasures and unceasing change and turmoil. Their whole heart is set on communion or union with Him, so that the world of phenomena comes to lose all its charm and attraction, merely serving as a signpost to the Divine, as a reminder of Him Who stands at the back of it all and transcends it.

True devotion is practising the presence of the Divine at all hours, connecting all one's thoughts, feelings, and actions with him, realizing oneself to be a humble instrument in the hands of God. The life of the Bhakta, no matter what religion he follows is always a life of consecration and self-surrender.

The Spanish mystic and monk Fray Diego de Estella from whose teachings some quotations are given below, was a soul of great intensity of faith and a great lover of God Whom he worshipped in the form of Christ. In his writings many passages of universal interest and great beauty can be found where his thought rises to the Divine in a spirit of perfect self-surrender and renunciation. As in almost all Western mystics of his time many chapters of his works are spoilt by a certain narrowness and traces of fanaticism so often found in devotees of intense feeling following a more or less dualistic path without recognizing the background of the One. But the beauty and clarity of his language is so great that he is counted among the classics of the Golden Age of the Spanish tongue.

Diego de San Cristobal was born at Estella in the kingdom of Navarra in the year 1524. During his studies in the university of Salamanca he came to realize what he later on called 'the Vanity of the World' and this made him leave the world and all worldly pursuits

and give his life to the Divine. He became a monk in the monastery of San Francisco of Salamanca, henceforth taking the name of his birthplace. As a monk he came to be known as one of the foremost scholars and men of 16th century Spain, but his life in the monastery made him realize that even that formed part of 'the Vanity of the World' he wanted to renounce. So there were times and periods of great struggle and persecutions in his life. He died in the monastery of Salamanca on the 1st of August, 1578.

Diego de Estella not only wrote about the Love of God, but tried to put it into practice in his own life and made all his thoughts and talks centre round this Love of God and the utter vanity and transitoriness of the world. In this respect he was one of the true Bhaktas of the West, although he may be inferior to other great Western mystics like Eckhart, Suso, St. Francis, and St. John of the Cross. But in his intensity and one-pointedness of Divine Love, in his fervour to realize the Divine Union with his Beloved he certainly equalled them in his own way.

I shall first give some passages taken from his 'Meditations on the Love of God (Meditaciones devotissimas del Amor de Dios) of which, I think, no translation is available. It is a work of great beauty and depth of feeling in which, it is true, he repeats himself again and again in his desire to emphasize certain eternal truths, but which seems to be his only book in which he now and then tries to express in a way that may even be unintelligible to the general reader his own experiences of the unitive life of the mystic and of the transformation of the lover into his Beloved.

He says :—

"We are pilgrims in this world, and we journey towards Thee, O Lord, as to our own country, and to the true native

land of our souls, wherein we live and move and have our being."

"How is it possible that any creature capable of union with Thee should not go with all its strength towards Thee, Infinite Centre of infinite good, and hence of infinite attraction? What thing can detain a creature capable of reaching so great a Good?"

"A small thing in comparison with the desire of Thee is that of the prisoner and captive, who is in constant peril of death, for the arrival of a true friend by whose diligence he may escape so great an affliction and return to his country and native soil."

"Arise, O my soul, go deep within thyself and see whose thou art, examine closely and rigorously to whom thou belongest, for thou belongest to him whom thou lovest alone. Do not be a slave of the world, a prisoner of the flesh. Break the chains round thy neck, regain thy former freedom, breaking with the world in right earnest. For God expects thy service only if it is free and voluntary. Which is the more honorable state for thee, that of being a slave and prisoner of worldly vanity, or that of being the servant of God, service to whom means reigning?"

"When art Thou going to rend the veil letting me see Thy face, so that I might behold that inaccessible Light and never again leave Thy presence? The first thing that I shall gain by Thy presence is that I shall find myself, for, at present, I have lost myself, and this not only when I am offending Thee, but even when I am longing for Thee in the secret recesses of my heart."

"So great and rare is the power of love that I must be even as is the object of my love, and according to that at which I arrive by love. There is nought that joins or adheres in as lasting a fashion as love, which unites and joins us with the Beloved in such a way as

to transform the lover into the object of his love. Love is nought but a unitive and mutual virtue. As iron, when greatly heated in the forge, becomes fire, so my heart, as it burns, O my Lord, in Thy Divine and sacred fire, is wholly transformed into Thyself by love. It is deified and becomes as God. The iron, cold and dark, as it is, becomes transformed into fire, and grows soft, warm, bright and shining, with all the properties of fire, doing all its works and everything that is done by fire, since it can burn, shed light, and enkindle."

And again he says:—

"Would, O my God and Lord, that my soul might be so absorbed in the ocean of infinite love and goodness, that I might no longer be myself, but rather, by Divine participation a copy and an image of Thy supreme goodness and mercy. O that it might be given to my thoughts to turn to One only, and that the strength of them all might be employed in burning in reverence before Thy Divine Self. Then might I say with the Prophet: 'The thought of my heart is ever in Thy presence.'"

"My heart has burned with Thy Love, O my Lord, and this flame that is so great has quenched in me all the fire of evil concupiscence. For no fire will burn beside that sacred fire, wherefore I have no great concupiscence, but all is the pureness and cleanness of chastity. The fire from heaven has consumed and destroyed in me all other heat, and I am wholly changed, for the most potent force of love has destroyed me and changed me into nothing."

"If thou didst love thy God and Lord with great and true love, thou wouldst not have such anxious care for the outward things which so greatly disturb and distract thee. The more nearly our will attains to God, the farther it is withdrawn from our selves. We ought

therefore to keep it fixed and intent upon God that we should be forgetful of all that is here below, and transformed, converted, and raised up into God."

And somewhere else :—

"This passing of the lover into the thing that is loved is neither violent nor painful nor laborious nor enforced, but free and voluntary, sweet and of great delight. And so the will, that in this way is united through love with the thing it loves, can be by no act of violence withdrawn from it, but by its own free will alone."

"Tell me, thou miserable and puny soul, what thing canst thou desire which thou findest not far more completely in thy Lord? If wisdom and knowledge delight thee, He is most wise and most knowing ; if power and might, He is most powerful and mighty ; if thou wilt have glory and riches, both glory and riches in abundance are in His house ; if delights and pleasures, at His right hand are pleasures for evermore ; if fulness and abundance of desires, those that possess Him are intoxicated with the abundance of His house."

"Only in God shalt thou find quietness and rest and in no other thing whatsoever that is in the world. He alone is thy centre, and thy true and natural sphere ; outside Him thou shalt find no contentment, but in Him all good, all rest, and all glory."

And again he says that the remembrance of God gives us strength and the power to overcome worldly temptations and that it is the only thing we can hold on to so long as our little "I" cannot be got rid of :—

"As I cannot fly from myself nor wholly renounce myself, there is no better means for me than the remembrance of Thee, O Lord, so long as my wanderings here on earth have not come to an end. The thought of Thee brings

sweetness and strength, and the remembrance of Thee heals all my weakness."

"All Thy creatures and Thy whole creation tell me to love Thee and cherish Thee, and in each one of them I see the language of Thy goodness and might. But all things created teach me above all devotion to their Creator, and far more so than love for the created."

"The very moment I give part of my heart, and be it ever so small, to the world, I divide it between Thee and the world. But in telling us to love Thee with our whole heart and being, Thou givest us to understand that Thy Holy Love wants our whole undivided soul to be made its dwelling place."

Through Divine Love all our desires and passions may be given a higher turn, all our actions purified :—

"Wherever my treasure is, there is my heart, and wherever my love dwells, there are all my desires. He who loves Thee with his whole heart, will always be thinking of how to serve Thee, and will always be yearning to be with Thee."

And here is a point he stresses again and again in all his writings : We cannot give part of our heart to the world and its transitory pleasures and at the same time be real lovers of God :—

"The cunning and deceptive world wants me to divide my heart, giving half of it to Thee and the other half to it, so that I may love it as strongly as Thee. But this neither righteousness nor feeling allow as all has to be given to him who is its real owner. So why dost thou want to be lame on both feet? Why dost thou follow two paths at the same time, my heart?"

"How indrawn and free from the world Thou wishest our heart to be, O Lord. In silence Thou speakest to our soul as soon as the noisy clamourings of

our desires and lusts and all our passions are stilled."

In all these passages we find the eternal cry of the soul for its Beloved irrespective of creed and clime, the one theme common to all devotees of all ages. It is the soul's yearning for its eternal home, for union with its centre which can never be limited to any one of the institutional religions. It is the cry of the child for its mother, of the friend for his only friend, of the lover for his Beloved, and the anguish of separation.

Fray Diego de Estella's well-known "Treatise on the Vanity of the World" (*Tratado de la vanidad del mundo*) is more time-bound in spirit and does not contain such high flights of emotion and depths of religious feeling. It is a rather arid work, depicting the transitoriness and vanity of ordinary human pursuits and pleasures in which the Divine has no place. But even here we find many valuable thoughts and suggestions that have an abiding worth if we take the trouble of studying this work in spite of its dryness and sometimes wearisome repetitions of the same strains and notes.

Only a few quotations and short passages will be given, showing the reader the general character and trend of this work. The didactic tendency of the book seems to have prevented the author from taking any very high flights in the realm of thought, very often bringing him dangerously close to rigid dogmatism. Of his own spiritual experiences scarcely any trace can be found in its pages.

"If you want God to come to your soul and hear you when you call on Him, all love for the world must die in you, and your heart, freed from all earthly affection, must be raised to the invisible and heavenly things."

"To many it is given to make a be-

ginning, to few to achieve something, and to very few to attain to perfection. We either run after the pleasures of the flesh, or lose ourselves in self-glorification, or break down under the blows of adversity. Few are those who seek God only and renounce themselves. Perfection is a very rare thing, and conquering oneself is an arduous task."

"Fly from dangerous conversations. Even if the wall be not burnt by the flame of the candle that touches it, it is at least made ugly and blackened. Even if you do not begin to burn, your character will be darkened by bad conversation."

"It is almost impossible to be in a mill without some flour getting into one's clothes and sticking to them. Similarly, it is scarcely possible to hold much converse with women and yet lead a pure life. You cannot go near the fire without getting warm. So if you do not keep away from dangerous conversation, you will be defeated sooner or later. Few, indeed, are they who do not pay some tribute to this idol "Woman", either in youth or in old age, for small is the number of those that resolve to break with the world in right earnest. They are in no great hurry to lead a chaste life, but at the same time, they praise chastity. Their intentions are good, but they sadly lack prudence. It is necessary to live with great caution. Guard your senses, for they are the windows of your soul."

"If you are careless about guarding your senses, you will be defeated. Reason resists the enemies where they can be vanquished most easily. The less you see or hear of the things of the world, the smaller will be your concupiscence, and the less you will think of illicit things."

"The eyes, being the guides of the senses, sully the heart in no time if you do not turn your gaze inward. The

things sully that which is inside are taken from outside. It is difficult to see beautiful things without getting attached to them. In order to get rid of the hidden bonds and those that are manifest, turn your eyes inward and draw them away from outer things, and see that you are not idle, for idleness gives rise to evil thoughts. Deprive the fire of its wood, depriving yourself of wine and too much food, then concupiscence will not be kept burning in you."

"The greatest harm done to the soul by the love of the world is to separate it from God. Only this inordinate love for the world separates us from the Creator and ties us down to the created which we prefer to its Maker."

"While there is sun there is light and joy, and in his absence there is gloom and darkness. The worldly-minded dwell in night and in the shadow of death, for leaving God, they go to the region of the Evil One where there is nothing but darkness and gloom."

"Leave your friends and companions, your relations and neighbours that you may find Christ. Do not love to be known. Learn how to die. He who is fond of the company of the worldly-minded cannot remain pure and good for long. He who is not zealous in guarding his devotion and goes to find consolation in the company of his worldly friends, loses it soon. So long as the candle is left inside the lantern, its flame is in no danger, but when taken out, it can be killed by any wind. In your prayers you will be greatly disturbed by the many and various thoughts of the things you have seen and heard while looking outward. Outer affairs and worldly occupations darken the understanding, making it unfit to contemplate the things of God. Blessed is he who guards his heart and body against all wanderings and enters into himself."

"Learn to conquer yourself in every-

thing, and the Lord will give you the fulness of peace. Cut off your inordinate appetites, let go the vain desires and send away the greed and craving for this world, then you will live in peace and contentment. Your own passions are warring against you. And while you go on complaining against your enemies outside, you suffer the others to stay in your own house. He is a great master and lord who is able to conquer himself."

"The world is a wheel that goes on turning and turning, and turning it kills all its lovers. The worldly-minded shall never attain to peace in their heart. Love God, and you shall have life. Deny yourself, and you shall come to have peace."

"The more you love God, the less value you will set on the things of the world. The Lord does not want our hearts to be divided and parted, but He wants them whole. Give your whole mind to God. Then He will look after you."

"So long as you allow yourself to be distracted by the things of the world, you shall never find rest in your heart. Only when you dwell with yourself, shall your life become well ordered."

"Enter your innermost being and stab all your passions and worldly desires, then you will never have any complaint against anybody. And if you have been offended and wronged, turn against yourself and fight those inner enemies of yours, because it is they who make you disconsolate. Do not go on complaining against those who are outside, for they cannot harm you in any way if it is not your will to be harmed."

"In the hour of death you shall find how vain has been the time spent in trying to please men, and what a great profit might have been yours, had you used it in pleasing Christ."

"Show your festering sores to God

and do not hide them. The humble confession of your own faults purifies you of all your vices if made with a humble and contrite heart before God."

"If you want God to be your helper, call on Him after having come to know yourself, for without Him you cannot be freed, and He only helps those who know themselves."

"If those who are diseased in their bodies do not deserve to be treated with hatred but with compassion, how much less do those souls that are full of festering sores deserve to be abhorred."

"Come to know the danger that lurks not only in evil but also in what you take to be good. Greater harm is done to a Christian by the things that appear to be good than by those that are openly evil."

"You should not set your heart on anything belonging to this world, for it is all vanity and a great madness. Vile are the things that are in the world and not worthy to be approached. Do not let the world deceive you. Close your ears to what it says. Do not allow your eyes to feast upon its show, for it is very different from what it appears to be. Do not allow its melody to lull you to sleep, for it is a siren that wants to betray you with her song, robbing you of your soul. The honours and delights of this world are flowers that fade in no time.

"Driven by his inordinate appetites the worldly-minded goes to the battle of Death where he loses his life."

"What are all the honours, riches and delights of the world, if not fetters to bind and tie down the souls of careless men? It is necessary to be watchful and to live with great caution. We should be suspicious of everything that the world tries to offer us and accept with fear and misgiving all its honours and its prosperity, for everything it offers is an ambush."

"Just as lust darkens the understanding, clouds all judgment, and dulls reason, the purity of chastity disposes the soul in such a way as to make it fit to receive a clearer conception of God and capable to grasp the heavenly secrets. Chastity subjects sensuality to reason, thus rightly disposing the soul to communicate and hold converse with her Lover, Christ. The spiritual beauty of our soul is to be attributed far more to chastity than to anything else, for chastity brings harmony and proportion, subjecting the flesh to the spirit. It is only reasonable that chastity finds its delights in God, for out of love for Him it despises the pleasures of the flesh and carnal appetites. He who abhors these coarse and dulling pleasures shall enjoy true and spiritual delights. Blessed is the soul that serves her lover Christ in a pure and undefiled body. Fly from the pestilence of sensuality, so that your soul may be an honest and loyal spouse of Christ."

"The royal prophet David says: In my meditation the fire is kindled. In order to kindle the fire of Divine Love in our will and to get a clearer knowledge of God, meditation and contemplation are necessary. Between them there is no greater difference than that he who has meditation thinks of God with an effort and difficulty, whereas he who has contemplation, having practised more, has created the habit and now thinks of the same Lord with greater facility and sweetness. But contemplation belongs to the mind and is the way and means to attain to perfection, not perfection itself which consists in raising our will to God through Divine Union and Love."

"A single day of fervent service is worth more than 100 days of lukewarm and lazy service. Half-heartedness in the service of God thwarts its own purpose. It does not attain what it asks

for in prayer, it fights and struggles and never wins, and sowing it does not reap."

"Purify your heart of all worldly affections. Remove from it all love for worldly praise and the vain glory of this world. Wash your hands of all perverse actions, guard your lips against all superfluous words, your eyes against seeing vanities and your heart against all bad thoughts, then you will have it pure in the sight of God. You wash your hands and face many a time so as not to displease men, but much more should you clean your conscience of all vices and sins and your heart of all stains to please God, Who sees its hidden secrets. Guard your heart in every possible way. From the heart rise all bad thoughts, murder, adultery, false evidence, theft and all other evils. So it has to be guarded and watched very carefully as the source out of which rise a number of vices. There are many who know what they should do and what they should guard themselves against, but as they are not careful enough in watching their heart, they come back to their old vices on the slightest occasion. It is one thing to know the right medicine, and another to apply the medicine to one's illness. It is very difficult to guard the heart in such a manner that it is not dragged away by the sense-objects outside, for life is one great temptation. So we should live with great care and watchfulness and pray for Divine Grace."

"The friendship of the world is in most cases like the friendship of the crow. Those whom you take to be your friends are not so in reality. They are but lovers of themselves. They simulate interest and only want to find

themselves in you. Do not trust the world. Do not set any value on words nor the vain friendship of men and never believe that the world will give you a better treatment than it gave to its Creator. O Vanity of vanities, to make much of these human friendships! They are toys for babies to play with and games for little boys and a vain and profitless occupation. Knowing that all worldly friendships are harmful for your spiritual progress, fly from them as from a manifest plague. And take all friendships below heaven to be things lent to you of which you shall be deprived the next day."

Many more passages could be quoted from the 'Vanity of the World', but these given above—scrappy and unconnected as they are, being taken from different chapters—will give the reader a general idea of the trend of this best known work of Fray Diego de Estella.

His sense of the evanescence of the world and all worldly things, of the instability of human relations and human love was very strong from his boyhood, and as the years rolled on, he came to realize more and more that the only sure foundation that could be relied upon at all times and under all circumstances was the Divine. As is the case with all Western Mystics, his melody is not rich in variations and different harmonies, but his was the true Bhakta's heart whose yearning cannot be satisfied with anything fleeting and transitory and who wants God and God alone.

Let us be grateful to him and give him a place in the company of the great devotees of all ages and climes who brought to humanity the eternal message of the Divine.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Swami Vivekananda in Oakland, California is concluded in this issue. In *Women's Education in India* we have examined the view-points of radical feminist movements of the day and have tried to show how the Indian women should be led along the lines of their national culture, and at the same time how they can be trained for the efficiency needed for the exigencies of the modern age. . . . Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Curator of the Boston Museum, Indian Section, is too well known for any introduction. *Sri Ramakrishna and Religious Tolerance* is an address delivered by him on the occasion of the Sri Ramakrishna centenary celebrations, New York, March, 1936. . . . *Sri Ramakrishna and the modern world* is a summary of the speeches delivered by Sir S. Radhakrishnan as the President of the Parliament of Religions held last May in Bombay in connection with the Sri Ramakrishna birthday centenary celebrations there. Detailed report of the meeting is published elsewhere in this issue. . . . *Eastern Tolerance and Christianity* is a speech which Rev. Wendell Phillips, Rector of Trinity Church, New Rochelle, delivered on the occasion of Sri Ramakrishna centenary celebrations held last March in the New York Town Hall. He observed in it how India can give a good deal to Christianity. . . . *The Appeal of the Gita to the Individual* is from the pen of Mr. R. Ramakrishnan, a new contributor. . . . Mr. Drupad S. Desai's *Samkaracharya's Idea of the Absolute* may be interesting to our readers after his article on Hegel, pub-

lished in April last. . . . Mr. Wolfram H. Koch is a new contributor from Germany. He is a master of several languages and an earnest student of religion. He has given us these interesting teachings from the original works of *Diego De Estella, A Spanish Mystic*.

SCIENCES OF LIFE POINT TO RELIGION

It is pretty late in the day to play the knight in behalf of a crass materialism and to renew the old fight against religion on rational grounds. Yet a few worthies in India seem to be engaged in the belated game. Science has become more humble today, and so far as its present position is concerned it has more than ceased to be hostile to religion. According to many leading scientists it tends further to confirm our faith in spiritual values, which we realize intuitively and which are incapable of being tested and verified by ordinary observation and experiment. Not very long ago it was generally supposed that science invariably turned its votaries into deliberate enemies of religion. And smattering of science does so even now. But at present we are just beginning to witness a reverse process whereby veteran scientists who grew up in a sceptical atmosphere and an agnostic tradition are veering round to an appreciation of things spiritual. The remarkable thing, however, in connection with this process of transformation is that the change has been occasioned and facilitated by patient and profound scientific investigations.

Prof. McDougall, F. R. S., confesses that such a change has come over him. In a recent publication of his he says

that a prolonged study of the sciences of life for more than forty years has brought about a slow transformation in his outlook on religion. He set out the grounds which led him from agnosticism to belief. First of all he was impressed by the fact that in spite of all the splendid achievements of science we still live surrounded on every hand by mysteries. Throughout his career he has also witnessed the mutation of scientific theories, which has helped him not dogmatize on the findings of science. But scientific caution and humility can never lead one along the way to religion. Does science say anything about spiritual values? With remarkable precision he places his finger on the two essential aspects of religion. Religion affirms man's spiritual nature and the supreme value of the spiritual. It also asserts "that it is the proper work of man to conquer the material aspects of the world and to bring them into subjection to the spirit." These imply two important things which science has so far obstinately denied, namely, that the spiritual ideals have causal efficacy and that "man in so far as his spiritual nature is developed can and does participate directly in the life of a realm of spirit infinitely surpassing in extent and power his own small spiritual spark." Does science still deny them? If not, does it afford any support for them?

As regards the causal efficacy of the spiritual, biology and psychology can deny them no longer. The mechanical theory of evolution has been given up on all hands, though there is no general agreement as to what is to be substituted in its place. Evolution is being generally explained in teleological terms, which can only mean that mind far from being a mere product or by-product of evolution "is, in some sense and manner, the essential active agent in evolution." When we come to psychology the in-

adequacy of the mechanical theory in explaining the adaptive behaviour of even the lower organisms becomes most manifest. Notwithstanding a few behaviourists it seems to be as dead as a door-nail. And it is amusing to see that while the physicists and chemists do not any longer adhere to strict mechanical explanation of phenomena, some reactionary biologists and psychologists who imbibed the theory from the former are clinging pathetically to a derelict vessel.

But what support do we get from them for the affirmation of spiritual participation? Even the untenable Darwinian or neo-Darwinian account of organic evolution postulates the struggle for life. This struggle for life among animals "is a series of activities which, though lowly and relatively simple, are yet allied to and are of the same fundamental nature as our own purposive actions." But every purposive activity points beyond itself to a larger purpose of which it is but a momentary and fragmentary expression. "Here we have one of the evidences of the view, often asserted, that all life is one." Again the logicity of human activity and the fact that the more logical is our activity the more successful it is in the world, point to a congruity between mind and the physical world, which can be explained as that "the laws of reason are primary and fundamental" and the "the physical world . . . is an expression of spirit." This particular point is, however, a double-edged weapon and too much must not be made of it. As a further indication of the pre-existence of logical power he cites the examples of precocious geniuses like Blaise Pascal and Mozart. "It is inconceivable", he says, "that this logical power thus mysteriously manifested is the product of the process of organic evolution, of the

mere struggle of living things to maintain life." Lastly it is in the realm of art that we find the spiritual kingdom expressing itself through man. All the richer instances of man's æsthetic powers go far beyond any biological utility. Artistic creations are symbolical. But no less so are the most sober descriptions of physical phenomena. All symbols imperfectly shadow to us spiritual reality. Again it is the experience of many that in the deeper moments of our existence as in contemplation we transcend the frontiers of our consciousness and partake of a universal spirit. Lastly he refers to the psychic phenomena from which many scientists have turned away in "fear disguised as contempt." His conclusion is: "The evidence supports the view that religion and science have ample scope to approach even nearer to the truth without essential conflicts and to achieve a fuller understanding of the spiritual aspect of reality without any sacrifice of the essentials of religion or any offence against the most rigid canons of scientific reasoning."

Non-recognition of the spiritual nature of man reduces all talks about social, political, economic, and moral reform to utter bunkum. And when determinists like Bertrand Russell advise a stoical bearing in a determinist world and yet preach "nudism, free-love, and the general principle of doing as you please" we can only enjoy an amusing bathos.

RAMAKRISHNA AND RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

A comparison has been instituted between Ramakrishna and Asoka, Akbar, Darasheikh and others as regards their attitude to religion. To utter all the above names together is not only to miss the speciality of Ramakrishna but also to lose sight of some

very patent facts of history. There is no special point in recalling names like Asoka in this connection as no comparison between rulers is being set up. Religious toleration has been observed in India from time immemorial. The synthetic basis of Indo-Aryan civilization was evolved early in the Vedic times. Since that time it has proceeded by appreciating, assimilating, and absorbing ever newer phases of thought and culture. Doubtless this attitude of toleration formed an essential element in the greatness of Asoka. But it does not specially mark him out from numberless others, rulers and non-rulers, who preached and practised such an attitude.

The case of Akbar is altogether different. We generally have an impression that he was very catholic and respectful in his attitude towards all religions. Without doubt he leaned towards Hinduism and showed favour to the followers of some other faiths, but he developed a very peculiar outlook on the religion into which he was born late in life. To be definite he abjured Islam and passed a stream of regulations which amounted to a galling persecution of that faith. Some consider it to be the greatest blot in his career—his failure to live up to his much-vaunted catholicity. Beside he formulated a sort of Esperanto religion, adherence to which required the solemn abjuration of Islam. This is neither universalism nor catholicism. The proclivities of Dara towards Hinduism and Sufism have drawn so much notice because of quite extraneous reasons. Anyway it cannot be considered as something exceptional in India, barring the consideration of Moslem rulers.

The case with Ramakrishna was radically different. His was no mere toleration of, or reverence for, other faiths, but full acceptance of them. It

was no cheap eclecticism. Further his universal vision was born of something deeper than mere intellectual discernment of the points of similarity among the different faiths. His universal spirit could not recognize the contradictions among the apparently conflicting paths of mystic realization and the different spiritual goals. He tested them one by one by the touchstone of life and realized their truth. Not only were the different paths efficacious but also the different goals of the different philosophies were equally true inasmuch as they represented the divergent aspects of the same Reality just as the variant pictures of a landscape snapshotted from different view-points reveal the same view. This synthetic vision was, then, something which was the very part and parcel of his being—a living truth felt in the deep recess of the being and not an intellectual acquisition. He did not, therefore, use a pruning knife to shear off the special features of the different outlooks but accepted them all in their totality. Here is then something unique which was never before witnessed in history. It constitutes by far one of the most distinct and important contributions of Ramakrishna to world-history.

THE CINEMA-DOPE

As we write leave for introduction of a private bill in the Assembly restricting to some extent youngsters from attending picture-houses has been obtained, and the proposed measure is awaiting its fate in the open chamber. This awakenment to a sense of the harm that certain types of pictures are causing in India is none too early. The evil of the cinema has already assumed sinister proportions in some of the front-rank countries in the West. It is evident from current literature that it is causing deep anxiety in certain

quarters, and a good deal of attention is being paid as to how this menace can be checkmated. But the evil that the ribald pictures are giving rise to in those countries is far too little compared with the injury that is being done in India. Quite apart from the fact that certain important differences in conditions which tend to set off some of the maleficent influences of the screen in the West, the advanced occidental countries have solved at least some of the pressing social, economic, and political problems which still stare at us threateningly. We do not say that they have achieved anything like finality in any sphere. But we do affirm that they have travelled a good deal further on certain paths which we are yet to traverse. Even so the cinema has disturbed their equanimity. How much more serious, then, is the evil in India?

It has been said that the Russians made the Revolution deprived of their vodka in war-time. And some gloomily envisage the violent tornadoes that will sweep over Europe when the nightly drug from Hollywood would cease. The picture is evidently overdrawn. But there is no denying the truth that the cheap nocturnal thrills are greatly retarding upheavals by blanketing mass discontent. In India cheap amusements are increasingly and effectively diverting national energies into fruitless channels while vexed questions are importunately banging on the door for solution. We know to what extent our youths are running mad after mere frivolities. We do not here refer to what we consider in the present context the lesser evils of youngsters deducing obnoxious values from the screen. We are only alluding to the general levity of outlook that is daily taking possession of the younger generations who instinctively try to fight shy of the hard battles of life. No body grudges them

a little innocent amusement. While the country does not provide institutions enough to build up a stern and sturdy manhood the evil outgrowths of a mechanical civilization are spreading ruin among our men and boys. The Roman Emperors used to avert revolutions by distributing corn among the rabble and by delighting them with fights in the colosseum. The twentieth

century Indian multitude is being held down by shadows. Let us remember that we are just now living on the capital of our moral and religious tradition. It is bound to expire soon. The future does not at least look rosy. Negative measures are but palliatives. Are there men enough to sense the danger and provide something positive?

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

DHARMA AND SOCIETY. By Gualtherus H. Mess, M.A. (Cantab), LL.D. (Leyden). *Published by N. V. Servire.—The Hague. Luzac & Co., 46, Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1. Pp. 206. Price paper 9/6s. net, cloth 12/6s. net.*

At the outset the reviewer hastens to compliment the author on the rare sobriety and insight which he has displayed in the work under review. It is not always that a foreigner can be accused of such deep understanding of the ideal and practices of the Hindu Society. It is pleasant to turn to this work by a low Deutsch from the pretentious volumes infected with vitiated views of Indian 'eigenart' and 'Weltanschauung' with which a few high Deutsch scholars are inflicting the public in this fourth decade of the twentieth century. The present work undertakes to study the concept of Dharma as the fundamental motive force in the life of man as a social being from the point of view of the Hindu Society. The author analyzes the different contents of the term Dharma as it is found in Hindu thought, compares it with similar conceptions in other cultures and comes to the conclusion that fundamentally it is of a mystical nature: "It is *a priori* knowledge, and by its very nature it cannot be defined." As such it may be deemed a fit subject for epistemology. He, however, tries to convey some idea of it by saying that it "is the underlying motive principle in the social evolution of humanity towards the manifestation and demonstration of the soul, or in other words, of the basic oneness of mankind". Two aspects of Dharma are distinguished. The first aspect is expressed in the theory of Varna, while the second aspect is applied to social-organization.

Varna is translated as 'natural class.' While racial, cultural, professional, symbolical and occult conceptions are to be found in the theory of Varna, the cultural connotation takes precedence over all. The norms of the ideal Varna are autonomous. When, however, "the Brahmaas posited them and they were sanctioned to some extent by the rulers, the norms became heteronomous norms of class and caste, or norms of convention and common law." While Varna represents the ideal state, "caste represents historical and actual social conditions in India and elsewhere." The different factors which went to give rise to this social phenomenon are carefully disentangled. Caste in its present state is an evil. But he points out that throughout the long course of Indian history 'periods of life' have alternated with 'periods of form', that is to say, whenever social crystallization and caste separatism took acute forms there arose as a reaction great teachers who tended to restore the social equilibrium by the promulgation of Dharma in its first aspect. In his opinion mystics were the greatest reformers. He traces the various social evils to their "sensible and excusable origin". Caste is not condemned in a hasty and outright manner: "Caste was not without its advantages in some period of history. . . . It will not do to condemn caste system *a priori* as something anti-social. Caste has more than served its purpose in history." He is also not one who detects the mote in the neighbour's eye and forgets the beam in his own. "In the West," says he, "the social mind is obsessed by the idea of economical power and in India by the idea of the caste power."

Doctrinaire critics will find many of his opinions unpalatable. He is no believer in the shibboleths of equality in the social sense. To him Varna represents the ideal norms of the human society. Varna does not admit social uniformity, though it does stress spiritual equality. A false and illogical sense of equality has been responsible for the tendency to "weave all pieces on the same loom" and to promulgate a uniform legal code which holds children, idiots, and the morally weak equally responsible for their actions. He has no illusion about progress. Rather he seems to adhere to the almost Rousseauian belief that civilization is a progressive deterioration from an idyllic state from the social and spiritual point of view. Says he: "If it seems that the 'scientific' knowledge of man has been increasing, periodically but steadily, it also appears as if the general spirituality and sociality of man has slowly decreased, in spite of the periods of renaissance and revival." He refers also the present ills not only of India but also of the whole world to a mixture of Varnas—to the non-correspondence of Varna with class or caste. Most of the upheavals, trouble and revolutionary outbursts of the modern era are an unconscious attempt to translate the ideal norms of Varna into actuality. "Fascism and National Socialism may perhaps be understood to be in essence movements and endeavours of the ruling and regulating Varna to make an end of 'mixture of Varnas' as regards matters of government." We cannot say if such oversimplification is possible. Anyway, he hastens to add lest he be misunderstood that the new world must come of itself by the way of the social mind, and all efforts to bring it about by force are unnatural (*i.e.* against the theory of Varna) and bound to bring much social suffering and to entail much waste of energy. As an instance of how the theory of Varna may be helpful in the solution of some baffling social problems he cites the vexed question of birth-control. "Sexual self-control and abstinence," he remarks, "may be seen to be the rule for the Brahmana, and the use of contraceptives may be regarded as helpful to peoples of the lowest Varna. Both courses are socially useful if followed by the right person."

For impatient reformers he has a word of caution. First of all the inner division of modern man has to be remedied. When that will be on the way to accomplishment, the outer division of society will be remedied as

a matter of course. "Forms must not be changed before the indwelling life has changed. The social mind is all important. The social leaders must work on and by the social mind." According to him, "no serious student of caste will propagate" the abolition of caste. How, then, to get rid of the evil? "The theory and ideal of Châturvarnya have to come forward again in the consciousness of the people, not as the model on which to remould the caste system by legislation, but as the fundamental theory of the composition of society. Public opinion will do the rest—and the problems of caste will solve themselves and the new classes will emerge from the crumbling remains of the old castes. The ideal Châturvarnya will serve as a beacon during this process which may be a long one."

We do not, however, at all minimize the worth of this extremely valuable publication which deserves the attention of all serious students of society, when we say that in a place or two his usual caution seems to have forsaken him. In rightly emphasizing the fact that the Hindu Society prescribes different standards of Dharma for different classes of people and stages of life he has evidently overdone the point by asserting that "the Hindu recognizes no universal ethical standard." As a matter of fact; he does. As Prof. Winternitz says "... the Indian law-books, when stating the laws for the different castes, generally add also a list of moral duties which are incumbent on all castes. Thus we read: "Not injuring living beings (Ahimsâ), truthfulness, not stealing, purity, and control of the sense-organs, Manu has declared to be the summary of the law for all castes. (Manu 10,63)." (See *Prabuddha Bharata*, February, 1936, p. 169). But this has arisen out of the author's endeavour to demonstrate the far more sober outlook of the Hindu ethics and law as opposed to the Utopian and impracticable ethics of the West, derived from Christianity, which seeks to bind all by the same rules of law and morality. Again he appears to have a feeling that Dharma and Âtman are antagonistic social principles and that dynamic Dharma displaced static Âtman as a social force in Hindu Society. But there is no such contrast. Correctly speaking Âtman is no social ideal directly, though it is the ultimate goal of all men. It is through Dharma that one is gradually led to the realization of Âtman which transcends Dharma. As moral and spiritual life pre-

supposes Dharma, even so Dharma presupposes Âtman. And it is in the realization of Âtman that the almost inexplicable and mystic nature of Dharma in its 'first aspect,' to which the author refers, is to be discovered.

BENGALI

ADISUR O BHATTANARAYAN. By Kshitindra Nath Tagore. *Published by Brajendra Nath Chatterjee, 55, Upper Chitpore Road, Calcutta. Pp. XXXII+229+80. Price Rs.2.*

The tradition that a King named Adisura ruled in Bengal prior to the Palas and that he brought five orthodox and learned Brahmins to Bengal for the performance of certain important ceremonies is schoolboy knowledge. Historians, however, have not always been agreed upon the authenticity of the tradition. It was the late Mahâmahopâdhyâya Pandit Haraprasad Shastri who first pointed out that the story of importation was neither false nor foolish. In the present work documented with a vast amount of well-attested facts gathered from a large number of sources the author

has ably demonstrated that Adisura was a real King who imported the five Brahmins namely, Bhattanarayan, Sriharsha, Daksha, Chhandar, and Vedagarbha into Bengal. He has discussed almost all the available sources, genealogical tables, ancient literary works, and epigraphical records and subjected them to an impartial historical scrutiny. Those who have argued that they can prove the existence of Brahmins in Bengal from time immemorial have, it has been shown, completely missed the mark. For the importation was due not to any dearth of Brahmins in Bengal but to a want of orthodox Brahmins competent to perform a difficult Yajna. The author has also traced the genesis of the Radhi and Barendra divisions in the Hindu Society of Bengal. While there will be obvious difficulties in accepting the date which the author assigns to Adisur (second quarter of the 9th century A.C.) we have not the least doubt that he has made a distinct contribution to the history of Bengal. The long list of authorities and authoritative extracts appended at the end of the book has considerably enhanced the utility of the work as a whole.

NEWS AND REPORTS

SRI RAMAKRISHNA BIRTH CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS LONDON MEETING

The chief meeting in connection with the Ramakrishna Centenary Celebration in England was held on Friday night (March 27) at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Gloucester Place. Sir Francis Younghusband was in the chair.

In the course of his message, the Marquis of Zetland wrote to Swami Avyaktananda asking him to forgive his delay in replying to his letter owing to great pressure upon his time during the past week or two. Lord Zetland added, "I am interested in what you tell me of the arrangements which you have made for celebrating the Centenary of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna in this country. I carry with me very pleasant recollections of my visit to the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission at Belur Math when I was in Bengal, and I shall be glad if you will convey to the meeting to be held on

the 27th of this month my good wishes. I trust that the philanthropic work of the Mission in India continues to make progress."

Mr. C. F. Andrews could not attend the meeting as his duties at Cambridge prevented him from taking part in the Celebrations. However, Mr. Andrews assured Swami Avyaktananda of his admiration for the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Mission which was very deep indeed. He had often worked with its members in relief work during times of flood or cholera or scarcity bordering on famine. Mr. Andrews was convinced that they had always rendered devoted and loving service to the poor. In his message, Mr. Andrews added: "I have also visited the Ramkrishna Mission in America, where it has carried a spiritual message into the heart of an overburdened world and civilization where untoward things have grown too strong for the silent working of God's spirit in man. Their members have shown an unselfishness and love for humanity which has won my heart."

Mr. Kanti Ghose, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Centenary Committee, read one more message received on the occasion. It came from the President of the Ramkrishna Mission in India.

Sir Francis Younghusband recalled how, when he was a young man in India, Sri Ramakrishna was living near Calcutta but that he had never had the good fortune of meeting him face to face. But he knew of one person at least who had seen the Master and that was the late Maharanee of Cooch-Bihar. The Maharanee had told Sir Francis that she was present at the first meeting of Sri Ramakrishna with her father, the great reformer, Keshub Chunder Sen. Although she was too young at that time to react to the spiritual force of the Master, she had held Ramakrishna in great reverence, and what a close bond of mutual love existed between those two great souls! Sir Francis observed that the Master's message of "As Many Faiths, So Many Paths" was the greatest of all messages that they had received from the East during the last century. The speaker therefore laid emphasis on the peculiar character of the message in that it did not advocate mere tolerance but that it insisted on the acceptance of the tenets of other faiths in their entirety, and, he felt, Sri Ramakrishna, through his spiritual practices, had proved that all religious paths, if sincerely followed, led in their ultimate consummation to the identical realization. That was a message which was destined to do a great deal of good to the modern world.

Mrs. Edith Hunter, Secretary of the Friends of India Society, in an interesting speech dwelt on the realization of Sri Ramakrishna and his message to the world. She observed that the problems of the modern world would automatically be solved if they would only follow the teachings of the great Master.

The Message of the sage as interpreted by his great disciple Vivekananda had this peculiarity that it offered a solution on the spiritual plane by advocating the worship of the divinity in man. That, Mrs. Hunter felt, was the only remedy for the fever-stricken world at the present moment.

Mrs. Hunter was followed by Dr. Har Dayal. He traced the trend of modern European civilization from the days of the Renaissance and Reformation which had culminated in individualism in its most pernicious form, the result of which could be seen, he said, in the unstable

condition of Europe at the present moment. Dr. Har Dayal added, it was there with its hedonism, with its love of money and power. "But," the speaker declared, "Sri Ramakrishna stood out against all these. He insisted on doing away with 'Ahankâr,' before one could hope to attain the ultimate bliss. His teachings are never more needed than in the present day when the whole world seems to be standing on the edge of a volcano, as it were. In his life Ramakrishna has proved how the most complete and blissful life can be led if one was only free from 'Ahankâra.'"

Swami Avyaktananda dwelt at length on the achievements of the Western civilization with its ideal of humanism. While paying tribute to the humanizing force of that civilization, Swamiji said the path led to a "cul de sac" and it was there that the light which Ramakrishna had lit would discover a new path which would lead the world to a state of blissfulness. He would not undervalue the greatness of the material civilization of the West but he was convinced that the time had come for its divinization by the acceptance of the spiritual ideals of the East. "The blending of the two ideals," Swamiji added, "will transform the world and it will be consummated in no distant future through the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna."

Before closing the meeting Sir Francis declared: "The West is now prepared to receive spiritual messages from the East and especially from Sri Ramakrishna who is not only the greatest spiritual genius in India of the present age, but also one of the greatest men of all times."

BOMBAY PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

"Truth is one, though sages call it by various names." This profound teaching of the Hindu religion was fully expounded at the Parliament of Religions which opened its three-day session at the Cowasji Jehangir Hall, Bombay, on Thursday evening, under the presidency of Sir S. Radhakrishnan. A unique gathering, representing all the great religions and faiths of the world, was present on the occasion. On the dais were placed paintings of the great religious teachers like Zoroaster, Ramakrishna, Lord Krishna, Christ, Lord Buddha and the star and crescent symbol of Islam. Among those present were the Thakore Saheb of Limbdi, Sir Lallubhai Samaldas, Sir Chunilal V. Mehta, Sir Hormusji Adenwalla, Sir Manu-

bhai Mehta, Sir Hormazdiar Dastur, Mr. K. Natarajan, Swami Vishwananda and Madame Sophia Wadia.

The proceedings began with devotional song by Mrs. Freny Cama, followed by a prayer by Swami Vishwananda of the Ramkrishna Mission. Mr. F. J. Ginwala then read two messages from Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Rabindranath Tagore.

Mr. M. R. Jayakar, Chairman of the Reception Committee, in the course of his address, thanked the public for responding in such large numbers to the invitation issued by the Ramakrishna Centenary Committee. It was only one of the numerous functions held in honour of that great saint of modern India throughout the civilized world since February last. To a country like India, politically backward and financially poor, it was indeed a great consolation that the teachings of one of her foremost saints should have produced such a great and lasting impression throughout the world.

What was it that the world found so admirable in his teaching? Today the world was war weary. Only three days ago one of the greatest affronts to human civilization and freedom had been committed in Africa. To such a world the teachings of Ramakrishna brought solace. And the central part of his teaching was the old, old Hindu teaching, "Truth is one, though sages call it by various names." Ramakrishna practised all the great religions of India. He realized more than any other modern saint that the truths of religion had to be lived and interpreted in man's daily life.

Sir S. Radhakrishnan then delivered his address on the essential aspects of the religious faiths of man.

Dastoor Noshervan Kaikobad then addressed the gathering on the teachings of Zoroastrianism. Zarathustra, the founder of the Zoroastrian religion, was the first to preach monotheism in Iran. It was he who developed the concept of God as Ahura Mazda, the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-pervading God. The essential part of his teaching was the emphasis it laid on the positive side of life. To him virtue did not consist in meditation, but in action. He wanted men to live and enjoy life and work for the service of their less fortunate fellows. According to him the highest service to God was the service to his creation. He enjoined his followers to lead a holy and righteous life, to be heroic and patriotic.

To be pure in thought, word and deed, to be righteous and helpful to others, to love the creatures of God, to strive to overcome evil by good, these were some of the cardinal teachings of Zoroaster. By following the path set by him men could reach perfection and immortality.

Referring to the cult of fire worship, the speaker observed that fire was only a symbol of divine purity. It was chosen to represent the divine, because of the qualities that brought it nearer to the divine.

Sir S. Radhakrishnan, while thanking Dastoor Kaikobad for his very interesting lecture, said that the belief seemed to exist that Hinduism was negative and other-worldly. That was, of course, a misunderstanding. Hinduism, as a matter of fact, never neglected the social aspect of religion. It was always recognized that wealth in the hands of a disciplined man was very desirable, and to be coveted. The service of man also had been well emphasized. It had been stated in more than one place that there was nothing higher than humanity, and that worship of man could be regarded as worship of God. One typical passage that bore out this statement was: "I do not want bliss or paradise. I want to be able to relieve the suffering of somebody in this world."

This concluded the day's sitting of the Parliament. It will reassemble at the C. J. Hall at 6-15 p.m. on Friday, when Sir S. Radhakrishnan will deliver his concluding address. Mr. M. R. Jayakar will preside at the sitting on Saturday, as Sir S. Radhakrishnan is sailing for Europe on that day.—*The Times of India, May 8, 1936.*

In the space of two hours, several speakers graphically explained the concepts of different religions and faiths to a large and representative gathering, at the resumed sitting of the Parliament of Religions, in the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall, Bombay, on Friday evening. It was, indeed, a rather difficult task, for the speakers were each allotted only ten minutes, and they were all congratulated by the President, Sir S. Radhakrishnan, upon the excellent spirit in which they approached their task.

Dr. Clifford Manshardt, speaking about Christianity, said he was not an orthodox Christian in the accepted sense of the word. He yielded to none in his appreciation of the humanitarian teachings of Jesus Christ. At the same time, he did not make a fetish of those teachings. Religion in India, to a

considerable extent, was a matter of ceremonies. Jesus had a noble ideal of goodness. The ideal did not relate to the meticulous performance of religious ceremonial; a good man was one who demonstrated his goodness by his deeds. Just as a tree was judged by its fruit, so a man's life spoke louder than his words.

Explaining the teachings of Islam, Dr. M. B. Rehman said that the Prophet Mahommed always emphasized that he was a mere human being like any one of them. The prophet was, perhaps, the first person who discovered that "Truth is one, sages call it by various names." It was not for the Muslims to ignore any of the great religious teachers who had long since done their work and retired from the world. Islam was a religion of service. The service of man and the good of humanity were the principal tenets of Islam. The great brotherhood, which was the ideal of Islam, could not be achieved without the utmost toleration, and that was preached by Al-Qur'an.

Mr. Adolph Myers then spoke about Judaism. He said Jews throughout the ages had always affirmed the unity of God. Like Truth, God was one; though sages called Him by different names. At the same time, the speaker felt that he would not be true to himself and his religion, if he were not to say that Judaism was different from other religions. It had always been different, and it would always be so. The reason was that it was inextricably bound up with the history of the Jewish people. The fundamental tenet of Judaism was Service—both of God and of humanity.

It was important to realize that, however much the great religions had in common, there would always be differences, and that they must learn to accept the differences in a spirit of mutual respect and toleration. If every one of them truly followed his own religion, the world would be a much better place. The Jewish religion stressed perhaps more than anything else the necessity of all the nations living together in peace and amity. If Judaism had any message for mankind in the modern world, it was that the liberty, equality and fraternity of nations in the family of nations were as important, as essential, as holy, as among the citizens of any one individual country, and that the soul of the individual could be saved only through the salvation of humanity at large.

After Mr. R. G. Pradhan had spoken about "spiritual idealism," Professor N. G. Damle expounded the teachings of Hinduism. They found today that they had enough religion to hate one another, but not love for one another. Matter was being controlled by mind, but the mind remained, to a very great extent, uncontrolled. It therefore required to be adequately controlled. Religions might differ in their philosophical doctrines, in their ritual, in their mythology; but they all agreed that there was a clear recognition of the reality and the supremacy of spiritual values. The ideal of Hinduism of a liberal and progressive type was to march ahead.

His Highness the Thakore Saheb of Limbdi suggested that the Parliament of Religions should find out one common religion for the whole of India to follow. Personally, he believed in and respected all religions. It was no use saying that "my religion is the best," for such an argument led to quarrels among themselves. God was one, and they had all to reach Him sooner or later.

Mr. Motichand Kapadia, speaking next about Jainism, stated that it was as old as any other system prevailing in India. Its tenets had been mentioned in the Vedas. Jainism had contributed materially towards general culture and human intelligence in various ways. Its ethical code of life, coupled with its highly disciplined routine, deserved careful consideration.

Mrs. Shirin Fozdar spoke about the message of Bahaim, stressing the necessity for bringing about unity between countries and unity between religions.

On the motion of Sir Jehangir Coyajee, a hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Sir S. Radhakrishnan, after he had delivered his concluding speech.—*The Times of India, May 9, 1936.*

ALL-ORISSA RELIGIOUS CONFERENCE

The All-Orissa Religious Conference, Cuttack, began its first sitting on the 10th of April, the Good Friday, on the Municipal Grounds at Cuttack under the auspices of Sri Sri Ramakrishna Centenary of Cuttack. Swami Nirvedananda of Belur Math, Howrah, was in the chair. Under the banner of Sri Sri Ramakrishna the devotees of different religions gathered to speak. Babn Gopal Chandra Praharaj welcomed the audience and Sj. Harihar Mahapatra proposed the president, which was seconded by Sj. Krishna

Chandra Sen Gupta. There were two opening songs sung by Miss Pratima Ray Choudhury and Sriman Natagopal Das. The opening address of the President was a review of world forces in which we are at the present time situated and indicated how we should be able to get rid of shoals and dangers of the world into which it is plunging headlong owing to a thorough revolution in our social, moral, intellectual, and spiritual existence. The great and mighty thinkers, scientists and philosophers of the world like Eddington, James Jeans, Oliver Lodge, Romain Rolland etc. have declared that the intuitional path is also a correct path which when pursued by a devotee of pure mind and thought must lead to life and light abundant and help, see, feel, and touch God as Sri Ramkrishna actually did. After the President's opening address was over there were other speakers. Representatives of Christianity were led by Rev. F. Fellows, B.A., Principal, Christian Training College, Cuttack, of Dwaita Philosophy by Rai Saheb Prof. Artaballabh Mahanty, of Ahamediya Religion by Maulavi Zahur Hussin from Qudian (Punjab), of Islam by Dr. H. A. Zahir, H.M.B., of Jainism by Sriman Bihari Lal Parwar.

This Religious conference was held in a specially erected pavilion which could accommodate 2,000 people. The attendance was more than the accommodation and many had to stand for hours together. The audience was practically kept spell-bound when the President spoke. The speakers showed perfect good temper and a spirit of tolerance while expounding their religions.

LAHORE

A memorial meeting was held in the Sanatan Dharma College Hall in connection with the Ramakrishna Centenary on February 24th, at 7 p.m. Principal P. N. Moulik was in the chair. Besides young men who were mostly University students, there were quite a number of Bengali gentlemen who came to join in the celebration.

Prof. S. N. Das Gupta was the first to pay his homage to the memory of the great saint. After a brief review of the life of Ramakrishna, he enunciated some of the

salient features of his teachings, which he considered to be a happy combination of the Gnâna, the Bhakti and the Karma systems of religion. He called it the crowning glory of a human being to have attained to the highest perfection of a Siddha, by dint of his own experiences and by practising all kinds of austerities.

The next speaker was Pt. Nirmal Chandra of the Dayal Singh College. He related some very beautiful and thrilling incidents of the life of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa bearing on the great achievements of that great saint of Bengal, and the great quest after God-realization which he pursued.

Pt. Vitasta Prasad Fida was the next to read his poem specially composed for the occasion. He narrated in the poem the chief characteristics of the Eastern civilization, and by referring to the saintly life of Paramahansa, he said that so long as India continued to produce men like Paramahansa, the West could not help seeking light and guidance from the East.

Prof. Hira Lal Chopra, M.A., next paid his homage at some length on the relationship between the Punjab and the late Ramakrishna, and reviewed the influence of a Punjabi saint on the saint of Bengal and that of the latter on Swami Rama Tirtha, the saint of the Punjab, through Swami Vivekananda. He referred to the Chicago Conference of religions and the message conveyed to the West by Swami Vivekananda.

The proceedings were brought to a close by a few beautiful observations made by Principal Moulik, who made a brief survey of the various aspects of the great saint's life, and said that whatever divergent opinions the scientists might have about the great dynamic power which a saint came to possess through a training of the soul, the facts remained unaltered. He criticized some of the view-points presented by the different speakers and tried to bring about a reconciliation between them. He complimented the great saint on his marvellous achievements and felt sure his name and example would continue to serve as the beacon-light for all generations to come.

With a vote of thanks to the chair and the speakers of the evening the proceedings came to a close.

RAMKRISHNA MISSION'S APPEAL

KHULNA FAMINE

We have already informed the public that terrible famine conditions prevail, amongst other places, in the Khulna district of Bengal, the total number of people affected in the whole Province being over five millions. We have sent a batch of workers to organize relief in the Satkhira sub-division of that district. From the latest information to hand we learn that they, in consultation with the Government relief officers, have taken charge of two unions in the Shyamnagar Thana. This area is reported to be very badly affected and is besides difficult of access. In addition to the severe scarcity of food, there is a similar scarcity of water, particularly drinking water, which has led to an outbreak of cholera. Clothes also seem to be an urgent necessity.

Nawbeki has been fixed as our centre. The first task before our workers is inspection of the area, which will take a little longer time than usual because of the difficulty of communication. Still it is expected that the first regular distribution of rice will be made in three or four days.

ARAKAN FLOOD

Readers of newspapers are also aware that a fearful flood has devastated extensive areas on the Arakan Coast of the Bay of Bengal, causing considerable damage to life and property. The reports that have so far appeared in the press give too little indication of the extent of damage done. Thousands of poor people are homeless and without sufficient food, particularly in the Kyaukpyu and Sandoway districts of Burma. Considering immediate help necessary, we have, in co-operation with our Rangoon branch, sent a batch of workers to Akyab for organizing relief.

Details of both activities will be published in due course. The success of the relief work will depend on a constant supply of funds by the generous public, to whom we earnestly appeal at this critical hour. Contributions will be thankfully received and acknowledged at the following addresses :—

- (1) The President, Ramkrishna Mission, Belur Math, Howrah.
- (2) The Manager, Advaita Ashrama, 4, Wellington Lane, Calcutta.

SD. SWAMI VIRAJANANDA,
Secretary, Ramkrishna Mission

22nd May, 1936.
