

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

VOL. XLIII

DECEMBER, 1938

No. 12



“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

THE HOLY MOTHER

BY DOROTHY KRUGER

I

Thou of the wish-fulfilling Mother heart
Where come all children of the human race,
Grown pale from wretchedness of life apart,
To lie in peace upon Thy bosomed grace;
Thou of compassion, burning day and night
From sins and ills of those who come to Thee,
Winging Thy Self, each dawn, in spaceless flight
To bathe in God-communion ecstasy;
Thou art not she who gently sews and bakes
And utters words emitting deathless rays,
But Kali, Kali, dancing as She shakes
The key to God before our pleading gaze,—
And fading from us when we fall before
Sri Ramakrishna shining at the door.

II

Kali Thou art, Thy hands with severed head
And dripping blade unseen, for hands with boons
Of victories, ten quarters over-spread,
Scattering stars of joy; Thy crashing tune;

Unheard, for lotus whispers of Thy love
 Calling the creatures of Thy womb to feast
 On golden bliss; calling the slow to move,
 The swift, the highest being to the least.
 Thou who hast come in guise of Brahmin-woman,
 The symbol of full-flowered self-restraint,
 Of God completely manifest in human,
 Of virtue blossomed fully without taint,
 Strip Thou the Maya off this smothered soul
 So it may breathe in rhythm with the Whole.

CHRIST ON THE CROSS

BY THE EDITOR

I

The history of humanity reveals one of its most tragic chapters at the present day. The world is casting off its old garments, and new forces are springing up on all sides with a challenge to the time-honoured systems of thought, standards and institutions. The whole cultural life of mankind seems to be in a melting pot. In sociology or politics, in science or religion, in industry or art,—in every domain of human thought and relations, we witness to-day a remarkable revolution and an unprecedented stir to bring into being a new order of life. And, in keeping with the spirit of the age, strange philosophies are also coming into existence only to strengthen the hands of the scientists who, by their inventions and discoveries, have already brought about a phenomenal change in the cultural ideology of mankind. What will be the cumulative effect of this rapid revolution of ideas it is hard to predict at this stage. But there is no gainsaying the fact that the cultural life of mankind has lost its old moorings and has drifted far away from the shore of its pristine spiritual ideal at the impact of these new forces. There is no doubt a quickened consciousness; and the products of spirit

and intelligence, the positive sciences, the engineering techniques, the governmental forms, and the economic institutions are bringing into closer contact peoples of varied cultures; still the pace of progress has been so fast and its character so revolutionary that we notice to-day a complete loss of balance and disharmony in the collective life of humanity. As a matter of fact this unstable enthusiasm for new-fangled ideas, that has occasioned a maddening greed for pelf and power, has served, in a large measure, to topsy-turvy the existing relation between man and man, between nation and nation. In whatever direction we cast our glance, nothing but excitement and rivalry, clash and conflict, ruin and desolation, savagery and war, greets our unwilling eyes. To crown all, the march of ideas in the realm of political philosophy has been so quick and sudden that it has brought in its wake a succession of political upheavals and national tragedies with an astounding rapidity both in the East and the West. In short force and fraud have begun to rule the day, and "no nation is safe which is not able with its own arms to defend itself from the aggression of those gangster nations, which comprising less than one tenth of

the population of the earth are nevertheless determined by force to overpower, rob and subjugate the rest of the world." Indeed the strangulation of the weaker nations and the rearing of the bloody edifice of political hegemony on the ruins of the bleeding and the bowed, are not looked upon to-day as acts of shameless savagery, but are prided upon as the triumph of neo-cultural movement and modern scientific civilization! We wonder whether we are not once again relapsing back into the primitive stage of barbarism in this maelstrom of confusion. Life on earth has become an intolerable oppression, and that is why a philosophic mind exclaimed in agony, "We have been taught to fly in the air like birds, and to swim in the water like the fishes, but how to live on the earth we do not know."

From a close scrutiny of the modern trend of events it becomes palpably clear that there is a general tendency to standardize thought and belief—a phenomenon which is detrimental to all creative enterprise. Even labour has to-day become a means of isolating man from man and deadening his social instincts and coarsening his spiritual fibre by the acceptance of lower values. Professor Radhakrishnan has rightly remarked in *The Future of Civilisation*, "Modern civilisation is in the stage of economic barbarism. It is concerned more with the world and its power than with the soul and its perfection. . . . The mechanical virtues of speed, quantity, standardisation, and absorption in things material, have resulted in a spiritual hardening." Even some prominent Christian thinkers have already been awakened from their slumber to the dire consequences resulting from a blind worship of this godless civilization of to-day. And it has been suggested by Rev. E. D. Meulder, the author of *The Challenge of the Eternal Religion*, that

'Christ on the Cross is the antidote against the body-and-soul-killing poison of the age.' Nobody can gainsay the truth of the sentiments vehicled through these significant words, which deserve more than a mere passing notice, inasmuch as they echo the anxious solicitude of every sincere soul for an abiding peace in the society of mankind. Indeed, if Christ were to travel down once again from the realm of his heavenly Father to this blood-stained Christian world, he would have wondered whether he was ever born on earth two thousand years ago to preach unto humanity the lofty ideals of universal love and toleration, purity and peace, renunciation and humility—the cardinal virtues that formed the very key-note of his spiritual teachings. Does not the present chaotic state of affairs in the Christian world demonstrate beyond any possibility of doubt that the gospel of Jesus who laid down his life on the Cross to expiate the accumulated sins of the erring mankind, is being trampled under foot from day to day by the protagonists of this 'Eternal Religion?' Does it not betray a great discrepancy between the true spirit of Christianity and the modern civilisation that bears the hall-mark of this religion? Paul Richard, the author of *The Scourge of Christ*, has indignantly remarked that 'the chief care of the Christian to-day is the reconciliation of God and Mammon' and while 'the Cross of Christ was stained with his own blood, the Cross of the Christians is stained with the blood of others.' Indeed the pelf and power have become the dominant interest to-day in human life and society, and unless the pristine purity of Christianity is proclaimed and vindicated by the sincere adherents of the faith, the fabric of Western culture that has been leavened and sanctified by the gospel of Christ will crumble to pieces in no distant future.

II

The advent of Jesus was not merely a fortuitous event in the phenomena of human life. He was ushered on the stage of human affairs as a dynamic personality by the throes of Nature to mould the destiny of mankind and to bring into harmony the discordant notes in the cosmic rhythm of life. He was born at a time when the Jews—the most persecuted of all the races in the world—were in a state of utter helplessness and struggling hard to preserve the integrity of their ancient faith, when Rome spread her dreadful arms all around, and her empire extended from the shores of the Atlantic to the banks of the Euphrates, and from the snowy peaks of Samarita to the rolling desert of Lybia, and when the military dictatorship of Rome left no room for a free play of the individual and collective life beyond the four walls of her capital. Even Mediterranean became no better than a mere Roman lake. In short the age witnessed an unprecedented moral and spiritual stagnation, unbounded avarice and tyranny. In Persia and Babylon religions were reduced to an official charlatanism, in Egypt and Syria, to a gross idolatry and superstition, and in the Greek and the Roman world they became no better than a meaningless parade. In fact the advent of Jesus was but a natural fulfilment of the long cherished dream of the oppressed and the helpless, and heralded the dawn of a new spring in the life of the suffering humanity. He grew up like a shining pillar of light from the midst of uniform mediocrity, and, with the consummation of his spiritual life, proclaimed unto the world the eternal truths in all their native simplicity and beauty—the truths that have found an eloquent expression from time immemorial through the gigantic spiritual figures of the East. An Oriental of Orientals, the Prophet of Nazareth was

full of the spiritual afflatus and wisdom of an Eastern genius. “The similes, the imageries, in which the Bible is written,—the scenes, the locations, the attitudes, the groups, the poetry and symbol,”—all speak of the Orient. “This Orient,” as Swami Vivekananda has said, “has been the cradle of human race for ages, and all the vicissitudes of fortune are there. Kingdoms succeeding kingdoms; empires succeeding empires; human power, glory and wealth, all rolling down there: a Golgotha of power, of kingdoms, of learning. That is the Orient. No wonder, the Oriental mind looks with contempt upon the things of this world and naturally wants to see something that changeth not, something which dieth not, something which in the midst of this world of misery and death is eternal, blissful, undying. An Oriental Prophet never tires of insisting upon these ideals.” And that is why Jesus of Nazareth spoke out from the inmost depths of his being those inspiring words of practical wisdom that embody the lofty message of renunciation and love, purity and peace, humility and hope characterising every true Prophet of the Orient.

The message of Christ is the message of the soul, for he himself was nothing but the Spirit eternal. With the insight of a seer of Truth, he was able to realize the shortcomings of humanity and regulated his teachings according to the mental make-up and capacities of the people that came to listen to his pregnant utterances. His life is an eloquent illustration of how the three aspects of Indian philosophy—dualism, modified monism and absolute monism—can be synthetically woven into an organic whole. To the masses who could not conceive of anything higher than a Personal God, he said, “Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Pray to your Father in Heaven.” To others

who could grasp a higher ideal he spoke of the immanent presence of the Supreme Reality. "I am the Vine, You are the branches," declared Jesus. "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. If any one abide not in me, he shall be cast forth as the branch and shall wither and they shall gather him up." But to the most intimate circle of his friends whose vision was highly enlarged, he disclosed the supreme metaphysical Truth—his identity with the Father-in-Heaven, the Brahman of the Upanishads. "I and my Father are one," declared the Prophet of Nazareth in a moment of spiritual exaltation, and thus pointed out to the self-forgetful humanity the gradual stages leading eventually to the acme of spiritual realization. Nothing can be more inspiring than this bold articulation of the Upanishadic truth—this message of the oneness of the soul. The age in which Jesus was born needed such a message, and the modern world, which tells the very same tale of oppression and woe, persecution and tyranny—the triumph of the pelf and the sword, the march of the powerful over the bleeding backs of the vanquished,—stands no less in need of a re-proclamation of this synthetic message of that heroic soul who sang for all ages and for all humanity the immortal song of the Spirit eternal. In the interest of peace and goodwill in the society of mankind, this sublime truth of the oneness of being embodied in the gospel of Jesus must once more be brought home to those who are making brutes of humanity and using this 'Eternal Religion' as a political weapon to subserve their own diabolical purposes.

III

Jesus was not simply a delightful moralist aspiring to express sublime

lessons in short and lively aphorisms. He was a transcendent revolutionary who essayed to renovate the world from its very basis, and to establish upon earth the ideal which he himself had conceived and realized. An embodiment of spiritual genius, of purity and love, renunciation and humility, Jesus regarded himself as the mirror in which all the prophetic spirit of Israel had read the future, and invited the frail and bewildered mankind to look at the face of Reality, with the boldness of an Oriental seer. His synthetic vision raised him far above the limitations of his age and secured for him a glorious position in the religious pantheon of humanity. That is why his teachings in their original form possess an irresistible appeal and the stamp of universalism, compelling the willing homage of men irrespective of caste, creed or nationality. But to-day in the Christian world, this spirit of renunciation and heroic self-sacrifice is going to be smothered under the surge of an inordinate passion for material comforts and earthly glory. It is time that the voice of Jesus which is a call to rise to the radiance of the Spirit is not allowed to be drowned in the clang and clatter of arms but is listened to in the silent sanctuary of the heart with a whole-souled devotion of a sincere seeker of Truth. "If a man would come after me," so did the Prophet say, "let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what doth it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" "Seek ye first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve

God and Mammon at the same time." Indeed the sublime note of renunciation thus struck by Jesus in his inspiring teachings rings even now at this distant period with an irresistible appeal in our ears. But the modern world, forgetful of his gospel, has hugged to itself a pragmatic philosophy that is silently eating into the vitals of mankind and paving the way for eventual ruin of human society and culture.

But the kingdom which Jesus asked humanity to aspire for was not the temporal kingdom but the kingdom of God which is to be sought in the inmost chamber of the heart. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hidden in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Verily, the jewel of infinite bliss is treasured up in the sacred sanctuary of the heart, and it shall be delivered unto him who has taken up the Cross and followed the path of renunciation and love, purity and truth. In fact spiritual life is a life of silent and unostentatious prayer, of self-effacement, and consecration at the altar of humanity. Jesus rose in righteous indignation against every form of hypocrisy in matters religious, and in fact against everything that was calculated to stifle the spirit of religion. He challenged the conduct of the scribes and the Pharisees and pierced hypocrisy to the heart. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" fulminated Jesus, "for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but within, they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,

hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within, full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within, ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Jesus therefore said to his disciples, "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the streets that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their rewards. But thou when prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." "Verily, I say unto you, except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven." "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Thus Jesus unfolded before all the path of blessedness and peace and even laid down his life to bring back the straying and self-forgetful humanity to the realm of truth and life everlasting.

IV

It must not be forgotten that the proper field of culture is not material only but mainly moral and spiritual. 'The spiritual alienation is the price which every civilisation has to pay when it loses its hold on religion and tries to be satisfied with purely material success. Economics or any other science cannot sustain a culture whose spiritual impulse is dead.' That is why the civilisation of to-day that stands divorced from its spiritual purpose has become an instru-

ment of ruin and a menace to human life and society. The militant powers that are riding roughshod over the weaker nations of the world must bear in mind that by their conduct they are not only stultifying the religion of their own Prophet but even digging their own grave; for Nature's retribution must visit those who dare to fling all the tender graces of human life to the four winds and fly in the face of the great commandments of the Lord. So did Jesus command, "He that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "You have heard that it was said, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven." "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called sons of God." But the world is too much intoxicated with the wine of material glory and power to pay any heed to the profound counsels of peace and love administered by Jesus. There is moreover witnessed a tendency among certain thinkers of the West to reconcile Christianity with war and force to find some plausible justification for their aggressive imperialism. "We of the new faith," says Mr. Wells in his *God: the Invisible King*, "repudiate the teaching of non-resistance. We are the militant followers of, and participators in, a militant God. We can appreciate and admire the greatness of Christ, the gentle being on whose nobility the theologians trade. But submission is the remotest quality of all from our God, and

a moribund figure is the completest inversion of his likeness as we know him. A Christianity which shows for its daily symbol Christ risen and trampling victoriously on a broken cross would be far more in the spirit of our worship." It is really nothing short of an insult to human intelligence to suppose that Jesus who could bear with a smiling countenance the excruciating tortures of crucifixion and even pray unto the Lord for the redemption of his own persecutors with the last breath of his life, would preach the gospel of cowardice to the world. As a matter of fact he himself was a dynamo of spiritual strength born of the realization of the infinite potentiality of the soul and was fully cognisant of the fact that non-resistance, of which he himself was an embodiment, was not the sign of weakness but the highest manifestation of power in actual possession. But the ignorant people without the requisite penetrating vision have failed to grasp the full significance of his gospel of non-violence and love, gentleness and peace, and are to-day trying to make Christianity more muscular and militant in the interest of state! For, as Bismarck has frankly confessed, 'a state conducted on the lines laid down in the Sermon on the Mount which is a counsel of perfection, would not last for twenty-four hours.' Thus indeed is Christendom mocking the pure and spiritual religion of the great Prophet of Nazareth!

The pitiful cry of humanity ground under the wheels of force and fraud—the off-spring of the so-called philosophy of power, is growing in intensity and volume with the roll of time. What is needed is the gentle but virile message of universal love and harmony, peace and goodwill which constitute the very essence of the religion which Jesus proclaimed from the highest altitude of his spiritual realization. "What moral

serenity and sweetness pervade his life ! What extraordinary tenderness and humility—what lamb-like meekness and simplicity ! His heart was full of mercy and forgiving kindness: friends and foes shared his charity and love. And yet, on the other hand, how resolute, firm, and unyielding in his adherence to truth ! He feared no mortal man, and braved even death itself for the sake of truth and God. Verily, when we read his life, his meekness, like the soft moon, ravishes the heart and bathes it in a flood of serene light; but when we come to the grand consummation of his career, his death on the Cross, behold ! he shines as the powerful sun in its meridian splendour !” These words from the pen of Keshab Chandra Sen bring into bold relief the synthetic personality of Jesus in whom both gentleness and virility found their noblest expression. The world must go deeper into the springs of his divine life so as to realize the greatness of the legacy he has bequeathed unto humanity. It cannot be gainsaid that there are masterminds in

the Christian world who still uphold and proclaim the true spirit of Christianity, but it is a fact that they are far outnumbered by those protagonists of the faith to whom religion is an instrument to advance material ends. Christianity, if it is to justify its existence as a spiritual force, must dissociate itself from churchianity and imperialism once for all and be preached in its original pure form for inaugurating a happier relation between man and man, between nation and nation. Down through the shining scores of centuries has travelled the voice of this great Prophet of humanity. It is time every true Christian responded to his stirring call and the soul-uplifting philosophy of life and stood against the organised sham and vandalism of the age. Let us all realize the true significance of his message and follow the path of heroic self-sacrifice and peace, humility and love, which Jesus had pointed out to the world by laying down his own precious life on the Cross for the well-being of mankind.

GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

It was the 25th of June, 1883. The Master had come to Balaram’s house in Calcutta.

Sri Ramakrishna (in an ecstatic mood): Listen, if one prays sincerely, one can realize one’s own Self. But it falls short to the extent to which there is desire for enjoying sense-objects.

M. : Yes, as you say, one must take a leap.

Sri Ramakrishna (pleased): There you are !

All kept quiet ; the Master was speaking again.

Sri Ramakrishna (to *M.*): You see, everybody can realize the Self.

M. : Yes sir, but God is the doer ; He makes different persons act as He pleases. To some He is giving enlightenment, others He is keeping in ignorance.

Sri Ramakrishna: No. One should pray to Him yearningly. If the prayer is sincere, He will listen to it most assuredly.

A Devotee: Yes sir, prayer is necessary, as the ‘I’ exists.

Sri Ramakrishna (to *M.*): One has to reach the Absolute with the aid of *lilâ* (the Divine manifestations), as one goes up to the roof by ascending the steps. After realizing the Absolute one should come down to stay on the relative plane

(*lilā*) with devotion and devotees. This is the mature wisdom.

He has many forms and various manifestations, Divine, godly, human, and cosmic. In every age He comes down in human shape as an Avatâra in order to teach love and devotion. Look at Chaitanyadeva. One can feel His love and devotion in the Avatâra alone. Infinite are His manifestations,—but I have need of love and devotion. I want just milk, which comes through the cow's udder alone. The Avatâra is the udder of the cow. . . .

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the steps of the Siva Temple at Dakshineswar. It was the hot month of May-June, 1883.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.): The husband of Manimallik's grand-daughter had been here. He has read in some book that God does not appear to be so very wise or all-knowing. Why should there be so much misery then? And reflect upon an individual's death; why does He not kill him at once instead of making him suffer greatly and killing him by inches? The author of the book is reported to have expressed that he could have created a better world.

M. was listening to the Master's words in amazement and keeping quiet. The Master was speaking again.

Sri Ramakrishna (to M.): Is it possible to understand Him? Sometimes I too look upon Him as good and sometimes as imperfect. He has put us under His great spell (*Mahâmâyâ*). He awakens us sometimes, and sometimes He covers us with ignorance. At one time the ignorance disappears; again it envelops us. The pond is laid over with sedge; if a stone is thrown into it the water is seen a little. Soon again the sedge returns dancing and covers that small stretch of water too.

Pleasure and pain, birth and death, disease and grief exist as long as there is the consciousness of the body. They all belong to the body and not to the Self. Maybe He takes one to a better place after death,—as one gets a child after travail. When the knowledge of Self dawns, pleasure and pain, birth and death appear as dreams.

What can we understand? Can a vessel with the capacity for a seer hold ten seers of milk? The salt doll which goes out to fathom the sea no more returns to report. It melts and mixes with it. . . .

It was the 18th of August, 1883. The Master had come to Balaram's house in the afternoon. He was explaining the doctrine of Avatârahood.

Sri Ramakrishna (to devotees): The Avatâra lives with devotion and devotees for the instruction of humanity. It is like going up and down the steps after having reached the roof. Others should follow the path of devotion in order to go up to the roof so long as knowledge does not dawn and the desires do not entirely disappear. One can go up to the roof as soon as the desires disappear entirely. The shopkeeper does not go to sleep until he has squared his accounts. He retires only after settling the accounts in the book.

(To M.). One will surely succeed if one takes the leap. One must.

Well, what do you think of the services conducted by Keshab Sen, Shibnath and others?

M.: As you say, they only describe the garden, but speak very little about meeting the owner of the garden. Usually they begin with the description of the garden and end with it.

Sri Ramakrishna: True! To seek the owner of the garden and to talk with him is just the task. To realize God is the goal of life.

ART AND MORALITY

BY PROF. A. C. BOSE, M.A., PH.D.

I. ART *vs.* MORALITY

There has been a long-drawn controversy regarding the relation between art and morality. One result of the controversy seems to be the acceptance of the fundamental difference in outlook between the two attitudes. Benedetto Croce has stated the difference in a precise manner. Art, he says, is the expression of intuition; morality that of will. Good will, the Italian philosopher asserts, does not lead to good art; a good man is not necessarily a good artist. Hence there may be a purely artistic attitude towards life as distinct from the moral attitude. One may take an artistic interest in something which is repugnant from the moral point of view.

But how, we may ask, does a man come to take an artistic view of something? And how does he take the moralistic view? What are the inner springs of his artistic as well as his moralistic life? What are the impulses guiding his mind in each of these activities? We may consider the question in general relation to life.

II. TWO LIFE-CURRENTS:

(a) *The Struggle for Existence*

Life flows through two broad channels. On the one hand there is the struggle for existence, on the other the joy of living. The struggle for existence engages every living being in strenuous effort which comes to a head when there is conflict and a call to fight. Ultimately life is a battle between the living being and the forces that threaten to destroy it. It is by fighting hard and persistently that life survives. Any relaxation in the effort

may mean immediate extinction. The price of existence is perpetual vigilance, perpetual effort, perpetual fight.

The rock lies dull and passive in its place till external forces move it. But not so the tree. It strains every root to obtain its sustenance and keep itself firm in its place. So does the animal in the forest strain every nerve to feed and protect itself. Life is a perpetual adventure, a perpetual war.

With man the struggle for existence is even more severe than with other living beings, because man wishes to live not only on the physical, but also on the intellectual and spiritual plane. He has not only to keep his body alive, but also to keep his mind alive and his soul alive. As on the physical, so also on the mental and the spiritual plane he is constantly exposed to the risk of annihilation. With the finest physical strength in the world, he may be intellectually impotent; with the most active body and mind he may be spiritually dead. There come crises in individual and collective life when the lack of adequate effort is threatened with moral and spiritual ruin. Not only physical well-being, but character, personality and culture have to be preserved by unwearied struggle against the forces of disintegration. "Gods befriend none but the tired," says the *Rig-Veda*. Whatever is worth having has to be won by the sweat of a man's brow. People may for a time live on inherited wealth or inherited prestige or knowledge, but inasmuch as it is unearned by the individual, each of these heritages loses its life-giving power and any disturbance in the artificial conditions which give them seeming protection

brings in inevitable ruin. Great nations in the world have fallen soon after they were in the zenith of their power. People sometimes speak of it as the pendulum movement of fortune. But perhaps the fact of the matter is that prosperity and prestige create a false sense of security and a consequent relaxation of effort which in its turn leads to degeneration and downfall.

(b) *The Joy of Living*

Exertion, contest, fight—this, then, is the primary impulse of life. It is an impulse that leads to the acceptance of pain and suffering as the essential condition of existence. But to make amends for the pain of existence, life has its joys to offer. The higher the sensibility in the animal, the greater the capacity for joy. Joy is not a necessity like pain. It comes after all necessity is over. It denotes a freedom of body and mind and soul—a state of exhilaration which lifts one above the travail and struggle of life.

It makes the lamb frolic in the meadow, the child leap in the mother's arms. It is a state in which all the burden has fallen away from the mind, all responsibility of life shaken off; a state in which man is less a part of the world-force struggling into being, than a complete being in himself, independent of, and unaccountable to, everything else.

III. ORIGIN OF ART

It is this joy that made primitive peoples dance and sing after the serious business of hunting and fighting had been over. And out of this dance and music, as Professor Gummere thinks, came poetry as the verbal accompaniment. The same joy that found expression in dance and song manifested itself in the carving of the figures of slain animals on the cave-walls of primitive men; and out

of these developed painting and sculpture. And in the long periods of peace that intervened between the primitive wars, men began to substitute houses for caves and made the beginnings of architecture. Again during peace time, when they did not divert themselves with mock-wars or sports, they delighted in narrating or mimicking the brave deeds performed in the wars. This led to the creation of epic and drama. In latter-day civilization when peace became a normal affair, men began to narrate and mimic the affairs of ordinary life and produced the realistic novel and play, and expressed their personal feelings in the lyric.

It became habitual with human society to fill the respites from struggle and strife with art. Thus art became the hall-mark of civilization. A nation that has not produced great poets and painters, or whose masses have not had folk-dance and folk-song and other types of popular art is not to be considered to have reached a high stage in civilization.

A nation without art has not felt the joy of existence. It has not been actuated by the instinct which leads to a non-utilitarian pursuit. For art begins where utility ends.

IV. ORIGIN OF MORALITY

Morality, on the other hand, is connected with the struggle for existence. The primary type of morality consists in those qualities of body and mind which contribute to survival in the struggle for physical existence. According to it, strength is virtue, weakness is vice; courage is virtue, cowardice is vice; energy is virtue, indolence is vice.

But mere strength, courage and energy are not enough in the battle of life; they must be controlled and directed. Hence even on the biological plane, morality comes to imply self-control and self-

restraint, moderation and order. That is to say, in the battle of life morality is the discipline for battle.

When men live collectively and fight for collective survival, morality stands for the suppression of individual desire for the collective good of the community. Life comes to be guided by the law of fellowship, sometimes spoken of as citizenship.

Morality as the fitness for biological survival is derived partly from animal and partly from social or gregarious instincts. There is, however, a higher morality which cultivates the fitness for spiritual survival. It is built upon the sense of spiritual values. Man develops a point of honour which evokes the highest courage, strength and energy of which he is capable. Not seldom does the spiritual value militate against biological existence. The sense of honour often demands the sacrifice of every biological interest, the sacrifice even of life. "Truth, even if the heavens would fall", "Justice, even if it would ruin the world", "Liberty, even if it would cost millions of lives", "Chastity, even if it would destroy every happiness of life"—these are principles dictated by a sense of spiritual value, which sweep every other consideration before them.

When these principles are passed on from one mind to another they are sometimes transformed into dogmas or blind beliefs; but in their origin they represent a heroic impulse in the higher nature of man, an intuitive and spiritual sense of life's higher values.

If morality is an expression of will, it is so only in a secondary sense. Will is merely the motor power which sets the mind and body into action. But how to decide what is to be willed? It is not will that decides what is to be willed. The will is commanded by a force beyond it. This force, at its highest, is a spiritual impulse—"a heroic inspiration

in man," as Carlyle calls it,—a sense of spiritual value. It leads life to spiritual survival.

Morality, then, is the law of survival: physical on the lower, and spiritual on the higher, plane of life.

V. PURE ART AND EXCLUSIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE JOY OF LIFE

The two movements of life—the struggle for existence and the joy of living—leading respectively to morality and art, have been conceived as parallel and mutually exclusive forces by certain schools of thought. The Stoics and Puritans have understood the most earnest interests of life to exclude the joy principle and come 'to scorn delights and live laborious days'. The aesthetes, on the other hand, have conceived life in terms of the joy principle and art, and excluded the contemplation of the struggles and problems of existence. They have found it more worth their while

To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair,

and to seek the grace of form and the pleasure it brings.

The art that puritanism has produced with the aim of teaching and 'justifying the ways of God to men,' has not always been recognized as good art; even where it has been recognised as such, it has been on account of the non-moral and non-religious elements.

At the opposite extreme of didactic and puritan art lies what may be described as "Pure Art," which is exclusively occupied with the joy of life and is indifferent to the moral and spiritual issues connected with the struggle for existence. It enjoys visions of life in detachment from the complications and problems of living. In other words, it is interested in form, and leads

to the serene enjoyment of its charms unperturbed by other considerations. It is indifferent to the subject and the moral values involved in the form. It will admire a villain portrayed in a highly impressive form more than a hero not similarly portrayed. In plastic art it will seek delicacy and grace of line, harmony of colour and rhythmic feeling and will ignore the appeal of the subject as such. It will find more interest in a villager's cottage than in the highly mechanized and more comfortable buildings in cities, in an old or ruined castle than in a fashionable hotel, in the picturesque costume of a Bedouin Sheik or an Indian Maharaja than in the stereotyped dress of an English gentleman.

In music and literary art it will look for harmony and melody, for unity evolved out of diversity, for rhythm produced by the fluctuation and swing in the movement of sound (as in music or verse), or in the movement of action, (as in the story or play).

A dramatic action, for example, fluctuates from prosperity to adversity with rhythmic movement in the fluctuation. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, for instance, we find a loving couple in the beginning and in the end the lady is killed by the lover and the latter commits suicide. If the couple had lived happily throughout, there would have been no movement, and hence no plot in the drama.

A purely aesthetic enjoyment of the drama will be an enjoyment of the rhythm of the movement, irrespective of any moral or spiritual significance of the content. The aesthetically minded spectator will find the same delight in *Othello* as he would have found in another play in which the swing of the action was from unhappiness to happiness, because what interests him is neither the happiness nor the unhappi-

ness, but the rhythm in the movement of life.

The pure artist who derives his joy from form is also found to draw upon the content of art for his delight when the latter happens to be pleasurable in character. In doing so he shows a special interest in those aspects of life where Nature herself has made the pleasure principle play an important rôle. Of the three primary impulses in animal life—those for nutrition, protection and propagation—the last is chiefly associated with the principle of pleasure. For finding food Nature has given energy, for self-protection and fight, she has given courage, and for procreation she has endowed her children with love and all its magic. Especially in the biped creation she has made lavish provision for art and beauty. There is the magic of plumage and song in the winged species, and there is the greater magic of physical and mental beauty and the infinite modulations of emotional contact in the wingless species of bipeds. Now one with a predilection for the beauty and joy of life will find inexhaustible material in human sex-life to fascinate the mind. Quite naturally pure art has shown a special—almost exclusive—preoccupation with sex and subtleties of emotional experience connected with it.

People, however, have sometimes gone against sanity and normality in the name of pure art. There is a type of "pure" artists who, in their search for the joy of life, find the normal varieties of it not sufficiently stimulating. They therefore habitually explore the abnormal, unhealthy and pathological side of life for additional stimulus. The result is sensationalism, vulgarity, prurience and other kinds of morbidity. They do not interpret sex, even in its exclusiveness, as a robust and healthy

impulse in man; they distort and disfigure its expression till everything associated with it looks wicked and provides unholy glee. These pure artists are often men with diseased and tortured souls with a morbid interest in life's aberrations. Theirs is not the joy of life that goes to the creation of genuine art. The suspicion that this kind of art is liable to induce coarseness and depravity is not altogether unfounded. But the expression of this suspicion has piqued the artists into a virtuous indignation and they have cried, "Art for art's sake." This is only an attempt to obtain personal prestige from an order, to the membership of which they have a very doubtful claim.

VI. COMPOSITE ART AND PREOCCUPATION WITH THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE AND THE JOY OF THE STRUGGLE

Apart from those instances where the doctrine of "art for art's sake" is intended to shield the unrestricted manifestation of bad temper or bad taste or bad breeding, there is an art, which is detached from life and its moral and spiritual values and seeks only the aesthetic value, that can rightly be spoken of as pure art.

But beyond the schools of didactic art and pure art, which represent, respectively, the puritan and aesthetic outlooks on life, there is a third school of art, a school to which the greatest artists and poets belong, that understands life neither exclusively in terms of its struggles nor exclusively in terms of its joy and beauty, but in terms of both. While this school makes of art a medium for the spontaneous expression of the joy of soul and the joy of living, it also deals with the struggle for existence, biological as well as spiritual. It goes to the depths of life, to its mysteries and problems and the moral and spiritual issues, and grasps them

with a sure hand. Finally, it leads to a qualitative understanding of life and character and a sense of values.

Great poets have never watched life as distinterested spectators, never taken a mere artistic interest in it, viewing virtue and vice, justice and injustice, courage and cowardice with an even mind. They have been persistent upholders of all those qualities which make for a noble, manly and virtuous life.

Their art differs from the didactic and puritan in that it is fundamentally an expression of the joy of life. Still it is not, except in its lighter forms, the joy of the aesthete, detached from the serious interests of life. The joy of which this type of art is an expression is of a twofold nature. First, it is the joy felt by strong souls in the serene intervals of strenuous action. It is a holiday rightly earned and enjoyed from the serious affairs of life. Shakespeare's comedies are illustrations in point. It is significant that love, that occurs very infrequently in his tragedies as a leading motif, is the only theme in his comedies. Secondly—and it is an interesting phenomenon—the joy of life sought by great poets is a joy that belongs to the struggle of life itself, and is not something separate from or opposed to it. It is the joy of battle, of heroic and strenuous action, of every enterprise of body and mind and soul. There is a qualitative difference between this virile sense of exhilaration and the facile and not seldom morbid and neurotic pleasure of the aesthete. This joy is not the negation of suffering and pain; it exists as a positive element in all heroic suffering, in all pain passed through by strong and noble minds. It is this joy that is found in tragedy, the wild Dionysian ecstasy of the soul—a reflex of the mad *tândava* dance of Siva—that accompanies the tragic representation of ruin and death.

While pure art is specially attached to sex and, at its best, to the lovely manifestations of eroticism, this greater art which does not altogether ignore them, is more interested in the sublimated forms of eroticism where it is a spiritual passion and a power in man's higher nature. But more frequently great literature contemplates the life of struggles and conflicts that put to the extreme test all the moral and spiritual resources in man. Shakespeare, it may be noted, treats, as a rule (with a few exceptions), the combats of men in his serious work—the tragedies, and the loves of women in his lighter work—the comedies.

VII. EFFECT OF VALUES ON LIFE'S CONFLICTS

The application of moral and spiritual values to life has an important bearing on the nature of its conflicts. In the animal existence which knows no value, every impulse corresponding to moral promptings is guided by expediency. A bison fights another bison in the forest with great courage till it finds courage to be of no avail and then it takes to flight. But a man who is guided by the moral principle of courage will fight dauntlessly, winning or losing, and will never take to flight; so that even where there is a physical defeat the vanquished fighter scores a moral victory. This means that, in a life affected by moral values, conflicts are more protracted and intensive than in animal life; hence the struggle for existence is more severe. And, in spite of the persistence, intensity and severity of the struggle, the issues may yet remain undecided. A bison, gored and laid low by its adversary, is finished for ever; but not so the man who takes his stand on moral and spiritual values. He may be tortured and killed but his ideal survives him and

recruits fresh forces to continue the battle.

In animal life, the power is quantitative. One may measure the duration of the fight between two contending bisons, and forecast the issue by a study of their physical constitutions. But in the life penetrated by values all calculations fail; because the power here is qualitative. A solitary man may fight a great empire and reduce it to the dust.

There is a tremendous increase in their intensity when the conflicts of life are associated with values. Life's irreconcilable issues, which bring its intensity to a white heat, belong to the moral and spiritual plane.

Art at its greatest deals with life at its intensest. Hence great art necessarily comes to be associated with values.

In literature, the simple and the more or less animalistic conflict is represented in the folk epics. Bhima fighting Duhsâsana with the mace, sitting on his prostrate body and sucking his blood; Achilles beating Hector in a furious combat and dragging his dead body behind his chariot wheels: these are grand spectacles of physical heroism. In art epics we already find the importation of values, and a new meaning attaching to life's conflicts. In the *Râmâyana*, Râma fights Râvana in a physical combat; but there is a moral combat between Sîtâ, the solitary woman held in duress, and all the power of temptation and coercion of a mighty king. Homer's Helen is only aesthetically great; she changes hands like a precious jewel from one party to another without any moral or spiritual struggle on her part; because her life has not been affected by spiritual values. Sîtâ is not a human jewel changing hands; she has a soul, and a proud soul, with a delicate moral and spiritual sensitive-

ness, that makes her as great as the hero of the epic, and intensifies its conflict.

In the transition from epic to tragedy, there is principally the change from life conceived more or less biologically to one penetrated by spiritual values. Really what tragedy represents is epic heroism in defeat and ruin. Now why should defeat and ruin exalt us? Is any one but the Sadist exalted by the sight of men being killed or cities being ruined? What is there in the sight of a Desdemona cruelly strangled to death by her husband or of a Lear breathing his last with the murdered body of his beloved daughter in his arms, that could conceivably exalt the mind of the spectator? Is it simply the sense of form, the rhythmic movement of action from prosperity to adversity, that does so? Certainly not. It is the sense of value which the drama inevitably produces on the mind of the spectator that leads to the characteristic tragic effect. Desdemona dies, but her death establishes something that is undying, *viz.*, the glory of love and chastity. Lear and Cordelia die, but their deaths make affection and fidelity survive more persistently in the mind of the audience than it would have done before. Tragic ruin and loss emphasise the value of what is ruined and lost. If life were to be divested of its values, no tragedy would ensue. There may be any amount of pity, but there is no tragedy, in the case of the drunkard who beats his wife to death or of the beggar who starves to death with his child. Tragedy belongs to the plane where life rises above biological interests,—where it is measured in terms of spiritual value.

Life's struggles and conflicts, intensified beyond measure by the application of value, make the theme of great literature. Even in the interest of pure form, especially the dynamic form as found in epic drama and novel, the value leads to a gain in artistic quality; for the intensity that it imparts makes the form most vital and most movingly real. There is nothing in devaluated life to correspond to this intensity. No amount of sensationalism, however shocking and breath-taking it may appear, can approximate the power and intensity of moral and spiritual conflicts. Hence the pure art that eliminates value can never be of the greatest, if only because it cannot contemplate life at its intensest.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Art is never moral, if morality means superimposed laws, dead forms, decayed conventions. But morality as the qualitative sense of life, as the elements of power and nobility in character, as the value which intensifies life's conflicts and charges it with a higher significance than biology ever gives it,—such morality is the very stuff of which great art and literature are made.

Pure art there has been and there will be—the contemplation of the beauty of form in detachment from life's moral and spiritual issues. But the more intensive and therefore the greater art will be that in which the aesthetic appeal is reinforced by all the depth and complexity of meaning that lies in life and the power and exaltation that go with life's moral and spiritual battles.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE OF INDIA*

BY ASOKE KUMAR BHATTACHARYYA

I

Contemporary Life of India: Social and Religious

The Bengal where Ramakrishna was born a hundred years ago was like a swamp of religious and social traditions left by the ebb-tide of the age-long spiritual ideals of the East. When the early days of Ramakrishna were being spent amidst the hallowed calm of Dakshineswar in passionate search for the Mother, there was gathering on the horizon of Bengal a storm that grew out of the conflict between the ideals of Hinduism and Christianity enhanced by the attempt of Swami Dayananda Saraswati to revive the Sanâtanist sect. People were at a loss to pick and choose from amongst them the right course of life with the consequence that many were carried away by the charm and novelty of the doctrines of Brâhmoism which sought to reconcile to some extent the two dominant religions of the East and the West and rescue the educated young Bengal of the age from the danger of an alien influence. Rammohan Roy, the champion of Brâhmoism, born in an orthodox Brahmin family and brought up amidst Islamic culture, was above all a rationalist and a moralist. He could accept neither the polytheistic ideals of religion as he found them in his ancestral creed nor the monotheistic

principles of faith as preached by Christianity.¹ He was an absolute monotheist in that he went the length of denying the Trinity of Christ just as he denied the Hindu divinities. To him it appeared that the only religion was 'the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe'. He claimed his religion as 'universal' and he endeavoured to preach universal brotherhood through it. But as against this it may be said that it was only as good a form of religion as Christianity, preaching a particular set of beliefs and vying with other existing faiths.

As a reactionary measure against the Westernization of the country in matters both intellectual and religious, a well-organized agitation was started in northern India under the heroic lead of Dayananda. The sole aim of this movement was to bring back to the ancient soil its long-forgotten Vedic faith and its practices. In the course of his journey which he undertook for preaching his faith, Dayananda came to Bengal. Though the success of this Vedic resuscitator was not so glowing in Bengal, mainly because of the classical Sanskrit language in which he spoke, yet the movement had its visible effect on the Bengal public.

When these cross-currents of religious thoughts were in full sway in this land already overwhelmed by Western ideas

* This essay won the 1st prize in the Competition among College Students.

¹ Romain Rolland: *Life of Ramakrishna*,

Sri Ramakrishna Centenary All-India Essay

p. 108.

and ideals of life, the Saint of Dakshineswar came with a spiritual message quite adapted to the sceptical and scientific age in which he was born. His is a message that he worked out in his own life without thrusting it upon those that came to him. His ideal of religious life is free from any scheduled restrictions of caste or creed, of place or time. The Divine can be worshipped by a man in and out of the temple, be he a believer in the formless God or in God with forms. What is needed is only a purified soul—a humble resignation to and an absolute faith in the Supreme Being.

Ramakrishna's Ideal of Religious Life—a reaction against as well as an assimilation of the prevailing social and religious surroundings

The message of Ramakrishna to India and to humanity at large is the sum total of human experiences in life. As a member of the family, as a man of society, he was more alive to the welfare of humanity than anything else and his teachings to the world are of great social value. His prime task was to reform the Hindu society which had been shorn of its ideal of unity, religion and social service. Social condition of Bengal, in particular, as Ramakrishna saw it, was anything but satisfactory. Prejudice of caste, hatred of heresy and above all, the evils of Western education gradually eating into the life of the country,—all combined to stir up in the mind of Ramakrishna the ideal of a universal religion where the lost children of the ancient sages might find a shelter. He made people feel that religion was no tyranny to be exercised over the society and was no object of dread for its thousands of bindings. A faith that could take within its fold the priest and the 'pariah' with the same rights and privileges was the faith propounded by Sri Ramakrishna.

II

Essential Elements in the Teachings of Ramakrishna

From the Vedic age through the Buddhist era down to the present time, the one common string that binds together all the religions preached in this sacred land of India is the spirit of renunciation. During the Vedic predominance man's course of life was marked by graded renunciation in its different stages; in the Buddhistic period the spiritual ideal of man was recast according to the Buddha's principle of renunciation which enjoined somewhat rigorous denial of pleasures to man whether he was a house-holder or a mendicant. The people of India in modern ages caught in the snare of worldly enjoyments were looking forward in disgust for an ideal of renunciation to satisfy their spiritual hunger; for, spirituality is an instinct of the Indian mind. And Ramakrishna came with this long-looked-for message of renunciation—a renunciation that demanded no leaving of the house-hold life in favour of the forest and practising penances there, but which only reminded man of his own inner and truer self in the midst of his usual hum-drum life and his inseparable relation to God. "When you are at work use only one of your hands and let the other touch the feet of the Lord."² "Live like a mudfish and let not the mud of the world stick to you." Be in the world and at the same time out of it.

But the remarkable feature of his principle of renunciation is that it is always coupled with the spirit of service. To him life within this world is the fit field for both. Renunciation as such separates man from man, but renunciation

² Romain Rolland: *Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 215. Interview with Keshab and his disciples.

through service unites humanity in a tie of universal brotherhood. He imbibed the teachings of the *Gitâ* and saw the manifestation of God in every man and thing.³ He was thus a follower of the *Gitâ* on the one side as also a worshipper of Kâli on the other. He was a synthesis, as it were, of the *Gitâ* and the *Chandi*—the eternal spiritual bequests of India. Indeed, he was a devotee of Kâli, as she is manifest in the *Chandi*, not as the destructive force of Sakti, but as the eternal fountain of Love and Beauty as embodied in his 'Mother.'

Ramakrishna's spiritual legacy to India is marked by synthesis and toleration. The greatest truth about religious life as revealed to Sri Ramakrishna is perhaps his conviction about One Eternal Religion running through all humanity. This religion manifests itself in different races and in different countries quite in different forms in obedience to the diversity of their environment, culture and temperament. The numerous faiths, therefore, that seem to prescribe distinct paths to God and spirituality are the different phases of that One Universal Religion that existed in the past and will exist for all time to come.⁴ Further, one individual may seek God through activity (*karma*), another through devotion (*bhakti*), while a third through knowledge (*jnâna*). It is just as one can view Truth from different angles of vision.⁵ But all the paths lead to the same goal; all seek God, though the roads vary. Ramakrishna combined all and despised none. For, so many ideas of God, so many religious beliefs were to him the forms of the same effort to attain the God-head. Every faith was equally potent to lead man to the spiritual goal, provided he has a sincere

and devoted heart to follow it.⁶ This universality of his ideas about God and religion and his unprecedented toleration of other faiths found expression in a thousand and one of his memorable utterances.⁷

At an age when religions in India—swelling in number as they were—far from being held in sacredness by their respective followers, were vying with one another, when society suffering from the ignorance of its masses was the hot-bed of vice and superstition, when individuals absorbed in elaborate rituals lost sight of the distant aim, Ramakrishna, simplicity and sincerity incarnate, purified the heart of Hinduism and made it a living force once again by removing all its excrescences that were threatening to stifle it. To think of God as the nearest, to take him as the dearest, formed the essence of that simplest faith which the poor priest of Dakshineswar wanted at this psychological moment to bring home to the heart of Bengal. "Why do you give these statistics?" he once reprehended Keshab Chandra Sen. "If you think of Him and His gifts as something extraordinary, you can never be intimate with Him...Do not think of Him as if He were far away from you."⁸ Religions in India are characteristically pervaded by the idea of realization and in this sceptic age it is unnatural that religion should be anything other than realization. And the life of the Paramhansa is one of such intense personal realization. The spirit of religion loses its hold both upon the devotee and its followers if it does not proceed from the realization of God. The devotee must think of God, 'feel God' and 'talk to God.' This is the

³ *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna I*, p. 350.

⁴ Vivekananda: *My Matser*.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Saradananda: *Ramakrishna Lila Prasanga, Gurubhava, Uttarardha*, Second Ed., p. 47.

⁷ *Gospel of Ramakrishna II*, 17 and 248.

⁸ *Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 365.

truest and most tangible of all religions that can touch the heart of humanity. But it must be remembered that Ramakrishna in representing to the world his religion of renunciation and service, of toleration, synthesis and realization has only re-echoed the sacred note sounded in this ancient land thousands of years ago. Indeed, his attempt has been an unconscious revival rather than a studied renovation.

Ramakrishna's teaching as contrasted with Buddhism, Christianity, and some forms of Hindu faith with special reference to their mystical aspect

The man-God of the nineteenth century felt the identification of himself with the Divine. His filial relation with God, the 'Mother', was the outward expression of his inner identification with the Absolute.⁹ He felt the immanence of God in every being and believed that every being is an expression of the Divine and that every man can attain godhead. Herein lies the difference between the Vaishnavite and the Sâkta idea of realization.

It has been urged by most of the European writers that Hinduism is essentially mystical and that the teachings of Ramakrishna, embodying as they do the essentials of Hinduism, share in mysticism as well. But Hinduism, and for the matter of that, Ramakrishna's teachings do not suffer in comparison with other forms of religion which have influenced the religious life of humanity at large. For all true religions are mystical. *If all true religions consist in the identification of the individual with the Universal,—the finite with the Infinite, such a consciousness of the identity cannot but be supra-sensuous and supra-rational.* The realm of the individual and the finite is the realm of the senses and of reason.

⁹ Dr. Mahendranath Sirkar: *Eastern Lights*, Ch. XI.

The senses and reason have their function within the bounds of the finite existence, which can be understood and interpreted in terms of the categories of time, space and causality, but the realization of the Infinite is beyond categorical knowledge and can be effected by intuition or inner vision alone. It can be effected by the inner spiritual awakening which no discursive reason however subtle in its application can bring about. Man's spiritual hunger and thirst goad him to that inner grasp of the Infinite which defies all intellectualism. Hinduism is therefore none the poorer for its mysticism.

The much too rationalistic tendency in Christianity has made it accept the reality of this phenomenal world, and the spiritual life which cannot be analysed by reason is only to be reached through a transcendental experience. The visions of the mystic are beyond the field of reason and make up a separate form of existence. There is a wide gap, as it were, between this mundane life and the delightful experience of a wider existence—the two can never be reconciled. In Buddhism the existence of this secular world has been altogether denied. The Buddhist at his highest has the transcendental experience of the unsullied bliss while the world of ordinary experience shrivels into nothingness. This is what is called Nirvâna. The Buddhist in the state of Nirvâna is, therefore, above the biological and psychical demands of life and makes his existence a matter of mystic realization. Mysticism thus forms the essential medium through which the Buddhist claims to taste the spiritual *summum bonum*. Hinduism here is more comprehensive in its ideal than either Buddhism or Christianity. It takes cognizance of the relative reality of the phenomenal world without bringing in an idea of isolation between the world of phenomena and the world of reality.

The mystic element in Hinduism and in the teachings of Ramakrishna, which are essentially the revival of the same, is distinctly inclusive in its acceptance of the world outside. Ramakrishna, consistently with the principles of Hinduism, has not given the go-by to the world of time, space and causation but rather asserted that the finite and the individual can become the Infinite and Universal in and through its participation in the workings and progress of the spatio-temporal world. When the Hindu Sâdhaka has seen through this spatio-temporal world and realized the Absolute, he enters into a wider life beyond and above the reach of reason and the senses but not antagonistic to them.¹² Ramakrishna realized this higher truth of Hinduism but preferred to practise its simpler form whose Deity was the Mother Kâli and his sonship to Kâli was at once a glory, a light and a delight to him.

III

Ramakrishna's Social and Religious Ideal is the Need of the Hour

Ramakrishna laid no claim on any one as his follower though every one that came into contact with him was anxious to follow him. He laid no claim on any religion as his personal bequest¹³ though his legacy to the religious world appears to be of the richest and finest type. Consequently, unlike Christianity or Buddhism which owed its origin to the life of its promulgator, Ramakrishna's religious life aims at a revival of the Hindu ideal as it was revealed to the ancient sages. It is universal in the sense that it bears no idea of proselytizing others nor does it find fault with any of the positive religions.

¹² Cf. Dr. M. N. Sircar: *Hindu Mysticism*.

¹³ Swami Premananda once heard him pray: "Mother, do not let me become famous by leading those who believe in beliefs through my voice."

It was the land of India which had once got the inspiration from the giant intellect of Sankara and it was here that Chaitanya's message of love opened up a new vista of spirituality to India of the middle ages and the time was ripe for one to be born, the embodiment of the intellect of Sankara and the heart of Chaitanya. The time was ripe for one who was to sound the symphony of all religions—to recognize variation within unity and integrate the quarrelling masses with a spirit of service and toleration. And the present spiritual atmosphere of India after her vicissitudes of religious experiences, and social filtration is largely the gift of Ramakrishna who saw and felt what the hour needed, and the world has come to see in this cosmic man the fulfilment of its religious aspirations.

What Ramakrishna did towards the elevation of the social and religious life of modern India

The ideal of service that often moved the Great Master haunted the lion-heart of Vivekananda afterwards, when the task of carrying the great message abroad fell on his able shoulders. The task was a tremendous one and Vivekananda took it up after his return from the far-off Western countries. India, more than any other country in the world, is the home-land of the poor and the suffering. Visitations of natural calamities greatly enhance the helplessness of the country and the need of rescuers is felt more keenly in this land of ours than anywhere else. Vivekananda felt the need in his heart and made the cause of the poor, the ailing and the down-trodden, a part of his creed.¹⁴ His clarion call to service was readily responded to and the greatest

¹⁴ *The Life of the Swami Vivekananda*, by his Eastern and Western disciples, Vol. II. Ch. LXXIII.

gift of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is the establishment of rescue-homes, industrial centres and orphan-asylums all over India and abroad. It has set up a country-wide agitation and the people of India have accepted the principle of service as a creed of their own. The Ramakrishna Math and Mission, the greatest organization of the kind in India, has not only taken upon itself the relief works of all manner and dimension, but as a stout step towards national uplift it has opened at many places of India centres for home-industry¹⁵ and has even undertaken the education of masses where possible to reclaim the fallen from the lowest depths of depravity. The institution, inspired with the ideal of Vivekananda and his Master, continues to contribute immensely to the uplift of the Indian society in its ethical and social standards.

The Vedic age had long gone away leaving its excrescences which went on accumulating only to encrust the Hindu society thicker and thicker. The caste-system which formed the backbone of the social unity lost its original significance, and men in the higher ranks of the society developed a superiority complex, and the reaction which followed found expression in the life and teachings of Sree Chaitanya. Chaitanya's overflowing love for all was a step forward towards the religious franchise of the low caste. But it waited on Ramakrishna in this modern age to deal, though only in principle, a stronger blow to this standing evil. Like Chaitanya he not only absorbed the low caste within his religious fold but roused a sense of respect for their religious aspirations. His direct disciples included low caste devotees,¹⁷ for, he held that realization of

God, the ultimate aim of humanity, is no personal privilege of any individual high or low in society. Yet, as Vivekananda who represented the practical aspect of the Great Master asserted, the difference between the high and the low, the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin, is only a difference of social functions and abilities and the moment the non-Brahmin acquires the abilities and character of a Brahmin he is to be exalted to Brahminhood.¹⁸ This liberalization of caste specially in matters religious on the one hand, and the vindication of the strong underlying principle of caste-distinction on the other, mark at once the revolution in spiritual outlook that the Paramahansa ushered into the Indian society without detriment to the ancient ideal of the land.

To study Ramakrishna in isolation from Vivekananda is quite an impossible task. Though in nature the two were exactly opposite, yet the one was the supplement of the other. If Ramakrishna was all inspiration, Vivekananda was all activity; if Ramakrishna was the maker of a religion, Vivekananda was its missionary. And the greatest mission that Vivekananda carried to the different parts of India is the awakening of the Indian youth to a sense of national pride and national respect. He infused into the mind of the young India the ideal of the sanctity of religion as the very basis of Indian life and in this respect he followed strictly his Great Master. Ramakrishna no less than Vivekananda was the real leader of the youth. The contemporary youths of Bengal were attracted by this Godman of the nineteenth century and a batch of "bold Sannyasins" arose out of them. And

servant, Latu by name, who was to be one of the direct and most favourite disciples of the Master.

¹⁸ Vivekananda: *The Reform of Caste.*

¹⁵ The reference is specially to Madras "Students' Home" and its great activities.

¹⁷ As an instance, it may be cited that along with Ramchandra Dutt, one of the earliest disciples of Ramakrishna, came his

Vivekananda's move for social service is in reality a movement for the youth of India. He proclaimed in every corner of India and abroad the call of service to the young generation, and, happily for India, this awakening of the youth of the country at a time when Indian nationality was at its ebb, served to stir up patriotism in this lost land.¹⁹ Since then the Indian national consciousness began to be felt all over the country and attempts were made to bring about a national unity through social service. This impetus to service which has since taken shape in innumerable useful institutions, we all owe to that maker of modern India, that great disciple of a great Master—Swami Vivekananda. The Master sowed the seed and the disciple gave it sap and nourishment.

But it was not the youth of India alone that occupied the Master's thought but the womanhood of India as well shared a large measure of his sympathetic estimation. Ramakrishna saw and felt the deplorable condition of the Indian womanhood of his time and endeavoured to revive its lost glory. He inculcated the ideal of the *Chandi*²⁰ and learnt to see in every woman the manifestation of his 'Mother', the Primordial Power (Adyasakti) of the universe. His relation with his wife was the sacred relation of mother and her child and he even went so far as to worship her having enthroned

¹⁹ Vivekananda's call to the Indians: Hero, take courage and be proud that you are an Indian and say in pride, 'I am an Indian and every Indian is my brother.'

²⁰ Cf. *Chandi*, XI. 6.

her in his 'Mother's' seat.²¹ In his religious life he acknowledged with all humility a woman, Bhairavi Brahmani by name, as his preceptress. His life, in a word, is a splendid devotion to the moulding of the Indian social outlook on womanhood which is nothing else than divinity.

Leaving his indelible impress upon the life of the Indian people, nay, upon the world at large, the Messiah of the East took his exit from the world-stage. The river that with its sacred waters sanctified all that was unholy in the religious and social body of India re-entered the ocean of eternal unity, sanctity and equality. Ramakrishna's ideal of a universal religion, his call to the Indians to extricate themselves from the meshes of social prejudices and, finally, his simple ways of religious life to attain God are the most striking of his gifts to mankind for which he is worshipped to-day and will be in ages to come by posterity. Ramakrishna was above all a man; humanity in him was more marked than in any other prophet of the past. As a human being he was always on the alert for the uplift of the human society and he could not afford to keep himself aloof. He has disengaged his self from the narrow adjunct of his body only to pervade the universe with his truer spirit. His bodily appearance we have been deprived of, but we seem to hear his inspiring voice calling us to a better and a truer life: *Uttishthata jāgrata prāpya varān nibōdhata*—"Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached."

²¹ Romain Rolland: *Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 99.

MAN'S PLACE IN THE COSMOS

BY DR. D. N. ROY, M.A., PH.D.

Some years ago a curious business was started in the Western world. There was a beauty contest in which many self-conscious girls appeared as candidates, each aspiring to secure the highest recognition for her beauty. In that unique contest one fortunate girl was ceremoniously elected as Miss Universe. The girl might have felt exceedingly flattered and very much enjoyed being advertised in such a wonderful manner. We, however, are much less interested in how she felt than what the wise judges thought when they elected her as Miss Universe.

When, in a beauty contest, a girl is elected as Miss Europe or Miss America one may take it with a grain of salt thinking that the persons concerned in this contest—those including the beauty contestants, the people who vote for them, and the judges who elect the most beautiful of them—are all Europeans or Americans and as such may talk of their own people and their continent in their own peculiar way. But when these very judges elect a Miss Universe from such beauty contestants, one cannot help wondering what they mean by the universe. Is it their Europe? Or the countries which constitute the West? Or this world of our five continents? It is hard to believe that they think of the universe as far greater than this our world. Even if some one of them does believe so, his conception may be so vague as to be all but meaningless. Otherwise he could not give his approbation to the very idea of choosing a Miss Universe from a group of girls hailing from only the countries of the West.

I do not know if that modern custom is still observed in Europe. If it is, it certainly gives the people there plenty of fun and amusements and that probably is the important thing for them.

We, however, are interested in the general implication of the custom. It alludes not only to those people who participate in it but indirectly even to many others who do not. It is this that most people do not realize what the term 'universe' actually stands for. They generally use it so loosely that this little planet of ours is large enough for them to be taken for its synonym. It seems they have not profited by time. Astronomy is the most ancient of all positive sciences. It has been talking about the mysteries of the universe since the time of the Chaldeans and the Egyptians. Yet the general people do not seem to have enlightened themselves any better from the rich findings of astronomy. The universe has not yet acquired its fuller meaning for them, at least, in their practical life.

It would not do to console oneself simply by saying that the general people should not be taken so seriously for what they do, that they do not count because they do not think. The general people constitutes a manhood which counts very much, because it has its indelible impress upon all people including the best thinkers of the age.

Neither would it do to dismiss this one instance of people's ignorance by saying that it matters little if the universe is taken by them in a loose sense, that it hardly affects their lives in any real sense. This may be the

observation of those who have no time to go deeper into the fact. But it is not a wholly correct observation. We all know that a peculiar conception of God: has its peculiar influence upon man's life. The God-concept surrounds his mental environment most of the time and directly or indirectly works upon his inner tendencies. In like manner, a certain conception of the universe has its own peculiar influence. The universe surrounds him in a more forceful manner than even his God, inasmuch as it is objectively present before his senses, while to him God is the Great Unseen. The highly rich meaning of the universe has its refining and elevating influence upon man; it has in it a great source of peace and contentment.

We often think of God and talk about His glory and majesty. We feel very much inspired thereby. But we would never use His name loosely. The common people may be stopped from doing it by threats of divine wrath, but the more thoughtful people would be able to see that the divine wrath is nothing but the degrading effect of holding a loose conception of God. Few seem to realize that, similarly, when we think of the universe we should not use it in a loose sense. Of course, the divine wrath is not there because, unlike the Great Unseen, it is visible to our gross senses. We can always see it and what we can always see does not inspire fear in us. Any wrath of the universe corresponding to divine wrath, therefore, is out of the question. We do not think of the greatness of the universe in our practical life, because we always find ourselves surrounded by it. Familiarity may not breed contempt in all cases, but it, at least, breeds indifference. Our indifference to the surrounding universe has caused us to use it less thoughtfully and inspiringly than it

deserves to be used and we are thereby deprived of its lofty influence.

Some people may think that to introduce such a contrast between our God-concept and the universe is wholly unwarranted. They would probably contend that our general idea of the universe bears no comparison with our idea of God which is ever inspiring and ennobling. I would agree with them that our idea of God blesses us with the loftiest inspirations of life, but that would not make a contrast with it of our idea of the universe unjustified. If a certain idea is rather obscure to us it becomes clearer when contrasted with some other idea with which we are very familiar. It is undeniable that we are more earnestly familiar with the idea of God than with any other idea. The contrast is very pertinent also in another respect which we shall see as we proceed.

But before that just a passing glimpse of the universe would not be out of place. The educated people including the scientists are found to use the term 'universe' in three different senses.

Firstly, it stands for our great solar system. It has received its name from a huge luminous body called the Sun which keeps its place at the centre. Around it there are nine planets, one of which is our beloved Earth. Some of these planets have a varied number of satellites or what we call moons. There are also other smaller bodies, such as asteroids, comets, and countless meteoric particles. These are what constitute our solar system and often stand for what many people call our universe. They, of course, admit that our universe is only one of a vast swarm of countless universes.

Secondly, it stands for the whole system of bodies in space which are visible to our unaided eye. It includes, besides our solar system, those luminous clouds called *nebulæ*, the individual

stars, and the star clusters. As we know that our Sun is just one of the countless stars that beautifully stud the vast body of space, it may be that each of those other stars is also a Sun with its own system of individual universe containing in the same manner, its planets, satellites, asteroids, comets, and meteorites. Thus the second conception stands for a universe of universes. It is a much grander and more awe-inspiring conception than the first one, inasmuch as it takes us farther and farther away where its apparent dimness only hides from us more glories of space. Astronomy has given us wonderful instruments to help our eyes see this vast universe.

But even with such instruments we can reach a distance which is only a point of space. It may be a universe of universes, still there is the endless beyond.

“In the deep abysses yonder,
Others measurelessly grander
Lie beyond them far away.

Those which thou hast deemed the
grandest

Are but motes to such as they.”

These “deep abysses yonder” suggest to us that our universe of universes is just one again of countless similar universes and the whole sidereal space is strewn with them.

Thirdly, it covers all the systems of universes—those that are visible, those that are not visible but imaginable, and those that stagger even our imagination. Who will count how many they make? But they certainly make one united whole and this great whole is *the* universe. In philosophy Cosmos is the term used for it to avoid ambiguity of the term universe.

How big is the size of the universe? Who can tell? And do we not feel inspired when we try to conceive of it?

Maeterlinck’s description will convince us :

“There we have in bold outline, some idea of our universe. I say our universe deliberately; and not the universe which is a different affair altogether. We have two universes to consider at the moment; that of our solar system, hitherto regarded as all-embracing but now recognized as comparatively insignificant; and the universe of the galaxy that comprises most of the stars our telescopes reveal in space, all joining in one single movement . . . Beyond or above, still a third universe suggests itself; one that we can only dimly picture, lying farther still than the galaxies, and composed principally of the spiral nebulae . . . And beyond even these three universes . . . there must almost inevitably be still more, a succession of universes, contained each within the other . . . and the last of these shall never be reached, for beyond would be inconceivable nothingness that cannot exist and can never have existed from the time that something was; for if nothingness ever had been, it would at once have been filled by whatever dropped into it.” (*The Magic of the Stars*, pp. 27-28.)

All these beautifully described universes of Maeterlinck make up *the* universe. When at the beginning I brought out a contrast between the conception of God and that of the universe in their bearing upon human life, I meant this great cosmic universe.

There is certainly a very elevating inspiration in the conception of this universe. Why? because it carries us by its mysterious endless beyond to a sphere of thought-life where the vision of the slowly unfolding infinite begins to clear itself. That which approaches the nature of the infinite has its great inspiration for us, since it keeps our

yearning for the infinite alive by its own indescribable beauty and grandeur. Of the only two objects of supreme admiration for Immanuel Kant one was the starry heaven above and the other the moral law within man. Indeed, the people who are spiritually inclined look for solitude. Far away from the "madding crowds' ignoble strife" he looks for a place where he can feel his being in the midst of the universe, where he can open his eyes to the farther and farther beyond. This is why the Buddha left his royal home and went to sit under the Bodhi tree from where his eyes unobstructedly perceived the greatness of the studded sky and then closed themselves to let the mind seek its eternal joy in that greatness.

Let us now turn once more to that little universe, our own solar system and consider the position which our Earth holds in it. There was a time when the callous egotism of man made this Earth the centre of the whole system because he happened to be in it, when it was considered to be the best of all possible worlds, because it is his world. Such ideas were so flattering to him that for long he was not willing to listen to any different scheme of our universe. But that egotism had to break down before truth, for truth is more permanent than egotism. We now know that our Earth does not hold any very distinguished position in the scheme of the universe.

The supreme position in our own solar system goes, of course, to the Sun which keeps its position at the centre like a benevolent king spending its own wealth of light and heat for the good of its surrounding retinue. It is the only self-luminous body and the greatest of all the great bodies of this system. Our Earth would look like a mere grain of sand if our Sun would be a tennis ball. Yet this Sun is merely one of the countless stars that shine in the

sky. It is rather small when compared with many of them. There are stars composed of matter a million times that of our Sun. There are stars composed of matter a million times less dense than the matter of which the Sun is composed, just as there are others "composed of matter two thousand times as dense as gold." Again, there are stars that emit thousand times the light and heat which the Sun emits.

If that is the position of our Sun when compared with its fellows, what position does our Earth hold before them all? Like its fellow planets, the Earth has no light of its own. It is like a "black star," or "stellar corpse," as Maeterlink calls it, borrowing its light from the Sun about which it moves all the time. Even among its fellow planets it does not hold any very exalted position. All of them except Mercury, Mars, and Venus are many times greater than it. Even Venus is almost equal to it. It is true, our Earth has a beautiful moon which affords unspeakable joy to many of us. But it is not a special favour for our Earth. All the planets except Mercury and Venus have their moons. While the Earth has only one moon each of the other five has more than one. Saturn is the most fortunate of them all, having as many as ten moons. We wonder how the inhabitants of Saturn, if there be any inhabitants there, especially of our type, feel about their planet and their life with so many moons emitting romance all the night.

At any rate, it is now very clear that our planet does not hold an exalted position in the grand scheme of the universe. Compared with the vast outside it stands like a simple grain of matter.

And how does man stand in this wonderful scheme? Is he not just a "subatomic creature" on this little grain of matter? He certainly is with all his

prattling egotism. He can perceive it if he wants to. Let him just come out in the deep silence of midnight when our Earth's own darkness hides all its borrowed glories, let him open his eyes to the studded sky above, gloriously silent with all its majestic greatness and let him focus his mental telescope upon it for a while. Ah, his inflated egotism will burst in its silent shameness, his cosmic insignificance will be as clear as the midday light!

But that need not be a depressing fact for man. The comparative insignificance in his outward cosmic existence does not minimise his essential greatness. He loses the real joy of his greatness in his self-conscious egotism, or as soon he builds up his own world centering around him. His greatness lies in his ability to transcend his narrow self and catch a glimpse of the infinite in all his surroundings. He is apparently surrounded by finite objects and if he cannot see anything more in them it is because his own egotism obstructs his vision and

sets limitation to all perceived objects. That egotism vanishes in his unconscious meditation upon the finites, and he begins to see the infinite unfolding itself in and through them. Take, for instance, just a little seed. Does it not tell the story of the infinite in its own finite form? It can produce a number of seeds each of which again can produce an equal number and so on and on until you can see that their numbers together may mount to any possible figure almost pointing to the infinite. That one little seed holds such a possibility in it! Take again a cosmic dust, even an atom. Are we not told that each minute atom is a wonderful world in itself? Do we not know that every bit of microcosm has all the realities of the great macrocosm? The man who can realize this profound truth has his own greatness which bears no comparison. Is the spark smaller than the flame in any essential aspect? If not, man has no reason to be depressed on account of his place in this cosmic order.

THE RELIGION OF NON-RELIGION

BY BHIKKU VAJRABUDDHI

The present man refuses to be bound to any creed, or drilled by a priestly caste. His is the mountain-view commanding wider prospects than his fellow-beings in the mist-enshrouded lowlands can command. He can raise himself above the traditions and prejudices of age and place, circumstances and birth; he sees, more clearly and in a truer perspective, the tangled web of men and things. His comprehensive vision embraces the world.

Sometimes, however, one is inclined to doubt the value of an effacing uniformity. The danger is that in cutting

oneself off from one particular tradition, one turns away from all traditions and drifts into that anchorless condition so characteristic of many "moderns." If a man is to study all religions and embraces none, he may in his mind construct an abstract ideal out of the best of all but that does not help him much. It is the same as bloodless cosmopolitanism.

In point of fact, while all things in this world of form are essentially one, they are unique in their outward appearance. The uniqueness of the individuality must be preserved as something

infinitely precious and as absolutely necessary for the perfection of the whole. As we see the universal Sanatana-Dharma, it is a fellowship in which every one has full scope for the flowering of his own distinctive individuality. Variation and colour are the signs of life, and only through agreeing to differ can the closest unity be attained. Differences are included within the Reality which transcends them and in which we can commune with one another. The basic conception of this "Unity in diversity," of the reciprocal need of the whole for the part and of the part for the whole is in accord with the fundamental principle of the universe, and is in fact the very keynote of Indian culture and thought.

It is a special Divine Ordinance, so to say, that Asia is the mother of all world-religions from probably the dawn of history. It has fallen to the lucky lot of Mother India, by a unique providential dispensation, to produce the greatest number of spiritual giants. Lately it was Sri Ramakrishna who aimed at an all-sided perfection and realized the eternal truth. Thus he could preach with authority the religion of not any particular creed so boldly. He did not preach any faith, but only gave the energy necessary for sustaining one's own faith. He had the highest respect for the personality of each individual, and refrained from enslaving others. The originality of his method of teaching lay in enabling his disciples to realize his self by their own efforts, on their own path, sincerely and zealously. His dynamic message of love and strength is to us a logical deduction from the Advaita of Vedanta.

The golden thread of the creative Vedic idealism not only runs as a common basis of Hindu and Buddhist culture but also of the whole Asiatic thought. All these are imbedded and harmonized in the

catholic and synthetic bosom of Vedanta. In the list of Indian Buddhist Patriarchs Asvaghosha and Nagarjuna are counted as the greatest and had a profound influence upon the philosophic thought of China, Tibet and Japan. Vedanta and Buddhism both teach that there is in each one of us the infinite source of bliss and knowledge. All human unhappiness arises from our allowing the discriminating mind to cover, or take the place of this divine Reality. The Nirguna Brahman of Sankara and the Sunya (Tathata) of Nagarjuna are the same. Dr. D. T. Suzuki, one of the greatest living Buddhists, emphasizes: "Indian metaphysics are the deepest in the world and all nations have to bow to the Indians in this respect." In India religion is always associated with experience and philosophy that goes on to an even increasing awareness, and certitude can only come from one's own intuitive self-realization.

When Indian thought came to China as Buddhism, the practical Chinese people took to it partly. But at the same time, owing to ethnological and temperamental distinctions, there was something that did not quite appeal to them. "Zen," said a learned Chinese, is the revolt of the Chinese mind against the traditional Buddhism. Zen (Japan) or Ch'an (China) has its origin in Indian Yoga practice whose Dhyâna was taken up by the early Buddhists as 'Jhana,' but when it came to China, naturally, it assumed a somewhat different form. If the Chinese individuality had to stand against Buddhism it had to take Buddhist philosophy and assimilate it into its own body and make it its own blood. So Chinese philosophy is the result of Buddhist philosophy stimulating the Chinese mind. The result of this penetration and assimilation was Zen (Dhyâna or Yoga), and this work was

completed by the Sung Dynasty which followed the T'ang.

Tao-Teh-King is the Vedas of the Taoist and if Lao-tze was its finest prophet, Chuang-tzu, the celebrated Vedantist of China, was to Lao-tze what St. Paul was to Christ. Tao, in its essence, is really another word for Brahman or the Buddhist conception of Tathata. They stand for the ultimate Reality or "suchness," That (Tat), which is universal, inconceivable, and inscrutable. Also the doctrine of illusion or relativity as advocated by Chuang-tzu is identical with the Vedantic conception of Mâyâ. This explains the many singular likenesses in these teachings, and also the reason why Indian Buddhism found an affinity with the Laotzuan philosophy and was profoundly influenced by it until by the sixth century A.D. the Dhyâna-type of Buddhism became indigenous.

Meditation as an operative technique, by means of which Moksha or eternal freedom is to be attained, is Buddha's unique contribution to human art of living. Meditation is of value only as it is interpreted in terms of everyday activity. This is the Zen-way of life. And that is the great social value of meditation, for human consciousness attains to a spiritual level when it has a feeling of realization that all life is one.

The Indian monk Bodhidharma, the father of Zen, brought it to China about A.D. 470-520. He was a son of India, and therefore he has always been known in the Far East as the "Bearded Barbarian" in whose eyes was that tremendous spiritual power which is characteristic of Zen. At the present day Zen is the most healthy and influential of all the Buddhist sects in Asia. The central thought of the practical Bodhidharma was that experience and life are primary,

while cult, theory and learning are comparatively unimportant. He urged upon all the wisdom of making a determined effort to attain the final experience. To see not in books but into one's own nature and to realize it as life itself—That thou art—that is the living, pulsating force and fulfilment of Buddhist Yoga.

There is a natural Law that a culture, when it is in a vigorous condition, goes beyond its geographical limits and, fearless of absorbing ideas alien to it, impresses its stamp on the life of mankind. The greatest achievement of India in this respect is the silent, triumphal march of its Eternal Dharma all over Asia. Its missionary spirit is singularly noted for its broad-mindedness and gentle-heartedness. Wherever transplanted it has allowed itself to establish a harmonious relationship with its new surroundings. This spirit of tolerance and non-violence is not a sign of weakness. Its character is dynamic too; it quietly comes among the cults and traditions of the people and is at home with them before long. Buddhism no more exists in India as Buddhism, but its original teachings are now absorbed in the religion and the life of the people. It rests with them to give life to it.

When we speak of "the religion of non-religion," the pious reader may be shocked, but this does not mean that the real experience of this religion denies the existence of God, Soul, and so on. Neither denial nor affirmation hits the mark. When we try to comprehend a fact by means of words, the fact disappears, the Reality is not there. We want to find a higher affirmation where there are no antitheses. Nowadays we believe far more in our own experience and facts than in words and holy doctrines, and we feel and know that it is impossible to give special earthly

names to that very Reality which is both the eternal principle or indivisible basis and the fulfilment of life.

In fact the religion of non-religion is neither a philosophy nor a religion. It transcends all. Our attitude to life arising

from the profoundest experience that came to the human spirit intimates us that we are already free and the eternal life is within us. No religion is higher than the realization of this fundamental verity of life.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

BY PRINCIPAL D. S. SARMA, M.A.

It is impossible to gather together into one short article all that the Bhagavad-Gitâ teaches. For this great Hindu scripture scatters the living seed in all directions with a very liberal hand. Indeed it sows not with the hand, but with the sack. Arising out of a historical incident in the remote past to solve a particular moral problem that confronted Arjuna on the field of battle, it surveys the whole field of man's endowments, his spiritual endeavours, his doubts and difficulties, his relations to God, Nature and society and his ultimate destiny in the Absolute. That is why the Gitâ is called a universal gospel with a message for all men and for all time. The terms that it uses, such as the five causes of action, the four-fold division of castes, the three dispositions of Nature, the two paths of the world, may have been drawn from contemporary systems of science and philosophy, but they are all used in such a way as to point to something in them which is of universal validity.

To divide the whole Gitâ, as is traditionally done, into three sections of equal length, each section consisting of six chapters, and to say that the first section deals with Karma, the second with Bhakti and the third with Jnâna is not very satisfactory. For there is a good deal of overlapping and some of the ideas that are briefly expressed in

the earlier chapters are developed at considerable length in the later chapters. Therefore setting aside all notions of artificial symmetry, we may say that the main body of the Gitâ comes to a close with the eleventh chapter in which the Visva-rupa or the cosmic Form of God is revealed to Arjuna to carry conviction home to his mind and to make him see and believe. Appropriately, therefore, this chapter ends with a famous verse which according to Sankara contains the whole essence of the Gitâ.

“He who does My work and looks upon Me as his goal, he who worships Me without attachments and he who is without hatred towards any creature, he comes to Me, O Arjuna.”

The next six chapters, from twelfth to seventeenth, are devoted to special problems arising out of the teaching. They may be analysed thus:

Chapter XII. Impersonal God and personal God; and devotion to Him.

Chapter XIII. The relation between body and soul.

Chapter XIV. The relation between God and Nature; and the dispositions of Nature.

Chapter XV. The transcendence and immanence of God.

Chapter XVI. Two types of men—the godly and the ungodly.

Chapter XVII. The relation between

Shâstra and Shraddhâ, the body and the soul of religion.

Finally, Chapter XVIII contains a general summary of the whole teaching which culminates in the profound secret of all spiritual life revealed in verses* 65 and 66. What is that teaching which is given somewhat briefly in the first ten chapters, driven home by the transfiguration in Chapter XI, worked out in considerable detail in chapters XII to XVII and summarised in the final chapter?

We have said above that the Gitâ is a universal gospel. But it is also a practical gospel. It does not simply point out the goal of man. It also points out the path or rather the paths which men possessing various endowments have to tread in their day. And, what is more, the Divine Teacher takes our hand in His and gently guides us along the path, if only we surrender ourselves to Him and do what He bids us do. He tells us that religious life need not be a thing of tears and groans and painful mortifications. It may easily be one of love and trust and of invisible progress.

Accordingly the Gitâ begins at the very beginning of the spiritual journey. It begins with the natural man—his innate tendencies and the circumstances in which he finds himself placed in life. It teaches him that these very tendencies and circumstances may be sublimated and made the means by which he may rise to a state of supreme happiness and freedom. For if only we use our natural endowments and opportunities in life, not for our own self-centred purposes but for a divine purpose, we enter into a larger life and begin to taste of a higher kind of happiness than that given to us by our creature comforts. And the more we fall into a line with the purpose of God, the Creator, the less are we mere

* These verses are quoted at the end of the article.

creatures. The more we co-operate with Him, the less are we the slaves of time and circumstance. Thus every man can make his own duties in life, however low and insignificant they may be in the eyes of the world, the means of spiritual realisation and the highest happiness. The Gitâ says:

“He from whom all beings proceed and by whom all this is pervaded—by worshipping Him through the performance of his own duty does man attain perfection” (XVIII. 46).

But service to God, which the Gitâ calls Karma-Yoga, is not the only element in spiritual life. There are other elements like Dhyâna or meditation, Bhakti or love of God and Jnâna or knowledge of and life in God. Disinterested service which the Gitâ teaches with such tremendous emphasis is the first step in spiritual ascent, though probably a vast majority of men would say “One step enough for me.” But a man who has taken that step may be said to have entered on the Path. He has entered on the path of fellowship with God which the Gitâ comprehensively calls Yoga. The various aspects of this ever-increasing fellowship are termed Dhyâna-Yoga or fellowship through meditation, Bhakti-Yoga or fellowship through love, and Jnâna-Yoga or fellowship through knowledge. It is wonderful how the Gitâ in a short compass gives illuminating descriptions of all these compartments of spiritual life and yet maintains a perfect balance among them. Take for instance the description of Dhyâna in the sixth chapter, or the description of Bhakti in the twelfth chapter, or again take the description of Jnâna in the thirteenth chapter. There is nothing one-sided or extravagant about these descriptions of the various aspects of spiritual life. They are in refreshing contrast to the excessive emotionalism or the excessive intellectualism

of the later schools of Bhakti and Jnâna in mediæval India. The Gitâ indeed teaches us restraint and harmony by example as well as by precept. This great scripture does justice to all aspects of spiritual life—service, devotion, meditation and knowledge of God—and never loses sight of their integral unity.

Thus there is no question in the Gitâ of this sect or that sect, this religion or that religion. There is only one question and that is of the human spirit, its natural endowments, its spiritual needs, its choice of the path suited to it and its goal in God by whatever name we call Him. Our endowments are many and varied, our paths accordingly cannot all be the same. But all of them are God's, as we are all His, and all of them converge in Him alone. Our supreme peace and happiness lie only in our union with

Him. As St. Augustine says, our hearts are ever restless till they come to rest in God. In a ringing verse, the Gitâ says:

“Fix thy mind on Me alone, let thy thoughts rest in Me. And in Me alone wilt thou live hereafter. Of this there is no doubt” (XII. 8).

The same idea is expanded in the two culminating verses in the final chapter to which reference has already been made.

“Fix thy mind on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me and prostrate thyself before Me, so shalt thou come to Me. I promise thee truly, for thou art dear to Me.”

“Surrendering all duties come to Me alone for shelter. Do not grieve, for I will release thee from all sins” (XVIII. 65, 66).

A SCHEME OF RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

BY SWAMI VEDANTANANDA

I

Rural reconstruction in our country is a most complicated affair, beset with a variety of problems. In order to succeed in this kind of work one has to understand fully the nature of each problem and to make a concerted attempt to solve all the problems at a time. Otherwise, one cannot expect any good result of a permanent and far-reaching nature accruing from the attempt to solve a part or two of these problems through sporadic work confined to one village or a part of it.

Our villages have to struggle against innumerable wants. Among these, the principal needs are: spread of education, improvement of health, economic progress, and dissemination of moral ideas.

All other wants may be considered to be included in these four main desiderata. So we have to adopt a well-thought-out way by which we can at least partly solve all these problems simultaneously within a definite period, and which may enable the constructive activities to flow in a better and wider channel in the near future.

Undoubtedly education occupies the foremost place of importance among these necessities of our villages. By spread of education one must not mean only starting of primary or secondary schools in villages and making arrangements for the attendance of village children in those schools. Under the present circumstances of the country the need of mass education is not a whit less urgent than that of extensive arrange-

ment for the spread of primary and secondary education. One notes with regret that the little education which boys and girls receive in such schools in an extremely adverse environment of life defeats its purpose to a great extent. A boy learns many a hygienic principle from his school; but when he describes these rules enthusiastically at home or tries to introduce them there, his parents and relatives who are quite innocent of these principles begin to laugh at him for his new-born zeal or show hostility towards his ideas, and thus damp all his high-souled enthusiasm. Thus the ignorance and superstition of the villagers and their love of the beaten track of life are in endless ways keeping the national life crippled and cramped. It is therefore an urgent necessity that along with better arrangement for teaching the village children there should be adequate provision for the education of their parents, relatives and neighbours also almost in every branch of knowledge.

Mass education has many sides. As, on the one hand, there is a necessity for night schools for those boys and youths who have not the opportunity of attending the day schools, so, on the other hand, we have the need of imparting oral or visual instruction to illiterate adults who form by far the majority of rural population. Moreover, success of village reorganisation activities and hence the good of the country, depend to a large extent on putting an effective stop to the wastage through disuse of the education which some partly educated, half-educated or even fully educated villagers may possess. So, the main duty of village workers should be to disseminate useful ideas among the rural public to make the village people realise their own position and to inspire them to works of self-improvement.

But no one should form an idea from what has been said above that we may for the present dispense with the attempts at the spread of primary education, starting of new primary schools and improving the existing ones. There is no doubt about the fact that the sort of education imparted in our primary schools is sadly inadequate to our needs, and that the primary school teachers do not now-a-days receive as much attention and respect of villagers as they used to do formerly. But it must be admitted that still to this day the rural schools are the hearts of the villages and they have a vital and organic connection with the village people. So rural uplift works will prove futile unless the present system of primary education is reformed to suit the needs of the village and the village schools are improved in efficiency and usefulness. Besides, it is quite possible to carry on such uplift works in villages easily and economically with these primary schools as centres. How that may be possible is described below:

The two main things that stand in the way of making even the existing primary education productive of sufficient benefit are want of adequate funds and efficiency of teachers. One must admit with regret that the primary school teacher cannot devote his whole energy and attention to teaching due to the extremely poor pay he gets for his labour. Though there may be young and active teachers in some schools, still they cannot do much to improve their schools for want of sufficient experience in teaching and proper management. Even if compulsory primary education is introduced in Bengal in the near future as contemplated by the Government, one does not find any indication of sufficient improvement of the financial condition of the teachers under that condition.

II

Let us now go into further details about the practical scheme by which we may, with minimum labour and expense, carry on the spread of primary and mass education as well as all kinds of rural uplift work at a time and gain a fair amount of success. We have to select a centrally situated village, where there are comparatively good opportunities of starting work. Let us form a unit with the villages that come within a radius of two or three miles from it. Two rural workers will be placed in charge of one such unit. It is necessary that these workers should have experience in the principles of education, history, sociology, economics, rural hygiene, physical education, Bratachari movement, scouting and so on. Of course both the workers need not have the same attainments. Among the requisites for such works there must be at least a magic lantern with slides on various useful subjects, and a travelling library.

One unit may contain 20 to 25 villages. Of course, the number of villages or the population of these units will vary in

different parts of Bengal. But that does not in any way affect the main plan of work. One such unit may contain or should contain 10 to 15 primary schools within its jurisdiction. But tentatively, let us begin with a unit containing 12 primary schools within it. We have already mentioned that the main cause of the present decadence of such schools is want of sufficient funds. It is, therefore, necessary that a monthly grant of Rs. 3 or Rs. 4 should be given to each of these schools to help its improvement.* This small grant does not only benefit the school concerned but also provides many opportunities to the village workers for doing various kinds of constructive work with their help. Once you get the opportunity of working through these schools, you can have fair chance of improving the minds of children, living in the present low moral atmosphere of our villages, of training them to live better lives, of employing them in various works of common weal, and of reorganising village life itself as a whole. The village school teachers also will then be of much service in constructive works of this type. These schools will thus have to be made a sort

* COST OF CONDUCTING SUCH ACTIVITIES.

CAPITAL EXPENSES :—

			Rs.	A.	P.
One magic lantern (with 12 sets of slides to start with)	...	...	600	0	0
Books for travelling library	...	...	600	0	0
One Cyclostyle	...	...	50	0	0
		TOTAL	1,250	0	0

RECURRING EXPENSES :—

			Rs.	A.	P.
Monthly grant to 12 schools at Rs. 3/- a month	...	...	36	0	0
A weekly paper (Yearly contribution Rs. 3/-)	...	...	3	0	0
Expenses of the magic lantern (Carbide, new slides, etc.)	...	...	15	0	0
Books for the library (including cost of binding)	...	...	10	0	0
Allowance, travelling expenses, sundry expenses of 2 workers	...	...	30	0	0
		TOTAL	94	0	0

N.B.—If funds are available, it would be better to raise the monthly grant for schools to Rs. 4 and to subscribe a Bi-Weekly paper with annual contribution of Rs. 6. This will mean an additional cost of Rs. 15 only. After 3 years the expenses of the magic lantern may be reduced by Rs. 5.

of meeting ground for the villagers, so that their interests may be indissolubly wedded to the welfare of the entire village in the process of time.

The village workers will supervise these schools, but should never take up their actual management in their own hands. As soon as they take upon themselves the task of maintaining and conducting the schools, the village people will try to shirk the responsibility which is theirs. And the main duty of the rural workers is to awaken in the village people a sense of responsibility in their own affairs.

The daily programme of the workers will be as follows: They have to visit each school twice a month. In the morning they will come to a village school, inspect the nature of teaching imparted to the children and give necessary instruction or assistance to improve the methods of instruction followed there. Their aim will be to introduce a system of instruction which does in no way sever the connection of the child with the village life, but strengthen it in such a way that he may, later in life, be considered as an indispensable part of the rural community and may discharge his duties towards society in an effective and efficient manner. Moral and religious training will form the basis of such an instruction. They will have also to see that the child is not occupied with his text books only, but takes regular part in organised games and sports and that his body is developed in keeping with the growing mind. They will start a Bratachari or Scout Troop with the students and try to inspire them with a spirit of service so that they may joyfully participate in works of improving the sanitary condition of their villages. The workers will also organise the boys and youths, who have given up education, into a group of village workers, give them specific

duties and train them in various kinds of healthy games and sports.

The travelling library will be conducted under the control of village school teachers. The library may be started with 5 or 6 hundred books packed in 12 chests. There should be proper arrangements for sending these chests to different village schools by turns. It is quite possible to have the transit done from one school to another by the students themselves.

When the workers come to visit a school, they will enquire about the part of the library kept there at that time, look into the lending and returning of books, suggest better means if necessary, fix up the transfer of that chest to some other school and arrange for its replacement by a new chest.

The workers will take their noonday meal in the village. After dinner they will meet with the villagers and talk to them about the improvement of agriculture, industry, health, education, etc., in that village. They will make these meetings a nucleus of a regular organisation—a Co-operative Rural Reconstruction and Health Society—and try their utmost to develop it and make it function properly. The society should be duly registered by law. It will help the village people to think and act for the welfare of their village. The society shall take upon itself the management of the village school, start night schools if necessary, arrange for the repair and preservation of village roads and tanks, make organised efforts for the improvements of agriculture, settle village disputes and try to spread moral and religious ideas as also to give pure pleasure to the village people through fairs, “iâtrâ” performances, “kathakatâs” and so on. The members of the society will have to pay at least 4 annas as monthly subscriptions. They will be at liberty to spend the income of such

subscriptions in any way they like on the works specified above. The workers will only help the organisation and maintenance of the society, but will neither be its members nor will they accept any post of responsibility. The members of the society and the band of other villagers organised for uplift work are entitled to the free use of the books of the travelling library conducted by the main centre, and the newspaper kept at the village school.

The education which a boy receives in a primary school is mostly wasted, as the boy soon forgets it when he is out of school. So, the range of knowledge of those village people, who are declared by Government census to be literate, is very narrow. In most cases their knowledge is limited to the ability of signing their names in some way. Village people have no habit of reading, no means or opportunity to buy or read books, or to gather various useful information. There are countless villages where one will not find a single periodical weekly or monthly. So, for the preservation and development of the knowledge acquired by village children, and for its use later in life, it is urgently necessary to start and run a library with books suitable for partly educated people. Introduction of travelling libraries will meet the demands of many at a minimum cost.

The main aim of all the activities of these village workers will be to re-organise the national life of India on a religious basis. They will do well to determine the duties and choose the subjects of instruction in the light of the lives and the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, the great prophets of the modern world. In determining the plan of work they must carefully take into account the ancient

history of India, her future aim, and her relation to the outer world. Above all, they must preach their ideals in a way most suitable and acceptable to the environment in which they have to work, and must do their best to arouse in the village people a healthy sense of personal and social rights and responsibilities consistent with the national ideal of the land.

In the afternoon the workers will go to some other school in the neighbourhood and pursue the same kind of work mentioned before. Moreover, in the evening they will address a gathering of men, women and children, and talk to them on a useful topic illustrated by magic lantern slides. There must be adequate number of slides on subjects like the present condition of society and on religion, health, history, geography, science, agriculture, economics and so on. In every school a series of lectures will be arranged on these topics by turns and results will be that the interest of the audience will never flag for want of variety.

The workers will visit each school twice a month, once in the morning and for the second time in the afternoon. Their works will be suspended for two months during the rainy season. As regards the villages within their jurisdiction where there are no schools, they should nevertheless try to start the Co-operative Rural Reconstruction Societies in them as well when there is necessity or opportunity for doing so. If the work can be conducted with sincere devotion for 5 or 6 years, it may be reasonably hoped that the sense of duty and the responsibility of villagers will be sufficiently awakened and that the workers will be able to transfer to the people the charge of ameliorating their own condition.

A JEWISH MYSTIC

BY RABBI WILLIAM G. BRAUDE, Ph.D.

A writer once said, in his book called "Christian Mysticism," that the Jewish mind and character, in spite of its deeply religious bent, was alien to mysticism. Like many a generalization, this one is untrue, for every great religion has chambers in the many mansions of God.

Two hundred years ago, in the remote hut in the Carpathian Mountains, there lived a wonder-worker named Rabbi Israel. Some now say that he never existed. The like has been said of King Arthur and of Jesus of Nazareth. The legends remain with us. Some say Israel was never a Rabbi but rather an unlearned peasant who took authority upon himself. It is true that even as a child he deserted the village school to run into the woods, where he learned the speech of animals and birds, of trees, stones and flowers. A great man, he knew all the secret mysteries of the Cabala, but he refused to live the stifling life of the Synagogue, and he withdrew to the mountains where he earned his livelihood and where he wandered alone, sometimes for many days, absorbed in his strange reflections. When Israel came down from the mountains it was to teach men to live with abounding joy; for joy in every living thing, he said, is the highest form of worship. The woods were home and the fields, and every stone and blade of grass contained a spark of the living soul. Every act of living, breathing, eating and walking should be accomplished with fervour, joy, ecstasy, for every act spoke of God and to God.

Souls who had passed their pale youth huddled over tomes of the Lord, lifted their heads and for the first time saw the

sky. He drew them out of the murky Synagogue into the open fields. There, too, he said, God would hear them. He did not violate tradition. He enlarged it. He said that the full-hearted desire to worship was more important than the form or the place of worship.

Let me illustrate it with an anecdote narrated of Rabbi Israel. It was Yom Kipper, or the day of atonement, which is the holiest festival in the Jewish calendar. On Yom Kipper all the Jews were gathered in the Synagogue. Among those who came there was a Jewish farmer and his half-witted, illiterate son. The boy was standing at the side of his father. He tried to follow the service, but of course, he was unable to. He got hold of a prayer book. He looked at it. He tried to follow the words, but he could not. He held it upside down and he turned it downside up, but it did not work. He was unable to follow the text. He saw some men had spectacles. He got hold of a pair, put them rather crookedly on his nose, manipulated them one way and another, but still he could not follow the service. The intensity in the Synagogue was growing greater; the murmuring was growing louder; the day was beginning to set. The boy was getting desperate. He wanted to give in to his pent-up feelings. Finally he put his fingers into his mouth and he let out a shrill whistle. The ushers ran over to him and were about to expel him, when the aged and sainted Rabbi Israel said, "Let go that boy. All day you men and women prayed, but your prayers remained outside of the outer gates of Heaven. The shrill whistle of the boy transcended all obstacles and is

even now nestled under the throne of God. Your prayers come trooping after."

Now, a whistle cannot be crowded into any known theological or liturgical formula, and yet you will agree that Rabbi Israel was probably right when he felt that the whistle was more acceptable to God than the set liturgy of the day of atonement spoken, year in, year out, by the Jews. That was the quality of Rabbi Israel's prayer. Disciples gathered about him.

Legends began to grow of the wondrous deeds and teachings of Rabbi Israel, and then he was called the Master of the Good or Wondrous Name. By that name, he had the power to do miraculous deeds; he went from one end of the earth to the other in the space of a single night. He conquered the wild boars that were set upon him. He drew the dead bride from her untimely grave. His friends numbered in the hundreds. Despite the objections of many noted Rabbis, who accused him of ignorance, the number of his followers grew, for his

teachings had that beauty of simplicity that goes directly to the heart of the common soul. The secret and delights of Heaven were no longer reserved for the rulers who could pass all their nights and days in the house of study. The water carrier and the mule driver could gather around the table and take part in the discussion. After several generations followers numbered half of eastern Europe; not that they were mystics, but they followed this mystic father.

A weary and sorrowing generation seeks joy again and finds futility. Best then it is to give up the modern struggle, the machinery and materialism,—to go back to the simple faith and the simple ways, back to real mysticism, for he who has realized God has everything he needs.

Sir Ramakrishna lived and passed away in India. Israel, Master of the Goodname, lived and died in Poland. Theirs was a common quest. And today we, though thousands of miles away, are united in a fellowship of faiths in their name, but the quest is endless.

RATIONALISTIC ATTITUDE IN SIKH RELIGION

BY PROF. CHARANJIT SINGH BINDRA, M.A., LL.B.

Some four hundred centuries back, before seed time and harvest began, in the days of hunting and wandering, the far off days of which we possess no written record, we have it on the authority of the researches of the psychoanalysts that the true man in his primitive stage must have thought much the same way as the child or the ignorant uneducated do even to-day, that is, in a series of imaginative pictures. These observations are based on the study of

the egotistic and passionate impulses of the child as restrained, suppressed, modified or overlaid to adopt them to the needs of social life. This view is further fortified by the study of the human interests as indicated by numerous drawings, carvings, statues and symbols that have come down to us from the early dawn of civilization as also by that of the ideas and customs of such contemporary savages as still survive. And finally the record of mental history

as fossilized in folk-lore and the deep-rooted irrational superstitions of the civilised people of to-day also suggests the same postulate. Systematic thinking is comparatively a late development, and even to-day the number of such men as control and order their thoughts is but a small fraction of the total population of the world. As H. G. Wells has it, most of the men still live by imagination and passion. They act in accordance with the emotions that are aroused in them by the images they conjure up, or the images that present themselves to their minds.

This is most applicable in the domain of religion, where presumption and speculation are the rule rather than the exception. Speculation as to the origin of the universe has always formed an integral part of all the important religious theologies. And the pictorial mode of thought seems to have been applied in all speculation as to the creation of the universe, till at last we come to the Sikh Gurus who frankly declared this mystery to be beyond human investigation and comprehension. When questioned as to the creation or manifestation of the universe, thus spoke Guru Nanak (Japji, XXI):

What was the occasion, the epoch, the phase of the moon or day of the week, the season of the month, when all that is, did come to exist? Neither pandits with all the learning of the Puranas, nor *qazis* who write the Quoran, nor yet the *Yogis*, nor any one else does know of that. The Author of it himself alone understands this mystery of creation.

A large part of the world till recently has believed on the authority of the Hebrew Bible that the world came into existence suddenly in 4004 B.C. The Puranas have put forward a theory of as sudden a manifestation, though the date of occurrence is pushed back by more

than three *yugas*. The present one, the *kaliyuga*, consists of 432,000 years; and the preceding ones, *krita (satya)*, *tretâ* and *dvâpara*, are four times, three times and twice the duration of the present.

That the universe in which we live has existed only for a few thousand years is now an exploded idea. The speculation of scientific men as to the age and origin of the earth, as an independent planet flying round and round the sun, puts it down to a figure exceeding 2,000,000,000 years. This is a length of time that absolutely staggers imagination. The telescope reveals to us in various parts of the heavens luminous spiral clouds of incandescent matter, the spiral nebulae which appear to be in rotation about a centre. It is supposed by many astronomers that the sun and its planets were once such a spiral, and before their separate existence they might have been a great survival of diffuse matter in space that had been undergoing concentration for majestic aeons. And only with a tremendous slowness through that vastness of time the earth could have cooled down and grown more and more like the earth on which we live, but as yet there could be no life on the earth. The geologists have endeavoured to trace the history of life before the beginnings of human memory and tradition from the markings and fossils of living things in the stratified rocks; and the whole compass of time represented by the record of the rocks is estimated at 1,600,000,000 years. The earliest of these rocks that lie uncovered in North America and present no traces of life are of a thickness indicating a period half the above geological record, *i.e.*, half the great interval of time since land and sea became distinguishable has left us no traces of life. The first indications of life we find in the Lower Palaeozoic Age; but these are the vestiges of comparatively simple and lowly beings; there

are no signs whatever of land life of any sort, plant or animal. This is more than a sufficient refutation of all theories conceiving of the origin of the world as a sudden phenomenon.

As regards the claim of the Puranic theory the following facts will be found interesting. The Azoic (lifeless) period along with the age that followed it as has been described above is estimated at 1,400,000,000 years. The third geological age, Mesozoic period, came to an end some 80,000,000 years ago; and between this and the present is placed the Cainozoic or new life period, a period of great upheaval and extreme volcanic activity, when the vast masses of mountains, the Himalayas, the Alps, the Rockies and the Andies were thrust up, and the rude outlines of our present oceans and continents appeared. The first monkeys and lemuroid creatures, poorer in brain and not so specialised as their later successors, appeared only some 40,000,000 years ago. It was not till the period of the First and the Fourth Glacial Ages (that long universal winter coming on 600,000 years ago and lasting till 50,000 years back), that the first man-like beings lived upon our planet. Yet now the ethnologists tell us that these creatures were not true men. They were of a different species of the same genus, and have been christened the Neanderthalers. The story of mankind begins only some thirty or thirty-five thousand years ago, when a race of kindred beings, more intelligent, knowing more, talking and co-operating together, came drifting into the Neanderthaler's world from the south and ousted him from the European region. Where the true men originated the scientific men do not know. The relics of a third species of man, intermediate between the Neanderthaler and the human being, were found in 1921 at Broken Hill in South Africa. True that the greater

part of Africa and Asia has never been traversed yet by a trained observer interested in these matters and free to explore; but so far as India is concerned the Indo-Gangetic basin was still under water. The primitive true man was either negroid or resembled the savages of North America. It was only fifteen or twelve thousand years ago that a fresh people, the Azilians, who had the use of the bow and could draw vividly reducing their drawings to a sort of symbolism, appeared in the South of Spain. They had only chipped implements; and cultivation in Europe began some ten or twelve thousand years ago with the dawning of the Neolithic Age. In the face of this evidence the Puranic theories also appear to be so much speculation without any historical data to support it.

Even the theories put forward by scientific men as to the origin of life are not final. There is absolutely no definite knowledge and no convincing guess as yet of the way in which life began, though their speculations are of great interest. The truth, according to an admission of H. G. Wells, is that the physical and astronomical sciences are still too undeveloped to make anything of a sort more than an *illustrative* guesswork. The Gurus realised the futility of all imaginative flights; and seeking to place religion on a sounder basis, they sang of the new way of life, of rational living.

Great stress is laid in the Sikh tradition on the control of one's conduct and thought by achieving mastery over lust, anger, greed, fondness and pride, the five human emotions that lead one astray. Thus the life regulated by the principles of righteous living is considered the only path of enlightenment that leads to truth (Japji, I). That is the ideal for the devoted Sikh. All attempts at pampering the imagination and feeding

the flame of emotion with a view to winning over the human heart to purity of life are scrupulously avoided by the Sikh Gurus. Though the cult of *bhakti* (devotion to a personal God), in a highly spiritualised form, has been incorporated in Sikhism, all emotionalism has been severely tabooed. No secret is made of the limitations of human knowledge either; and a note of warning has been sounded repeatedly to

make the disciple aware of the pitfalls that abound in this new path of rationalism, as will be made clear from a perusal of the Japji. Faith, that creates confidence and is to be attained by remembering the Almighty, is the chief guarantee against the hazards of this new road to celestial beatitude. Herein lies the highest achievement of the soul, not in the cessation of *karma* or in the observance of mystic ritual.

SRI-BHASHYA

BY SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

CHAPTER I

SECTION I

THE GREAT SIDDHANTA

Advaitin's position refuted

Even if the co-ordinated statement 'That thou art' were meant to show that the Jivahood denoted by 'thou' does not exist in Brahman denoted by the word 'That', still we have to give up the direct meanings of the terms 'That' and 'thou' and take to implied meanings, 'That' denoting a universal substrate Brahman and 'thou' denoting that the Jivahood has withdrawn from it; while the other objections shown already remain. In addition, two more defects would be added if this interpretation is accepted. Where shell is taken for silver and we have the wrong perception, *viz.*, 'this is silver,' the silver is sublated by an independent evidence got through a later perception 'this is shell and not silver', but in the case of 'That thou art' there is no independent evidence which sublates the Jivahood, and we have only to assume it through our helplessness. Further, where shell is taken for silver the possession of an attri-

bute by shell which is the substrate of the wrong perception and which attribute is later perceived contradicts the perception of silver which is therefore sublated; but here the word 'That' denotes the substrate Pure Consciousness and no attribute besides that, and as such the impression of the Jivahood will not be nullified, for the perception of Brahman without any attribute is not inconsistent with wrong perception. It may, however, be said that Consciousness which is the substrate remains concealed and the function of the word 'That' is to reveal it. But in this case such a concealed substrate cannot be an object of error or the subsequent sublation. Nor can it be said that the substrate is not concealed in so far as it is an object of wrong perception, for in its non-concealed state it is opposed to all wrong perception. Hence unless we accept an attribute of the substrate besides its substance we cannot explain

wrong perception and sublation. It is only when such an attribute exists and is concealed that wrong perception is possible and when the attribute is revealed the wrong perception is nullified. If, however, the text is interpreted as referring to Brahman having the *jivas* for its body, then the words, 'That' and 'thou', will convey their primary meanings and the principle of co-ordination also will be justified, as the text refers to a single substance, Brahman, existing in two modes and a further attribute of Brahman will thereby be enunciated, *viz.*, Its being the inner ruler of the individual souls. Moreover, it would be in keeping with the introductory portion of the section and also with the promissory statement that by the knowledge of one thing every thing is known, as Brahman having for its body the *jivas* and the matter in their gross state is the effect and the same Brahman having these for Its body in the subtle state is the cause.

On this interpretation it may be questioned which of the two is the original statement. This objection is not valid, for the text 'That thou art' does not make any such statement as it is already made at the beginning of the section in the text, "All this has That for its Self" where it is clearly stated that Brahman is the Self of 'all this', *i.e.*, of the world of matter and the individual souls which form Its body. This is justified by a previous text, "All these creatures are born of Brahman, in It they live and in It they are merged again." Other texts also declare this identity of Brahman with the individual souls and matter in so far as they form Its body, for in the *Brih.* 3. 7. 3, and the *Taitt.* 2. 6, Brahman is said to be the Self of this sentient and insentient world which is Its body. Moreover, the *Chh.* text, "Having entered into them let me evolve name and form," shows that all things attain substantiality due to the

individual soul which has Brahman for its Self entering into them. This text along with *Taitt.* 2.6 shows that the individual soul also has Brahman for its Self, Brahman having entered into it. Thus the whole of the sentient and insentient world has its Self in Brahman in so far as it constitutes Its body, and as the whole world derives its substantiality from Brahman all terms whatsoever denoting different things ultimately refer to Brahman in so far as It is distinguished by these different things. The text "That thou art" is therefore only a special statement of the universal truth, "In That all this has its Self."

On the other hand the Advaitins, the Bhedâbhedavâdins and Bhedavâdins will find it difficult to explain texts stating the doctrine of universal identity. If, according to the Advaitins, there is only one non-differentiated substance, then with respect to what is this identity taught? It cannot be said with respect to Itself, for that is already known from texts like, "Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, Infinity," and there is nothing further to be known from texts depicting this identity. It may be said that this teaching of identity is necessary to remove the imagined differences in Brahman. It has already been shown that such imagined differences cannot be removed by texts teaching identity by way of co-ordination. For, co-ordination cannot be used at all except to show that the substance exists in two modes, which will go against the conclusions of the Advaitins, the absolute oneness. According to the Bhedâbhedavâdins also, in either case, *i.e.*, whether the difference is due to limiting adjuncts or it belongs to Brahman due to Its very nature, Brahman which is the Self of everything and which is free from all taint would be contaminated by imperfections. Lastly, the Bhedavâdins will have to entirely ignore these texts teaching uni-

versal identity inasmuch as it is meaningless to say that things which are entirely different are identical also.

To sum up: Texts declare a threefold classification: matter, individual souls and Brahman—matter being the object of enjoyment, souls, the enjoyers and Brahman, the ruling principle. Matter and souls which other texts declare to be connected with Brahman as Its body are controlled by It. It is therefore the Self of everything—the inner ruler. “He who inhabits the earth but is within it” etc. (*Brih.* 3. 7. 3-23). Other texts again teach that Brahman which has matter and souls for Its body exists as this world both in the causal and effected states, and hence speak of this world in both these aspects as that which is the real (Sat). “Sat alone was this in the beginning, One only without a second” etc. (*Chh.* 6. 2. 8); “He wished, ‘May I be many’ ” etc. (*Taitt.* 2. 6) and so on. These texts also uphold the threefold entities essentially distinct in nature from one another—a view which is supported by texts like, “Let me enter these three divine beings with this living self and then evolve names and forms” where the three divine beings or primordial elements stand for the whole material world and the living self refers to the individual soul. Brahman is in Its causal or effected condition, according as It has for Its body matter and souls either in their subtle or gross state. The effect being thus non-different from the cause, it is known through the knowledge of the cause, and the initial promissory statement of the scriptures that by the knowledge of one thing everything is known holds good. As Brahman which has for Its body matter and souls in their gross and subtle states constitutes the effect and the cause we can well say that It is the material (*upâdâna*) cause of this world.

Texts which teach that Brahman is without qualities teach that It is free from all evil qualities. Similarly texts like, “True, infinite, knowledge is Brahman,” which declare knowledge as Its essential nature declare that the essential nature of Brahman which is all-knowing can be defined as knowledge, while texts like, “He who is all-knowing” etc., show that It is essentially a knowing subject. Again texts like, “He desired, ‘May I be many’ ” (*Taitt.* 2. 6), teach that Brahman exists as this manifold world, thereby denying the reality of all things different from It, which is the true import of texts like, “From death to death he goes who sees any plurality here” (*Brih.* 4. 4. 19.). Thus we find that texts which declare matter, souls and Brahman to be essentially different in nature, which declare Brahman to be the cause and the world the effect, and finally the cause and effect to be non-different, do not in the least contradict the texts which declare matter and souls as the body of the Lord—matter and soul in causal condition existing in a subtle state, not having assumed as yet names and forms, while in the gross or effected state they are designated by such names and forms. Thus some texts declare that matter, souls and Brahman are three different entities, while others teach that matter and souls in all their states form the body of God who is their Self, while still other texts teach that It in Its causal and effected states comprises within It these three entities. “All this is Brahman”.

Bondage is real and is the result of ignorance which is of the nature of Karma without a beginning. This bondage can be destroyed only through Knowledge, *i.e.*, through the Knowledge that Brahman is the inner ruler different from souls and matter. Such Knowledge

alone leads to final release or Moksha. This Knowledge is attained through the Grace of the Lord pleased by the due performance of the daily duties prescribed for different castes and stages of life, duties performed not with the idea of attaining any results but with the idea of propitiating the Lord. Works done with a desire for results lead to impermanent results while those performed with the idea of pleasing the

Lord result in the Knowledge of the nature of devout meditation which in turn leads to the intuition of Brahman as the inner Self different from souls and matter. This leads to Moksha. As the due performance of the duties prescribed requires a knowledge of the work portion of the Vedas, an inquiry into Brahman must be preceded by an inquiry into the works.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

In the *Editorial* we have dwelt at length upon the organised sham and vandalism of the modern age, pointed out how the sublime gospel of the Prophet of Nazareth is being stultified in the Christian world and also shown that it must go back to the original teaching of Christ to find an antidote against the soul-killing philosophy of the Western world. In his thoughtful article on *Art and Morality*, Dr. A. C. Bose, M.A., Ph.D. (Dublin), Professor of English, Rajaram College, Kolhapur, has discussed the relation between art and morality and pointed out that beyond the schools of didactic and pure art, which represent respectively the puritan and aesthetic outlooks on life, there is a third school that understands life neither in terms of its struggles, nor exclusively in terms of its joy and beauty, but in terms of both. Asoka Kumar Bhattacharya, in his article on *Sri Ramakrishna's contribution to the social and religious life of India*, has presented a graphic account of the part played by Sri Ramakrishna in moulding the socio-religious life of India. In *Man's place in the Cosmos*, Dr. D. N. Roy, M.A., Ph.D., formerly Professor

in the Department of Philosophy in the University of the Phillipines, has discussed the various conceptions about the universe and pointed out man's relation to God and the world as also his ultimate spiritual destiny. Bhikku Vajrabuddhi, a German Buddhist monk of the Sivali College, Ratnapura, Ceylon, has shown in *The Religion of non-religion* that all religions including Buddhism are encompassed in the catholic fold of Vedantic thought. In a *Bird's-eye view of the Bhagavad-Gitâ*, Principal D. S. Sarma, M.A., of Pachaiyappa's College, Madras, has dealt with the salient features of the Song Celestial and shown how it gives in a short compass illuminating descriptions of all the varied aspects of spiritual life and yet maintains a perfect balance among them. Swami Vedantananda of the Ramakrishna Mission has presented a practical scheme for the uplift and education of the poor and ignorant village-folk with primary schools as centres in his article on *A Scheme of Rural Reconstruction*. The article on *A Jewish Mystic* by Rabbi William G. Braude, Ph.D., Lecturer in the Brown University, U.S.A., gives a short life-sketch of Rabbi Israel, a Jewish mystic

of Poland, as also his teachings. Prof. Charanjit Singh Bindra, M.A., LL.B., of the Khalsa College, Amritsar, Punjab, has discussed in the light of the available historical data the antiquity of the modern world and given in a nutshell the cardinal teachings of the Sikh Gurus in his article on *Rationalistic attitude in Sikh Religion*. Swami Vireswarananda of the Ramakrishna Mission concludes the first sutra according to *Sri-Bhashya* which gives the most important features of the philosophical position of Sri Ramanuja.

A CALL FOR HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY

Communalism has appeared like a terrible comet on the horizon of India's socio-political life. It has so much obsessed the imagination of a certain section of the Indian people that they can hardly dream of any communal harmony which is so vital to the organic growth of India's national existence. It is however a hopeful sign of the times that this unfortunate state of things has attracted the serious attention of a number of Indian leaders who want to banish this evil once for all from the arena of Indian life. Recently Sir Akbar Hydari, President of the Executive Council, Hyderabad State, rightly observed, "I for one refuse to believe that those differences are not capable of lasting solution such as would, on the basis of a common nationalism and of national endeavour in the service of a common patrimony, lead to mutual respect and understanding." This lasting solution is only possible when the members of the two principal communities, Hindu and Muslim, will be quite aware of the beneficial and virtuous effects of toleration and sympathy and the suicidal and baneful results of the mad pursuit of communal discord and enmity. They must know, as Sir Akbar

Hydari said, that 'we cannot follow the radical path of secularisation.' Indian social fabric is so knit together that none of its parts can be separated without the dissolution of the whole. Those who dream of the triumph of their own religion and the destruction of others, really build castles in the air. Rather they should bear in mind that mutual friendship and co-operation will bring peace and prosperity which are the crying needs of the present-day society. This can best be effected by means of participation in the religious festivities of the two communities. It is not possible for all to understand the intricate philosophy of religion, but everyone can join the festivals, which want to preach religion in the popular way and to create a common meeting-ground for free mixing of the rich and the poor, the ignorant and the learned. Thus they will understand that there is very little difference in these two religions which always teach toleration and harmony. It is gratifying to find that recently a Mohammedan High Court Judge and a Mohammedan Minister of the Government of Bihar paid glowing tributes to Lord Sri Krishna on the Janmastami Day. The examples set by these Mohammedan gentlemen of high position should be emulated by their co-religionists.

Care should be taken to educate the public mind by creating a literature which will foster communal harmony and friendship. Nowadays a few self-seeking persons are utilizing the press and the platform for the propagation of the dangerous doctrine of religious bigotry which has fairly succeeded in creating a mass hatred and jealousy. Even the text-books for small boys are written in such a fashion that they stir up this communal spirit from the very beginning of their lives. So, to nip this feeling in the bud, such books and papers

should be published as would reveal the true spirit of each religion and promote goodwill and peace, love and brotherhood amongst the adherents of different faiths.

In fact no religion preaches narrow-mindedness. When sincerely practised, it will make its followers holy, tolerant and wise. So, as a matter of fact, those who want to foment communalism in the name of religion, only show their inability to understand the true spirit of religion. What is needed is the proper understanding of the sacred ideal of each religion and the cultivation of fellow-feeling which will stamp out the bogey of communalism that has recently appeared on the horizon of Indian life.

India, the fountain-head of spirituality, where the various sects have been living for centuries in amity and peace, should not be allowed to become a battle-ground of warring creeds through the fanatical zeal of a band of rank communalists. Rightly did Swami Vivekananda say, "If anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of their resistance, 'Help and not fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.' "

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

ESSAYS ON THE GITÂ, FIRST SERIES.
BY SRI AUROBINDO. *Arya Publishing House,*
63, College Street, Calcutta. Pp. 380.

Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gitâ* ranks to-day among the great classics of India. Herein we find displayed in all its depth, subtlety, and profundity of learning one of the most mighty and original minds of modern India. His influence upon a large number of distinguished contemporary writers on Indian philosophy has been marked, though this has not been always recognized or even acknowledged; and among his works which have exerted this influence these *Essays* are by far the most important.

The work deserves to be read widely not only as a deep and acute analysis of one of the most celebrated scriptures of humanity, but also as a book whose understanding is essential to grasp the full significance of Aurobindo's philosophy. For, it is plain that his ideas have developed in the course of his interpretation of the message of the *Gitâ*. It is of course true that the writer begins his essays not in the spirit of a narrow dialectician or a metaphysician, for he holds "it of little importance to extract from the *Gitâ* its exact metaphysical connotation as it was understood by the men of the time, —even if that were accurately possible," but

with the object of discovering its central message and "the living truth it contains apart from their metaphysical form" and of presenting them in the most vital and neutral form and expression that will be suitable to the mentality and helpful to the spiritual needs of our present-day humanity. But as we follow him through his brilliant expositions we find him committed in the end to some very definite metaphysical views.

This is inevitable. For, it cannot be regarded as of little moment to enquire into and to ascertain the views of the *Gitâ* on nature, God, and man, as a firm grasp of them is a necessary basis for our spiritual striving. The comprehension need not—and perhaps cannot—be metaphysically immaculate and finely rounded off; still a tolerably firm hold on the ideal is of the utmost importance, for spiritual endeavour and growth is nothing short of growing into the likeness of our ideals.

What then is the central drift of the ideas contained in the *Gitâ*,—what in short is its perennial message? And though the writer has expressed it in his own distinctive and individual way, it is the same message we meet with in the works of its classic commentators, if of course we are not very particular about the author's precise metaphysical

leanings. The *Gitâ* urges the radical transformation of our normal outlook on life and existence, the lifting of our being to a superior plane of consciousness, the discovery of our true bearings in God; in fine, the leading of divine life. The *Gitâ* is emphatically not a gospel of 'duty for duty's sake,'—an interpretation which a series of illustrious modern commentators beginning with Bankim Chandra Chatterji down to Tilak and others of our own day would fasten upon it. It is indeed a gospel of works, but of works "which culminate in knowledge, that is, in spiritual realization and quietude, and of works motivated by devotion, that is, a conscious surrender of one's whole self first into the hands and then into the being of the supreme, and not at all of works as they are understood by the modern mind, not at all an action dictated by egoistic and altruistic, by personal, social, humanitarian motives, principles, ideals."

The disinterested performance of social duties, the right to action and the rejection of the claim to the fruit do not constitute the great word, the *mahâvâkya*, of the *Gitâ*, but only a preliminary word governing the first stages of the disciple as he proceeds on the path which leads to supreme knowledge and devotion. And this standpoint is clearly superseded at a later stage, when the disciple is enjoined to follow the divine life, to abandon all dharmas, *sarvadharmân*, to take refuge in the Supreme alone. And "the divine activity of a Buddha, a Ramakrishna, a Vivekananda is perfectly in consonance with this teaching. Nay, although the *Gitâ* prefers action to inaction, it does not rule out the renunciation of works, but accepts it as one of the ways of the Divine. If that can only be attained by renouncing works and life and all duties and the call is strong within us, then into the bonfire they must go, and there is no help for it. The call of God is imperative and cannot be weighed against any other considerations."

If the disinterested performance of social duties were the final answer of the *Gitâ*, the book might well have ended with the sixth chapter, and an ethical or a pragmatistical or even an ideal solution of Arjuna's dilemma would have sufficed, for there was no necessity in the immediate problem to lead up to the "whole question of the nature of existence, and of the replacement of the normal by spiritual life." The *Gitâ* did not end there because it recognized that no such

solution from an intellectual or ideal standpoint could be absolute. And as Arjuna was not in a mood to accept such a practical solution, the *Gitâ* proceeded to develop a new standpoint to give a different answer. Failure to grasp this crucial factor has vitiated numberless works and in particular has rendered Tilak's otherwise valuable work a monument of misspent ingenuity and stupendous waste of effort.

The *Gitâ* then works out a great synthesis of works, knowledge, and devotion; and though the writer emphasizes the theistic character of the teaching no reasonable objection can be had against this manner of approach, if this is not pressed as the only true way of regarding it to the exclusion of others. The broad message of the *Gitâ*, which is capable of being viewed with equal cogency from a number of different standpoints, would itself repudiate such interpretation.

This series which is devoted to the first six chapters of the *Gitâ* ends with an essay on "the Gist of Karmayoga" where we obtain a glimpse into the metaphysical position of the author. We meet in this chapter, where he has found it necessary to anticipate some of the results of his study of the later chapters, with his views on Nature as the power of the Supreme going forth in cosmic creation, on the eternal individual, the immutable Self of man which is above the mutations of Nature, and on the Supreme, the Purushottama, the Master of works who is above Nature and the immutable Self of man, above *Kshara* and *Akshara* even. About some of these we may honestly express our misgivings; and we are far from having any assurance that the *Gitâ* finds in a conception, which is only a variant form of the doctrine of *Lilâ*, any easier solution of the riddle of existence than in the theory of an incomprehensible *mâyâ*, though the former is more acceptable to common sense and less resisted by our instinctive tendencies. On matters like these we are guided by faith and inherent traits of character. But talking of authority and its reasonableness, many of us would prefer to be governed in their ultimate beliefs by the deliverances of those rare souls who claim our allegiance by the plenitude of their power, purity, and holiness and knowledge of the highest truth in life rather than by assumptions arrived at by fine intellectual efforts, however novel, intriguing, and fascinating they might seem.

THE MESSAGE OF THE GITĀ: AS INTERPRETED BY AUROBINDO. EDITED BY ANILBARAN ROY. *George Allen & Unwin Ltd. Museum Street, London; The Gita Prachar Karyalaya, 108/11, Monoharpooker Road, P.O. Kalighat, Calcutta. Pp. 281. Price 7s. 6d.*

This is a commentary on the *Gitā* based on Sri Aurobindo's famous exposition of the

work. It gives the text and English translation of the *Gitā*. The notes which have been compiled from the *Essays on the Gitā* have been arranged under the *slokas* in the manner of the traditional commentaries. This summary of a celebrated classic in the writer's own language will be of great value to all students of the *Gitā* and of Aurobindo's philosophy.

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION

Swami Virajanandaji Maharaj, a direct disciple of Srimat Swami Vivekanandaji Maharaj, has been elected President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in place of Swami Suddhanandaji Maharaj, who passed away last month.

Inspired by the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Virajananda renounced the world and joined the Ramakrishna Order at Baranagore in 1891, at the age of 17. He had the rare privilege of living with most of the direct disciples of the Master, and profiting by their life of intense spiritual practices.

After Swami Vivekananda's return from the West in 1897, Swami Virajananda had the opportunity of serving him personally. In the same year he was initiated into 'sannyasa' and was sent to Eastern Bengal on a preaching tour. During the next few years he was in different parts of Northern India, particularly at the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, District Almora. He was made a trustee of the Belur Math in 1906, and that very year he was put in charge of the Mayavati Ashrama on the demise of its first President, Swami Swarupananda. He successfully held this office till 1913, and in addition was the editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, the English monthly organ of the Order. During his regime the early volumes of the complete works and the life of Swami Vivekananda were published.

The next year he founded, in the same district, a beautiful Retreat, called the Vivekananda Ashrama, at Shyamala Tal, where he passed many years in meditation amid the quiet and sublimity of the Himalayan forest.

In the year 1926 he came down to the Belur Math to attend the first Convention

of the Order. Thereafter he was actively in touch with the work of the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, of which he was elected Secretary in 1934 and Vice-President in May last.

His life is a harmonious blend of contemplation and action. His purity, steadiness and spirit of service are sure to prove a blessing to all spiritual aspirants, particularly to the members of the Sangha of which he has been chosen the leader.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA, KANKHAL, HARDWAR

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1937

The 37th annual report of the R. K. Mission Sevashrama at Kankhal, Hardwar, shows how since its inception in 1901, the Sevashrama has been trying its level best to serve the poor and the distressed in various ways. Its present dimensions and importance bear eloquent testimony to the admirable work done during these years.

The Sevashrama maintains an Indoor Hospital of 50 beds. The total number of patients admitted during the year under review was 934, of whom 853 were cured, 44 relieved, 23 died and 14 remained at the close of the year. There is a well-equipped outdoor dispensary where 25,772 patients were treated.

The following are some of the present needs of the Sevashrama:—

(1) *Workers' Quarters*: A building was constructed for housing the workers. A sum of Rs. 1,500/- was received for the purpose. The remaining sum of Rs. 2,000/- is yet necessary.

(2) *Night School for the Harijans*: The school had about 50 students on its roll. The municipal monthly grant of Rs. 10/- is insufficient and so public help is urgently needed.

(3) *A Guest House* : It was constructed at the cost of Rs. 12,734-15-9. Still a sum of Rs. 2,100/- is necessary to pay off the expenditure.

(4) *Permanent Endowment Fund* : Out of 50 beds 15 were provided for and the remaining 35 beds are yet to be endowed.

(5) *Library* : It consisted of 1,876 volumes of different languages but money is necessary to make it a well-equipped one.

(6) *A Prayer Hall* : It was constructed at the cost of Rs. 3,000/-. The sum of Rs. 200/- was subscribed and the remaining sum is to be collected to meet the deficit.

(7) *Funds for a Sevashrama at Rishikesh.*

(8) *General maintenance Fund.*

With the growth of the activities of the Sevashrama the necessities have also grown apace and so the active sympathy of the public is earnestly solicited. Any contribution towards any of the departments of the Sevashrama will be thankfully acknowledged by the Hony. Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, P.O. Kankhal, Dt. Saharanpur, U. P.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION INDUSTRIAL
HOME AND SCHOOL,
BELUR MATH P.O., DT. HOWRAH

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1937

To impart vocational education among the poor boys this institution has opened the following courses:—(1) Cabinet-making, (2) Weaving and dyeing, (3) Tailoring and (4) Dairy and agriculture. The minimum qualification for admission is the completion of the Middle English Standard. The Session begins from January. With the exception of an admission fee of Rs. 5/- and a game fee of Re. 1/- no other fees are charged for tuition. The number of students at the close of the year was 41. Of the 13 students who appeared for the final examination, 9 came out successful. 21 boys were accommodated in the Students' Home attached to the institution. Apart from the instructions given in the school, religious and music classes, physical training and other recreative and social functions were arranged for the benefit of these boys. The total cost of running the school in 1937 was Rs. 6,259-15-6.

A large number of applicants are refused admission for want of accommodation. A room may be built in the Home at a cost of Rs. 1,000/-, and an endowment of Rs. 2,000/- can permanently maintain a

poor student by means of a scholarship. An endowment fund of Rs. 30,000/- and another sum of Rs. 20,000/- are urgently necessary for the extension of the work-shops, library, etc.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA,
DHANTOLI, NAGPUR

REPORT FOR 1937

This Ashrama which was established in 1928, has been silently and unostentatiously attempting to serve the people without any distinction of caste or creed. The Charitable Dispensary which was situated at the Ashrama premises, treated 47,738 patients and the branch dispensary at Khamla attended to 1,292 patients during the period under review. In addition to the medical help, periodical lectures were arranged when the basic principles of hygiene, preventive measures and curative remedies were lucidly explained in Marathi with the aid of magic lantern slides.

The Students' Home accommodated eight inmates, of whom three were full free, four part-paying and one paying. Two students of the Home creditably passed their M.A. Examination, one of whom secured first place in the first class.

The Study Circle arranged regular classes on the Geetâ etc., by the monastic members of the Mission. The library had 2,913 books on different subjects and had 105 regular members on its roll. The Free Reading Room attached to the library received 11 monthlies, 6 weeklies, 3 dailies, etc. About 25 students attended the Free Gymnasium which was kept open for the school and college students. In response to invitations from the public, the Swamis of the Ashrama delivered lectures on religious and other subjects in schools, colleges and other parts of the city. Anniversaries of Sri Krishna, Sri Ramakrishna and other prophets were held with *Bhajan*, *Kirtan* and public lectures. The Birth Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna was also celebrated with *Bhajan*, *Kirtan* and other religious discourses, feeding of the poor and a convention of Religions. The said Centenary celebrations were organised in 27 other district towns of C. P. and Berar. The Ashrama published 6 books in Marathi and 5 books in Hindi on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Amongst various needs of the Ashrama, a Dispensary building is an

immediate necessity, the approximate cost of which is Rs. 8,000. Any contribution for the Building Fund or for any other departments will be thankfully acknowledged by the President.

**THE SONARGAON RAMAKRISHNA
MISSION, P. O. AMINPUR, DACCA**

REPORT FOR 1936 AND 1937

This Ashrama, ever since its inception in 1915, has been carrying on multifarious activities, social, educational and spiritual. To alleviate the distress of the suffering millions, this Ashrama has been maintaining a Charitable Dispensary which attended to 6,231 patients during the period under review. To minister to other wants of the people the institution doled out rice to 107 families and 304 poor persons and ran a Free Library of 500 books and a number of weeklies and monthlies which were profitably utilised by the local public. To ameliorate the moral and spiritual condition of the people the Ashrama organised 158 religious discourses on various subjects and 22 magic lantern lectures were also delivered in the neighbouring villages. The Birth-Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated with due eclat. Lectures on different religions, readings from the scriptures, industrial and agricultural exhibition, feeding of the poor were some of the main items of the nine days' programme arranged on this august occasion. The birthday anniversaries of Swami Vivekananda and other prophets were also duly celebrated.

Any contribution, however small, will be thankfully acknowledged by the Secretary.

**SRI RAMAKRISHNA VEDA VIDYALAYA
86A, HARISH CHATTERJEE STREET,
BHOWANIPUR, CALCUTTA**

REPORT FOR 1933-37

The quinquennial report of this Vidyalaya shows how from a very humble beginning this institution has been able to intensify the academic atmosphere and to widen the scope and ideal of its work. The teaching staff consisted of three stipendiary pandits who were noted for their scholarship. The total number of students in 1937 was 57, amongst whom there were five M.A.'s, two B.A.'s and several college students. It is really gratifying to note that

the students of this institution secured one or more scholarships every year. There was a library attached to the Vidyalaya which contained many rare and valuable books. The special features of this Vidyalaya were the free teaching of the higher branches of Sanskrit literature and philosophy, free board and lodging to a few deserving students, and the sittings of Sri Ramakrishna Vidyarthi Parishad, an assembly of students to develop the power of speech and writing in Sanskrit.

The immediate needs of the institution are a suitable house of its own and a permanent endowment fund for the maintenance of poor students and efficient Adhyapakas. Any contribution will be thankfully received by the Secretary.

**RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASAMITI,
HABIGUNJ**

REPORT FOR 1936 AND 1937

This institution, started in 1920, has been carrying on its work of service by arranging occasional lectures and religious classes for the propagation of the true knowledge of religion and by establishing schools and Co-operative Societies to foster education and industry. A 15 days' programme was arranged to celebrate the Birthday Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna, which included lectures by learned scholars, selected readings from the scriptures, magic lantern lectures, Students' Day, Ladies' Day, procession, and feeding of 5,000 persons. The birthday anniversaries of Swami Vivekananda and Holy Mother were also duly celebrated. The Ashrama conducted 4 primary schools specially for the Harijans, the average numerical strength of which were 20, 18, 20 and 40 in 1936, and 19, 16, 18 and 39 in 1937. The library which contained 846 books in 1936 and 870 books in 1937 and the Reading Room which was furnished with a dozen magazines and newspapers were fairly utilized by the reading public.

Two Co-operative Credit Societies were established which worked nicely by opening shoe factories and helping other industries. Four patients were treated and nursed in the Ashrama and 16 families were helped with 3½ mds. of rice in 1936 and in 1937, nine patients were served with medicine and diet, and cholera preventive medicines were distributed amongst 143 persons, and 11 families received 2 mds. and 27 srs. of rice.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION
(CEYLON BRANCH)

REPORT FOR THE YEARS ENDING JUNE 30TH,
1936 AND JUNE 30TH, 1937

The seventh and the eighth annual reports of Ceylon Branch of the Ramakrishna Mission record a steady development of its activities, missionary and educational. It was able to carry the spiritual, cultural and moral ministrations to the doors of the inhabitants of this island, who in their turn received them with sympathy and generous support. Its new building known as the "Centenary Math" was opened on the 24th February, 1936, the inauguration day of the Birth Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna. A public meeting was arranged on this occasion; good-will messages from the President and the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission were read and speeches were delivered by eminent men of the city. In 1937, a special programme was organized to celebrate the Birth Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna, which included *puja*, devotional music, lectures on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, distribution of leaflets containing his teachings, feeding of the poor and a Convention of Religions which was attended by learned scholars who spoke lucidly on the different religions of the world. At Batticaloa the important item of the Centenary celebrations was the opening of the Anaipanthi Girls' School, the Kalmunai Tamil School, the Karativu Girls' Orphanage, the science laboratory and class rooms of the Shivananda Vidyalaya and the new building of the Karativu Boys' School. Celebrations were also observed in all the Mission Schools at Trincomalie and Jaffna; there were special *pujas*, *bhajans*, lectures and religious processions. The centenary was observed at Hatton and Anuradhapura.

The educational work of the Mission has considerably grown during these years. The Mission managed 15 schools with 84 teachers and 2,624 pupils. There was an increase of three schools, six teachers and nearly three hundred pupils over the numbers given in last year's report.

The Rural Reconstruction Centre started at Kalladiuppodai worked satisfactorily and was

able to receive the support of the generous public.

The urgent needs of the Mission are:

- (1) Funds for the maintenance of the Ashrama,
- (2) Funds for the educational work, and
- (3) Funds for the maintenance of the Students' Home and the Rural Reconstruction Centre.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MISSION
VIDYARTHI BHAWAN,
NARAYANGUNGE

AN IDEAL HOME FOR THE TRAINING OF
YOUNG STUDENTS.

A healthy and morally sound environment is an indispensable factor for the proper training of young minds. Students starting on the journey of life with a reverential receptiveness and a delicate sensibility should, on no account, be allowed to live in circumstances which may not be free from all filthiness. Rather they should be placed, if possible, under the direct guardianship of some truly great man; for it is only the morally noble, and not the intellectually clever, who can be the real custodians of the moral and spiritual interests of the young minds. But it is a pity that in modern times such a Students' Home is very rare that can assure its inmates all the requisites for self-culture in the real sense of the term.

"Sree Ramakrishna Vidyarthi Bhawan" is an attempt to provide one such ideal Students' Home for those who are just starting in the career of life.

The institution is in charge of a senior Sannyasin of the Ramakrishna Order and is situated in the premises of the Ramakrishna Mission, Narayangunge. At present the number of seats is limited to ten only. The Charge is moderate—only Rs. 12/- per month, including board and lodging, tiffin, private coaching, etc. Admission fee is Rs. 2/- only. Only students between 9 and 15 years are taken in. For other particulars, apply with half-anna stamp to the Rector, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyarthi Bhawan, Narayangunge, Dacca.



SWAMI VIRAJANANDAJI MAHARAJ
THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION