

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

## CONVERSATIONS OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

BELURMATH, 27 APRIL 1932

Reading the American magazine *Asia*, Mahapurush Maharaj was delighted at the news that Russia had guaranteed in her constitution employment for all and said : ‘Well done ! Excellent ! It makes one so happy even to hear of such things. Ah ! what suffering the workers in India have to undergo ! Who cares to think of the poor in a subject country ? Will they not ever see good days ? O Master, do something for them. You came for the sake of the poor and humble alone.’ So saying, he sat for a while absorbed in silence, and then went on to remark, ‘It will come. A way will be found out soon. Swamiji said that, in the coming age, the Shudras will rise. Indications of this are also visible. There are signs of a new awakening among the workers all over the world ; India alone will not be left out. No outside power will be able to suppress this awakening, because behind it lies the Divine Power—the *sadhana* of the *Yugavatar*. Swamiji specially came to know the diverse ways and the diverse fields in which the Master’s Power will operate

in the world ; none else could realize that. Before leaving his body the Master transmitted all his spiritual power to Swamiji and said : “Today I have given you everything and become bankrupt.” And he also laid the whole burden of spreading the *Yugadharma* on Swamiji. Vested with that power, Swamiji also has worked for the good of the world. The ideas he has left behind will, by and by, bear practical fruit in different countries in various ways through different media and will, without doubt, achieve all-round progress all over the world.’ ...

An initiated boy-disciple came and saluted Mahapurush Maharaj who asked him affectionately to sit before him. After enquiring about his health etc. he said : ‘Do you practise *japa* regularly ? Do it as much as you can. Don’t forget to practise *japa*. The Master is the *Yugavatar*. You will find much joy in your heart by continuing to repeat His name. Pray with all your heart : “Lord ! I am a boy, I know nothing. Have mercy on me, fill my heart with love, and faith, and make me realize Your Nature.”

That will achieve everything. Call on Him much and with a yearning heart. While you meditate imagine that the *guru* is gazing at you affectionately and that you are looking at him, full of love. All this does not happen aright in a day. Go on doing it with a simple heart ; gradually it will come.'

Afterwards, he fed the boy with consecrated fruits and sweets. When he went to the roof to wash his hands and mouth, Mahapurushji said : 'This boy's signs are good. He will have attainment. We can know a person by sight. The Master had taught us many of these things. A pleasing outside appearance alone is of no consequence ; devotees have other signs.' ...

Another devotee saluted Mahapurushji and said : 'Maharaj I am continuing *japa* and meditation ; but I am not finding any joy to speak of. And further, I find myself unable to control my mind. Please bless me and tell me how I shall find joy.'

Mahapurushji replied affectionately : 'My child, is it so easy to find joy in *japa* and meditation ? It can only be had after much spiritual practice. Hard and long toil is necessary. The mind has to be pure. The more you feel God as your own and the more you are able to love Him, the more joy you will find in His name. Nothing can be had until the mind is steady. Go on practising *japa*, meditation, and prayer as much as possible. You will see that you will discover new strength in the body ; gradually the taste for His name will come. The mind generally remains scattered among many things. You have to collect the scattered mind and attach it to the object of meditation. Pray much. Prayer is of great help. Whenever you find that you are not able to practise *japa* and meditation, pray with great yearning. Also come here now and then and mix in holy company ; you will have great mental strength by doing so. When you come to the *sadhus*, have discussions about God in a devotional attitude. Otherwise, if you talk of sundry other nonsense, it will bring you no gain and will further

waste the *sadhus'* time. The thing is this : Through *japa* and meditation, prayer, remembrance, study of good scriptures, discussion of God and such other diverse means, you have to keep your thoughts engaged on God. Well, just do one thing. Go now to the shrine room and facing the Master, pray with great intensity and say : 'O Master, save me ; I am without shelter and ignorant. O Lord, have mercy, be compassionate, and give me strength. One of your sons has sent me to you.' Pray intensely in this way. He will have mercy and fill your heart with joy'. ...

In the afternoon he was listening to letters being read to him. Listening to a particular devotee's letter, he said : 'This is right. If this yearning is sincere, what's there to worry about ? Write to him : "Weep much, call on Him much, feel intense dissatisfaction and suffering, be thoroughly burnt out—then only will you have success. The Master used to say that people shed pots of tears for wife and sons, but how many weep for God ? He who weeps for not finding God is very fortunate indeed. He has surely had God's grace. Is the attainment of peace an easy affair ? How can there be peace without the attainment of the knowledge of Truth ? Real peace is had only when the mind merges in Him in *samadhi* ; not before that. This is not a thing to be had at a bound ; one must be at it always—like the hereditary farmer.' (The allusion is to a story of Sri Ramakrishna. The hereditary farmer does not give up cultivation whether or not the rains come or the crop fails.) ...

A devotee had written a letter praying that he might attain pure love for the lotus feet of the Master even in the present birth. In reply Mahapurushji said : 'Write to him, "Child, I am very glad that you have felt a sincere longing in your heart for attaining love and faith in His lotus feet. Pray to Him with great yearning. He is the Inner Guide ; He knows when and what to give to His devotee. Take refuge in His lotus feet and remain there. A real devotee does not care for this birth or that. This is a very low con-

ception. Pray to the Master only for this, namely, that you may have whole-hearted faith, love, and devotion. Do not say anything about this or that birth. May you be filled in full measure with faith and love, is my sincere prayer. A true devotee's prayer should be :

*Etat prārthyam mama bahumatam janma  
janmāntarepi*

*Tvatpādāmbhoruhayugatā nischalā bhakti-  
rastu ;*

*Divi vā bhuvī va mamāstu vāso, ncrake vā  
narakāntam prakāmam.*

'My one and only prayer, O Remover of Hell, is this—that wherever I may dwell, whether in heaven, or earth or in hell, may I have steady love for your lotus feet in all my births, this and subsequent ones.'

When love for His lotus feet is attained, all is transformed into heaven—all becomes blissful. May you have that through His grace." . . .

To the letter of another devotee he dictated the following reply : 'One who seeks the Lord

finds Him. But one should seek Him sincerely. He will reveal Himself only if He is called upon as one *should* call upon Him. The Master used to say : "God is like the Moon, the common maternal uncle to all children. Whoever wants Him finds Him." Nobody can teach another to weep at the pang of separation for not finding God ; it comes of itself in time. . . . When a real want for God will be felt in the soul, when the heart will be distraught at not realizing Him, when at separation from Him the world will appear empty to your eyes—then alone will tears flow, bursting through the heart. Nobody can tell when that good fortune will come. That state of mind will come as soon as His Grace will be had and you will feel it in the heart itself. Call on Him with great yearning, pray to Him much, saying : "Have mercy on me, O Lord, have mercy on me !" He will listen to your prayers—take it from me. He is the wish-fulfilling tree to His devotees. I pray sincerely that the Lord grant your heart's desire.'

## THE WESTERN QUESTION (IX)

BY THE EDITOR

We are going to consider the impact of Islam upon India in this article. Our statements will be broad and concerned with the fundamentals, giving an analysis of Indian life at the deepest.

We have said earlier that Islam fractured our social unity. The split still remains and awaits solution on a spiritual basis. The process, started long ago, is far from complete. The spiritual solution of this problem and similar others has been given in our time in an unprecedented manner by Sri Ramakrishna whose practical verification of different faiths can have no other meaning but this. A

purely intellectual and personal explanation of his experiments, treating them as an individual freak, will be utterly inadequate and pointless.

It is futile to seek social unity on a basis of material aims. Political and economic factors are ephemeral and change constantly giving rise to new groupings and tensions. A conception superior to them is needed to circumvent their antagonisms. The purely ethical solution, however appealing generally to refined sensibility, lacks a sound basis in empirical facts. Ethics may differ with taste and feelings, and there is no way of deciding between the truth or falsity of an ethic by an

appeal to empirical facts. The ethics of the 'superman' and the 'democratic' ethics are 'scientifically' speaking, on a level. A rational solution can lie only in the perception of an objective spiritual reality transcending material notions and the subjective fancies of individuals. It lies in the perception of an objective impersonal truth. This fact should be clear to all Indians whose philosophical tradition embraces a larger conception of science and empiricism. ...

The political success of Islam was due first to national weakness, second to the fanatical zeal and superb fighting qualities of its adherents. Circumstances had rendered the Indian society extraordinarily complex. Reform movements which periodically extended the principles of civilization to raw masses of humanity failed to achieve in time a high degree of social cohesion. Further, some of the most powerful ones became one-sided and challenged the broad conception of the traditional system. They also became ossified in process of time and grew into vested interests. Their narrow and negative attitude to life and its impulses led to suppression, large scale hypocrisy, and social degeneration. It is clear vigorous political force cannot be generated from such a weak social basis. A balanced view of life and society as represented by the *varnashrama* ideal is essential for the healthy functioning of national life. The ideal need not imply the hereditary principle.

As examples of wrong emphasis and negativism which led to political listlessness and national disaster we shall refer, as promised earlier, to a few facts drawn from a wide area. These instances are not meant to cast any reflection on any religion, but are intended to show the paralyzing influence of partial philosophies of life. The North-Western parts of India were long under Buddhist influence as abundant archaeological evidence shows. One would expect from the nature of the terrain and climate in those parts sturdy qualities of character among the people

there. But when Islam appeared on the scene we do not find there, nor in Kashmir, nor in Western India, Buddhist or Jain rulers and peoples offering real resistance to the marauders from outside. Buddhism suddenly vanishes, and we find the Hindu Shahiya kingdom of the Northwest defending India's marches with rare courage and sacrifice for nearly a century. Behind it were other Rajput kingdoms which, however, failed to combine effectively against the common enemy due to the personal jealousies and ambitions of their rulers. Though we do not know much about the composition of the population of those parts, there can hardly be any doubt that the Buddhists, lay and monastic, were numerous. What part did they play? We do not know much besides their non-activity. If, however, we turn to other directions certain analogical conclusions suggest themselves.

The political conquest of Sind in the eighth century, then under a Hindu king, was made possible by the local Buddhist monks who secretly informed the invading Arabs of a crossing across the Indus. This enabled them to steal a passage and take the Indian army by surprise. Evidently, theological rancour blinded them to the larger matters of national importance. In Bengal, we are similarly told in an extant Buddhist work that the local Buddhists, who were doubtless numerous, welcomed the first Muslim invaders as deliverers. It will be futile to ascribe all this to social oppression. First of all, it has to be answered why did Buddhism which was long dominant on the political and social planes gradually lose ground and driving force?

As a strange ironical conclusion to all this the Buddhists of India were finally obliterated by Islam through conversion and decimation.

In Gujarat in Western India, shortly after the Somnath temple had been sacked and destroyed, the Jain minister of the kingdom where the desecrated temple lay found no better object to his statesmanlike activity than the construction of a temple at Abu at

a lavish cost. A truly amazing conception of duty for a minister of the state at a time of mortal national peril!

Orissa, which had long successfully resisted Islamic aggression under its early rulers, became politically weak when an one-sided *Vaishnavism* cast a paralyzing influence on its later rulers and peoples, and quickly lost its freedom. Similar is the case with Vijayanagar, which, originally founded by the statesmanlike activities of Madhava and Sayana, saints and scholars, lost all political vigour afterwards under rulers and ministers who lost sight of the original balanced conception.

The above observations are intended to make the point that the idea of punishment (*danda*) cannot be excluded from the conception of the State, at least as far as we are able to see into the future. It will be wrong to confuse this idea with aggression or militarism. The conception of the State as a means to a spiritual end does not rule out the use of necessary force. Pacifism and non-resistance logically lead to monasticism. But the monastic solution of the problem of life is a personal solution and cannot be applied to society as a whole.

It is farthest from our intention to speak disparagingly of any faith. We hold all faiths to be approaches to the same Truth. But a faith is not the Truth, it is only one of the many ways to It. A creed which arrogates to itself absolute Truth and fails to make a realistic approach to the problems of life becomes subversive of the social order.

The Islamic period of Indian history has been likened by some, not without reason, to the Dark Ages of Europe, when a gloom gradually spread over the land. A distinguished historian has condemned the political rule of Islam as an utter failure, since its effect was wholly retrograde, so he thinks, as regards creative effort of all kinds among the native population. There is much to be said in favour of this view. And as a judgment on Islamic political rule it is largely correct, for it was marked by destructive action in

many fields over a long period. Yet it will not be quite right to maintain that the creative spark was entirely lost, or that no fresh advances in life were made. There are many things which, despite political rule, diminished the darkness of the period. In fact, the blows of Islam stimulated creative responses along modern lines. Many of the older developments had reached some sort of a dead end. Developments along new lines were called for. New forces arose, despite opposition from many sides, which gradually acquired strength and wrought important changes in the social and political structure. These have ensured the continuity of Indian civilization. For this reason the period was one of breakdown and recovery.

When the Islamic invaders came in contact with the Indians they must have become aware of themselves, as times passed, as very uncouth and barbarous in comparison. The Indians were superior to them in nearly every way: in manufacture and agriculture, in religion and philosophy, in art, literature and science, and in various other apparatuses of civilization. Even in matters of civil administration and statecraft the invaders lacked the vast experience and knowledge of the conquered. In fact they made little alteration in the civil administrative structure. The only things in which the invaders were superior were social cohesion and military tactics.

The Arabs were originally not a very religious and philosophical people. In matters of civilization they contributed little that can be called original. They showed no capacity for independent thought or speculation. They became good commentators and they were important as transmitters of oriental knowledge to the West. In this way they rendered a great service to civilization. The modern Western civilization owes much to their activity of this sort. But the political conquest of the Arabs led to a great transformation of Islam. Particularly the Persians, whose kinship and indebtedness to the Indo-Aryans are well known, made out of Islam

something much more religious and philosophical and interesting. Much of the aesthetic refinement and taste of the Mughal rulers of India was due to this source. The Turks, however, remained very crude even long after their conversion.

Gradually some of the Islamic rulers came to feel the greatness and depth of the native philosophy and culture. This was not liked by the orthodox party of Islam whose religious zeal was upheld by motives of economic gain and political power. The zealots did all they could do to prevent national assimilation. But rare far-seeing rulers of later times tried to free themselves to some extent from this theological incubus and come closer to the national idea.

Islam came with new conceptions of law and government, religion and society. Islamic rule here, as elsewhere, was a theocracy, which means that the State has a theological bias. The bias may take different forms, from the simple levying of tributes from those who differ from the State religion to extreme persecution of unbelievers, like the Inquisition. To Islam's credit it has to be said that its intolerance did not take the extreme form of Inquisition characteristic of the Catholic church in the middle ages, though violent outbursts were not uncommon. Islam's rule was founded on military power, which was for a long time maintained by an extensive slave-system, which formed a sort of ruling and fighting caste. The motive of the ruling classes was generally self-aggrandizement and proselytization which served it. The interest of the people was hardly present before their eyes. As a consequence the people became economically and socially depressed. Much of the magnificence of royal courts and stately buildings, built by indigenous builders, rested upon a foundation of human misery. Such a rule can hardly find support in popular affection, and it found no such support, except in the case of a few exceptional rulers. Very often the degenerate and demoralized ruling princes and classes became political and economic superfluities, able to protect the

people neither from outside aggression nor from periodic internal chaos.

The rulers conceived it their duty to convert non-believers into the 'true' faith. Their fanatical conception of religion, namely, that one faith alone is true, and the others are false and evil, which was derived from Jewish and Christian sources, introduced an entirely novel feature into India. Freedom of conscience in religious matters is an ancient and recognized principle of Indian life. It finds its most emphatic assertion in the conception of the *Ishta devata* or the personal spiritual ideal. Theocratic notions are completely alien to the Indian temper. The identification of politics with religion or of a dogma with the State has been made in Christian and Islamic countries. The conception of the secular state in modern times in the West has therefore a historical basis. The Church there stood against freedom of thought and conscience. But the modern slogan as applied to India is ill-conceived, since it gives a false picture of the Indian past and since it suggests a secular conception of society and a secular solution of the problem of social conflicts. All this is not only wrong but full of dangerous possibilities.

The greatest obstacle to Indian reconstruction is ideological, arising from a misconception of Indian history and culture. We are given to talking vaguely about unity in diversity, tolerance and that sort of thing, without realizing that this unity can have no substantial basis except God. Without that ground and aim diversity can only mean conflict and not harmony. We cannot achieve social cohesion and unity by slurring over this basic issue. Until the various elements of the Indian humanity come to take a common pride in the valuable spiritual heritage of the country, they will never be integrated into a harmonious whole.

Despite gravest provocations the traditional culture has not departed from its tolerant spirit. Compare for instance the attitude of the powerful Hindu rulers and kingdoms of the period with that of the paramount political

authority. Take only two typical instances : the Maratha state and the Vijayanagar kingdom. One would expect Shivaji, whose inspiration was religious and who led a national uprising against Aurangzeb's fanaticism, to take at least some steps to discourage the faith associated with such a narrow temper. But the fact was quite opposite. Shivaji gave instructions to his men and officers never to molest a woman, whatever her creed, or desecrate a tomb, or the *Koran*, or a mosque. He even provided for the illumination of the tombs of saints and fakirs in his kingdom. All this has been recorded by Khafi Khan, an orthodox Muslim historian who was all admiration for Aurangzeb's bigotry. The kingdom of Vijayanagar which prior to the rise of the Marathas, formed for long the chief focus of national resistance against Islam's aggression never adopted bigotry in retaliation for it. The foreign traveller Barbosa writes : 'The king allows such freedom that every man may come and go and live according to his own creed without suffering any annoyance, and without enquiry, whether he is a Christian, Jew, Moor or Hindu.' In Europe of the time such tolerance and liberal spirit were completely non-existent.

The fanatical policy of the paramount power led to great destructive consequences, of which the most calamitous were those which concerned national learning and education. The change in the political power disestablished as it were, by a sudden stroke the vast system of indigenous education. The state support was withdrawn from institutions which had hitherto been dependent on it. But this was only negative. Worse still, active hostility was shown against them. The big universities and establishments of learning like Nalanda, Vikramshila disappear all of a sudden. We hear no more of anything in their likeness afterwards. This attitude had far-reaching consequences, as can be easily surmised. The scholars gradually turned away from unremunerative philosophical and academic pursuits to priestly functions, which at least

brought them some pittance to live by. This along with the loss of self-confidence which came with the deprivation of political freedom led to a paralyzing worship of the past. Free thought and independent speculation were given up, intellectual vigour declined, and superstitions and verbal quibbles took the place of rational enquiry and research. Archaism of all types became more and more marked.

Priceless monuments and works of art, temples and manuscripts, were all destroyed wherever possible. Many brahmins fled from the north to the comparative security of the south. One reason, perhaps the main, why the Buddhist Canon and many Sanskrit works have been discovered in the south and outside India, and why many books survive in translations in non-Indian languages while their originals have been lost here, is to be attributed to this kind of destructive action, in the Indo-Gangetic plains in particular.

Still this is only one side of the picture. There is another side which shows that the creative spark was not lost. It was being rekindled into a new flame and bringing to birth powerful social movements. This creative side is represented by the medieval saints and their followers. Their liberal movements effected important changes in the social structure. Judged by social effects alone, their work was of the first importance. By its side, the doings of the politicians and rulers look trivial and ephemeral.

India's social weakness lay in masses of men nominally forming part of a common society but actually deprived of the true heritage. All hopes of betterment seemed lost to them for the time. Large converts to Islam were made from these sections in the east and the west. It will be wrong to attribute these to force or to economic and political temptations alone. If no progress seemed possible within the old fold, despite its most lofty conceptions, no other way to elevation was open but to seek salvation outside by leaving it. Alarmed by such conversions and Islam's proselytizing zeal backed by force, the

orthodox party sought safety in reaction and further tightened social bonds. This type of mentality is reflected in the several *smṛiti* texts and commentaries of the period. The famous among these were the *Parāsara Smṛiti*, a commentary on it called *Kālanirnaya*, *Madana-pārijāta*, Kulluka's commentary on Manu and the *smṛiti* of Raghunandana, all of which came to have a wide vogue. These seemed to close all gates of society to new-comers and even repudiated many of its members for small peccadillos. Vainly did they seek to protect society by a carapace of stringent and futile orthodoxy. This conservatism was not without some service, but gradually it took on such an extreme form that it became antithetical to the very spirit of the culture it sought to preserve. The real solution of the complex problem came from the side of the liberal reformers.

The general social situation, broadly speaking, was as follows. At one end of the scale stood the conquerors, their followers and converts, at the other were the disinherited social proletariat. The problem was how to bring them all within a common framework by curing the fanaticism of one and removing the disabilities of the other. This fundamental social problem was tackled by a long succession of saints and preachers from the twelfth to the seventeenth century, whose achievements laid the basis for a new regeneration. These saints belonged to the traditional line, deriving all their power and inspiration from a common source. God and religion to them were facts of perception and not an ideology constructed to secure social unity and stability. Their preaching was spontaneous; the driving force of their life was universal love. They did not start with conscious aims of social reconstruction and national salvation which followed as a matter of logical conclusion. The designation reformer as applied to them is therefore not quite right. Their approach was intuitive and they worked from the bottom up. We can now see the tremendous services they have rendered to India, which to contemporaries

probably seemed nothing extraordinary. The great figures of the times were Ramanuja, Ramananda, Kabir, Vallabhacharya, Chaitanya, Nanak, Namdev, Tukaram and Ramdas. All of them belonging to long-standing *sampradayas* which have always been like a chrysalis for fresh national regenerations.

Their preaching led to India-wide social uplift in north, south, east and west. The people got culture and new self-confidence in their liberal message. Conversion to other faiths was checked and many Muslims were drawn by their simplicity and charm to accept the new teachings. The preachers taught in one voice the fundamental equality of all faiths, unity of the Godhead, and caste as an attribute of character. They protested against formalism, ritualism, and the rigidity of caste, and emphasized simple devotion as a means to realizing God. They gave a way of salvation that was emotional and easy in place of the philosophical path which was too intellectual and remote from the common understanding.

The process of solidification and synthesis gathered great momentum as time went on. Fanaticism was being worn down. Thanks to this the shattered fragments of the society were being put together. Even Muslim rulers and nobles came gradually under the liberal influence and some of them adopted a national policy in administration. The names of Zainul Abedin of Kashmir, Hussain Shah of Bengal, Akbar, and Dara Shikoh, stand out in this connection. The spirit of synthesis and rapprochement was visible in many fields. Islam was being assimilated into the main body of Indian society.

All this, of course, alarmed the orthodox party of Islam which felt that it was losing ground. It made a final determined attempt under Aurangzeb to reverse this tide. This is the true explanation of Aurangzeb's politics, which was essentially a response stimulated by fear. The great Akbar, one of the most remarkable among the great geniuses of the world, had tried for the first time during this



period to give a real national character to the empire of Delhi. He grasped the essential nature of the problem and showed a liberal temper and a devotion to truth which have not been equalled by any great ruler outside India. His successors, however, gradually abandoned his policy under pressure from the court nobles and orthodox priests, and Aurangzeb completely reversed it. The results of this reversal are well known.

The work of the saints and 'reformers' begun on the religious plane gradually found expression in other fields and brought into birth a new national consciousness. The beginnings of the modern Indian vernaculars are to be traced to this period. A popular language is an essential medium of culture. Truths locked up previously in Sanskrit were put across to the common people in their own language. Ramananda and Kabir preached in Hindi; Namdev, Tukaram and Ramdas developed the Marathi literature; Mirabai composed her songs in *Brajabhasha*; Nanak and his disciples laid the foundation of the Punjabi and Gurmukhi. Similarly Bengali, Telugu, Kannada were used and developed by the religious writers.

Political forces of a character not known before arose on the new social bases. Politics took on an increasingly national and popular character instead of being confined to princes and nobles. The Marathas, Sikhs, Satnamis, and Jats became politically organized on a religious, but not fanatical, basis. Shivaji's war was not a prince's war; it was a popular war. These powers pulled down the political structure of Aurangzeb and not one stone was left upon another. Aurangzeb's political success was the last flicker of the flame before

it went out. These national powers dominated the Indian scene when sovereignty of the land passed into British hands.

We were drawn into the West's political and economic net before the old problems had been finally solved. The West came with new values and conceptions, science and technique. Many of these were necessary to bring about a quick transformation of Indian society along upto-date lines. We have today accepted, and rightly so, its science and technology and liberal political system; we have recently freed ourselves from its political meshes; but we have at the same time fallen victims to its secular ideology. We have to extricate ourselves from this subtle ideological mesh and build our society on the basis of our true and eternal values with the necessary help from science and technology. We cannot neglect the study of nature, except at our peril, but we cannot neglect the study of man except at a greater peril. Our social reconstruction must rest on an understanding of Man and nature. This is true of the entire humanity. But here we have already a priceless heritage. What can be a greater folly than to lose this?

We have given a brief analysis of the main factors of Indian history upto the time of the British conquest. The last period is very recent and the creative forces in it are well known. We cannot deal with it, though we wanted to do so. But we think we have been able to make the point we wanted to make. We have to bring our survey to a close, which we propose to do in a summing-up in the next month which also closes the year.

(To be continued)

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'The powerful men in every country are moving society whatever way they like, and the rest are only a flock of sheep. Now ... who are these men of power in India?—they who are giants in religion. It is they who lead our society, and it is they again who change our social laws and usages when necessity demands; and we listen to them silently and do what they command. ...'

—Swami Vivekananda

# NATURE OF MAN AND RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINES

BY DR TARAKNATH DAS

All religions deal with man's relations with the Universal Spirit, called by different names. All religions have taken the stand and cherished the concept regarding the nature of Man as something other than a 'material object'. Man is Spirit. Man in his essence is Soul. For instance, in Plato's *Phaedo*, we find that Socrates told Cebes :

'Then reflect, Cebes : is not the conclusion of the whole matter this—that the soul is in the very likeness of the divine and immortal and intelligible and uniform and indissoluble and unchangeable ; and the body is in the very likeness of the human and mortal and unintelligible and multiform and dissoluble and changeable. Can this, my dear Cebes, be denied ? No indeed.'

This conception that man's real nature is not merely a physical machine—body—that man is the Soul in the body and the Soul is immortal and divine in nature, is one of the greatest conceptions of the ancient sages of India, thousands of years before the days of Socrates and Plato. In the *Upanishads* and in the *Bhagavad Gita* we have ample expressions of this glorious conception of God in Man. For instance, in the *Bhagavad Gita* we find the following :

'Even as a person casts off worn-out clothes and puts on others that are new, so the embodied Self casts off worn-out bodies and enters into others that are new.'

'Weapons cut It (Soul) not ; fire burns It not, water wets It not ; the wind does not wither It.'

'This Self cannot be cut nor burnt nor wetted nor withered. Eternal, all-pervading, unchanging, immovable, the Self is the same for ever.'

'The Self is said to be unmanifest, incomprehensible, the unchangeable. Therefore, knowing It to be so, you should not grieve.'

In the *Upanishads* we find the discussion of Brahman, the Universal Spirit, as the Absolute Existence (Sat), Absolute Consciousness

(Chit), and Absolute Bliss (Anandam). It is conceived that the Self or Soul in its essence is no different from Brahman. Thus the *Upanishad* says :

'Brahman is Being, Consciousness and Infinity.' 'In the beginning, my dear, there was That only which is one only, without a second. It is the True. It is the Self. And thou art It.'

This is the conception of the spiritual nature of Man. There is the Divine in man. It is needless to affirm that the spiritual aspect of man's nature is of the highest importance for his survival, emancipation, and true happiness or bliss. Coming down from the highest concept of man's spiritual heritage, one may point out that a rock or a giant machinery made by man's ingenuity, or a calculating machine which solves difficult mathematical problems, does not possess that quality which is the source of all emotions and sensibilities. Thus in probing into man's nature we are forced to take account of love, beauty, wisdom, virtue, and even immortality. One of the most interesting facts about man's nature is this : Not being satisfied with his material possessions or surroundings he is always in search for Inner Peace or liberation from self-imposed bondage, and for true happiness.

In Plato's *Symposium*, we find the following interesting conversation between Diotima, a wise woman and teacher, and Socrates which gives an idea of man's search for Happiness :

' "When a man loves the beautiful, what does he love ?" Socrates answered : "That the beautiful be his." "Still", she said, "the answer suggests a further question, which is this : What is given by the possession of beauty ?" "That" Socrates replied, "is a question to which I have no answer ready." "Then" Diotima said, "let me put the word "good" in place of the beautiful, and repeat the question : *What does he who loves the good desire ?*" Socrates answered, "The

possession of the good." Diotima asked: "And what does he gain who possesses the good?" Socrates replied, "Happiness; there is no difficulty in answering this."

Thus one may say that the manifestation of the spiritual nature of man leads him to the quest of true happiness. Regarding this search for Happiness, Alcibiades once remarked: 'The wise physician, skilled to heal our wounds, shall prescribe and we shall obey.' This injunction that we are to obey certain spiritual laws laid down by those who attained God-consciousness may not be obeyed and even listened to by many modern physicians of the soul, who try to cure inner maladies, but often make it worse for the patient because of their disregard for spiritual laws and profession of materialism and search for happiness through mere satisfaction of sensual life.

The process of reaching 'Happiness' or really blissful state of Inner Peace has been discussed by the ancient sages of India; and I shall make a very brief mention of the preliminary process of hard practice of *Raja Yoga*. It involves eight stages or forms of practice: 1. *Yama* (practice of love, chastity, truth, and greedlessness); 2. *Niyama* (cultivation of certain positive spiritual attitudes); 3. *Asana* (posture of sitting down for meditation); 4. *Pranayama* (so-called breathing exercises which can only be taught by the *guru* or spiritual guide); 5. *Pratyahara* (withdrawal of the sense-organs from their objects); 6. *Dharana* (holding fast to certain contents in our mind); 7. *Dhyana* (meditation); and 8. *Samadhi* (super-consciousness). Animal instincts should not dominate man, but spiritual consciousness, which does not interfere with man's living in the material world, should be the motive of human activities. In a way this may be termed the religious and spiritual discipline of a man.

Hindu philosophers were quite cognizant that there are various types of individuals. There are some who are predominantly full of inertia or laziness (*tamasic*); there are others

who are of active temperament (*rajasic*); and the others, whose number is less numerous than the others, are possessed with blissfulness or clear understanding (*sattvic*). In every individual there are the qualities of laziness, activity, and blissfulness; but a man to become illuminated with spiritual light will have to develop a *sattvic* or pure nature.

Man must get out of laziness. This is the first imperative of spiritual life. Because laziness causes ignorance. An ignorant man develops egotism. From egotism develop types of unreasonable attachment, aversion, and love for the so-called enjoyments of life. These produce afflictions.

One who is bound by afflictions of all kinds cannot have true happiness. Thus the problem is, how can a man get rid of all the afflictions? The answer is, by *sadhana* (practice of religious and spiritual disciplines). By this process a person can become truly pacific or calm, possessing physical or emotional control; he becomes at peace with himself and with the universe. Such a spiritual man's nature is fruitfully active to serve others and perform his duty according to the station of his life. He acts with non-attachment or without being a slave of his desires.

Thus it has been said that one must possess right desires or thoughts and ideals; but he must not allow himself to be a victim of passions. Here is then the theoretical secret: Rise above your desire; be a master of yourself and attain real freedom. Some of the modern psychologists or psycho-analysts might wrongly suggest that it is the doctrine of repression. In self-illumination, there is no room for repression, but there is the essential necessity of pursuing a course of life which will lead to self-regeneration. As in license there is no freedom, it being really an expression of abuse of freedom, so in unrestrained and misdirected sensuous or sensual life there cannot be Inner Peace. Mere pursuit of material enjoyment cannot give Inner Peace. Thus it was said, 'Man does not live by bread alone.'

Modern psychology has rightly given emphasis to the Sub-conscious or inner life or what is sometimes termed as hidden or suppressed desires. People suffering from hidden or suppressed desires cannot be made happy merely by making them conscious of the nature and root of their suffering. Such a practice, or so-called analysis, does not provide a remedy for a malady. An expert physician may find out that a person is suffering from a serious ailment; but this diagnosis does not provide the needed remedy. There is not a man who is not suffering from some kind of inner malady or other. The difference lies in degree only. But the *Gita* assures us that we can attain freedom and perfect happiness. This can be attained by devotees 'whose happiness is within, whose relaxation is within, whose light is within; that yogi alone, becoming Brahman, gains absolute and true Freedom.'

This state of spirituality in man's life is not easily attainable. Thus the *Upanishads* teach that 'inner or spiritual Freedom cannot be attained by the weak.' Man must have spiritual strength to be free. There are obstacles on the road to Inner Freedom and they must be overcome. The sages of India, treading the road to freedom made mention of a few of them: Disease, (physical and mental), langour, indecision, carelessness, sloth, sensuality, mistaken notions, missing the vital points, and instability.

From the standpoint of spiritual experience, a free man is one who has attained the stage which is beyond all fear. Attainment of this stage is not so easy as it is a very difficult task. We are afraid in proportion to our own consciousness of our Fear due to our limitations. It is by being afraid that we become hypocrites and dishonest and ill-treat others. But the only sublime way of overcoming Fear is to be in tune with the source of All Good and to be conscious of God-in-Man.

The moment one becomes conscious of the God-in-Man, he sees the limitations of his

egotism, which begins to vanish, through the process of self-surrender.

One feels like this: I, an egotist and with my limitations, cannot overcome the obstacles in the way of becoming free and attaining Inner Peace and thus wish to surrender to Divine Will for direction. Thus we find in the *Bhagavad Gita*, a devotee—one who is striving for attainment of True Freedom—practises self-surrender with the following words: 'Oh Lord, Thou residing in my innermost being, I shall follow Thy bidding in whichever way mayst Thou direct me.' Lest there be any mistaken conception, I wish to emphasize that this self-surrender is not fatalism but surcharging the insignificant self of mine with the limitless strength emanating from the Divine. This cannot be explained but must be experienced. (Self-surrender of a lover is not a slavery but surrender with self-mastery.) In the Lord's prayer we repeat, 'Thy Will Be Done.' May I become the instrument to carry out the Divine Will. In such a spirit there is no inaction or fatalism.

In conclusion, then, I wish to emphasize that man is not a machine; man is not merely the body. There is the spiritual aspect of man which is by far the most important in man's nature. Man is seeking for Peace, and when he is in peace with himself and the rest of the universe, then he can spread Peace. Political and economic machineries and military preparedness cannot give that Peace which cannot be disturbed. There must be a sincere recognition of the necessity of that 'spiritual basis of peace endeavours' by men who have attained Inner Peace and are not in the bondage of materialism. Men make organizations; organizations do not create men. Men of Peace can serve the cause of peace through certain instruments,—organizations. Without the peaceful intents of the Inner Man, there cannot be Peace. Thus the problem of cultivation of religious and spiritual disciplines is vital to the cause of World Peace.

## THE LIFE OF TULSIDAS (II)

BY MRS C. K. HANDOO

After leaving the house of his father-in-law Ram Bola first came to Prayag at the confluence of the Ganga and Jamuna, and here he took the vows of *sannyasa* and probably the name of Tulsidas as well. From Prayag he went to Ayodhya, where he remained for four months, and thence proceeded to Jagannath Puri on foot, where he reached in fifteen days. From Puri he went southward to Rameswar, then slowly wended his way to Dwaraka on the west coast and then across the plains to the snow-clad Badri in the Himalayas, thus completing the four pilgrimages at the four compass points of India. This homage to the motherland is a well-known way of seeking to reach the Eternal through the physical and geographical unity of India, and it is this vision which sustains the faithful pilgrim as he trudges along the dusty paths, fields, and forests, watches the sun rise and set in a new place every day and partakes the fare of the hospitable poor from village to village. So Tulsi also trod on the beaten path. From Badri he visited Kailas, the Mansarovar lake, Rupachal and Nilachal mountains, again to Mansarovar, Chitrakut, and Kashi. Since he left his father-in-law's house his travels took in all 14 years 10 months and 17 days. After this, though he continued to go out on his wanderings at frequent intervals, he always returned to the banks of the Ganges in Kashi.

Four places in Kashi are associated with the life of Tulsi. At Assi Ghat on the Ganges he established a Hanuman temple and lived in a cave nearby. The last days of his life were also spent here. In the compound of the temple of Gopal a small room is still known to be the place where he wrote the *Vinaya Patrika*. The two other places are Prahlad Ghat and a temple of Hanuman, consisting of twelve images, built by Tulsi and known as Sankat Mochan Hanuman.

Tulsi lived in Kashi and recited the *Rama-*

*yana* daily. A very interesting anecdote is related by Beni Madho Das and is also widely prevalent in the traditional and other accounts of the life of Tulsidas. We shall repeat it also. The spirit of a dead man was bound to a peepul tree for some evil deeds of its past life and was spending its days in great agony. Tulsi passed that way daily and poured water at the root of the tree after his morning bath. This released the spirit who showed himself to Tulsi and wishing to express his gratitude asked him how he could repay him for his kindness. Tulsi said he did not desire anything but the vision of Ram. The spirit replied that this was beyond his power but he could tell him the means by which his wish could be fulfilled. The spirit then informed him that when Tulsi recited the *Ramayana* Hanuman came to listen to him in the disguise of a leper dressed in rags. He was the first to come and the last to leave, and it was within his power to give Tulsi the boon of Ram's *darshana*. Next time Tulsi looked carefully at the audience and spotted the leper. After the recital was over and the crowd departed and this man also was about to leave, Tulsi fell at his feet and begged him to fulfil the desire so dear to his heart. In vain the leper protested, but Tulsidas clung to his feet and implored him over and over again to be kind. At last the visitor said, 'Go to Chitrakut and there you will be blessed by the vision of Ram'. Tulsi left for Chitrakut immediately. Throughout the journey his mind dwelt on Ram, the possibility of Ram's *darshana*; when he looked back on his own mediocre life he felt despondent, but his heart filled with hope and his steps became bouyant when he thought of 'the grace of Ram which is never satisfied even through its own compassion.' (*jāsu kripā nahin kripā aghāti*).

On reaching Chitrakut he lived at Ram Ghat, started on his daily recitation of the

*Ramayana*, and followed his usual routine of life as in Kashi. One day, while going on his *pradakshina* round he saw two princely looking boys of fair and dark complexion running after a deer with bow and arrow in hand. Though Tulsi greatly wondered at their beauty and felt very much attracted towards them he could not guess that they were Ram and Lakshman. According to another version quoted by Sir George Grierson, Tulsi saw the two brothers with Sita and Hanuman returning to Ayodhya after the death of Ravana and the crowning of Vibhishana as King of Lanka. Tulsidas at first mistook the sight for a scene from the *Ram Lila* but when he discovered his mistake he wept inconsolably. Hanuman pacified him in a dream, however, and said that he had been the recipient of great grace and no man in the age of Kali could expect more. Instead of weeping over it Hanuman commanded Tulsi to go and serve Him.

Early in the morning on the Mauni Amavasya day in the year Samvat 1607 (1550 A. D.)—it was a Wednesday—Tulsi once again had a vision of Ram. Tulsidas was making sandalwood paste for the use of *sadhus* after their bath in the Mandakini river. Ram came to Tulsi in the form of a young boy and said 'Baba, give me some *chandan*!' Tulsi, intent on his work, handed it over to him without looking up. Hanuman seeing him thus lose a second opportunity took the form of a parrot and gave him a warning. An oft-quoted verse describes the situation thus :

*Chitrakut ke ghāt par, bhayi santan ki bhir*  
*Tulsidas chandan ghise, tilaka deta raghuvir*  
'The ghat of Chitrakut was crowded with holy men and Tulsi rubbed the sandalwood with which Raghuvir anointed Himself.' On hearing the cry of the parrot Tulsi looked up in great bewilderment, but in the twinkling of an eye Ram had disappeared leaving Tulsi in deep meditation oblivious of the outer world. Hanuman once again came to the rescue and brought Tulsi back to ordinary consciousness.

In Samvat 1626 (1569 A. D.) the poet Surdas came to see Tulsidas. He showed him

his *Sur Sagar*, from which he read out some verses to him. Tulsidas praised the book. They spent seven days together after which Surdas returned to his place. We think the latter wrote a poem in memory of this visit in which he starts by saying, 'Blessed am I that I have come to the lotus feet of the best amongst the holy ones' (*dhanya bhaga mama santa siromani charana kamala tuki āya un.*)

Another story is told of the meeting of Tulsi with Nabhadās, the author of a book called *Bhakta Mala*. Nabhaji once came to Kashi and just before he left he paid a visit to Tulsi. Unfortunately Tulsi was in meditation at that time and Nabhaji returned without meeting him. When Tulsidas came to know that Nabhaji had left for Brindaban the same day he decided to make personal amends for his apparent discourtesy. He started for Brindaban, and on his arrival there, when he went to see Nabhaji, he found himself in the midst of a feast which the latter had arranged for the *sadhus*. Tulsidas, though uninvited, also sat amongst the guests. Nabhaji took no notice of him and perhaps as a result of his indifference, when *khir* was being served Tulsi had no cup in which to hold his share of it. But he was up to the occasion. He picked up the shoe of a brother-guest and said that it was a fitting vessel for him to receive the *khir* and eat from it. Nabhaji's heart was touched by Tulsi's humility and devotion, and he at once went to him and embraced him with great affection. A beautiful verse in Tulsi's *Dohavali* gives expression to the same sentiment, though we cannot say that it was written in memory of this incident. It is as follows :

*Āp āpune te adhik, jehi priya Sitaram*  
*Tehi ke paga ki pānahi, tulasi tan ki chām*  
'He who loves Sita and Ram more than "me and mine", the skin of Tulsi's body will serve as a shoe for his feet.'

Though Nabhadās does not mention the above meeting with Tulsi in his writings, yet in his book *Bhakta Mala* he has written a few verses in praise of him as follows :

*Kali kuntala jiva nistāra hita vālmiki  
 tulasi bhayo  
 Tretā kāvya nibandha kari sata koti  
 Rāmāyan  
 Ika achchhar uchchare brahma hatyādi  
 parāyan  
 Aba bhaktana sukha dena bahuri vapu  
 dhari lila vistāri  
 Rāma charana rasa matta rahata āhinisi  
 vrata dhāri.*

'For the liberation of the wicked creatures of Kali Valmiki became Tulsi, and described anew the indestructible *Ramayana*, the poem of the Treta Age, the utterance of one word of which washes away the great sin of the killing of Brahmanas and the like; now to bring happiness to the devotees he is reborn and is again showing his *lila* and day and night he remains steeped in the sweetness of Ram's feet.'

As the contact of Tulsidas with Mirabai has been dealt with in a previous article (*Prabuddha Bharata*, January 1949), we shall not go into it again except to remind the readers of the letters that these two great saints exchanged between themselves. Beni Madho Das says that this event took place in Samvat 1598 (1541 A.D.).

When the poetic talent of Tulsi first found expression he would compose verses in Sanskrit during the day but would completely forget them overnight. This went on for a week. On the eighth day Tulsi saw Siva and Parvati in a dream in which the former said to him, 'Do not try to write verse in Sanskrit; one should not imitate others without thinking. Go to Ayodhya and write poetry in your own spoken language. Through my blessings it will be as fruitful as the *Sama Veda*.' Though very much surprised, Tulsidas obeyed the command and went to Ayodhya. After some-time in the Samvat year 1631 (1574 A.D.) on the *Ram Navami* day Tulsi commenced the famous *Ramcharit Manas*. We wish specially to point out to our readers that according to Beni Madho Das he was at this time seventy seven years in age. To all those who labour

and struggle without apparent success it is heartening to note that conquest and achievement may come even in the evening of their lives, as it came to Tulsidas. In Samvat 1633 (1576 A.D.) in the month of Margashirsha, on a Tuesday, during the bright fortnight, it was the anniversary of Ram and Sita's wedding and on this auspicious day after two years, seven months and twenty-six days Tulsi completed the *Ramcharit Manas*. The first person to hear of this book was a renowned *sadhu* of Mithila called Sri Rugarun Swami who had cultivated the attitude of Raja Janak and who looked upon Ram as his son-in-law. After this Tulsi returned to Kashi.

In Kashi Tulsidas first recited the poem in the Viswanath temple. At night the book was left near the image of Sri Viswanath and in the morning when the temple was opened in the presence of a large number of holy and learned men they found *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* written on the book with the signature of Lord Siva Himself. In fact these appreciative words were not only written but they were heard to echo and re-echo within the temple walls. The spectators—perhaps comprising the audience of the previous day's recital—were duly impressed. And in this ancient city of Kashi, which had been the seat of Sanskrit learning and stronghold of orthodoxy since the dawn of history, this news spread like wild fire. The intellectuals raised a storm of opposition. The Divine *lila* should be sung in no language other than the language of the gods, *deva bhasha*, and that was Sanskrit. The great mystery of the descent of the Supreme Godhead could not be thus desecrated, they said in pious horror. The persecution of Tulsidas that followed proves how strongly ingrained was the language prejudice, but befitting his role as a great teacher, and in refreshing contrast, is this great quality of vision and imagination that he showed by striking out a new path for himself in the choice of the language of the common people.

Already the Mughals were well established

in India and the influence of the rulers was undermining the idealism and tradition of the country. It is no exaggeration to say that Tulsi's *Ramcharit Manas* proved to be a great force in preventing the disintegration of the *Sanatana Dharma* and helped in giving back to the people confidence in themselves and faith in their own culture. The book proved to be an immediate success, and since then it has been enshrined in the heart of the common man. In all Hindi-speaking provinces its popularity is undisputed. Though in the palaces of the rich it might prove to be one of the diversions of life, but in the cottage of the poor where life goes on in the usual rut it is a source of endless joy. Through constant repetition many of its lines and phrases have become well-known quotations, and the influence of this book on the life and thought of the people cannot be over-estimated. Often at dusk in the village, after a hard day's labour and a frugal meal, when the old and the young are assembled together to hear the recital of this most wonderful poem, they are so completely transported into the Ayodhya of Ram that at his banishment the song breaks down. The gathering silence becomes pregnant with deep emotion, and through the rustling of the *neem* leaves and the wailing cry of the jackal in the distance are heard the quiet sobs of the heart-broken people for the sorrow that befell Ayodhya at the departure of Ram to the forest.

But a narrowness of heart and a spiritual arrogance had completely blinded the pandits to the greatness of the book, and they were so enraged at its increasing popularity that they decided to get rid of it by shady and unscrupulous means. They engaged two professional thieves to steal it hoping to destroy it altogether. When the thieves tried to enter Tulsidas's hut at night they found two young boys of fair and dark complexion walking up and down with bow and arrow in hand guarding the entrance of the hut. Observing them thus vigilant the whole night, the mind of the thieves was purified. The next morning they

made a confession of their intentions to Tulsidas and inquired who were his night watchmen. On hearing what they had seen Tulsidas shed tears of joy and distributed all his possessions to the poor; he congratulated the thieves on having had a vision of Ram and Lakshman, and they also repented, fell at his feet and reformed their lives. This incident has been related by Sir George Grierson, the well-known Orientalist, and Priyadas, a disciple of Nabhadass, has also mentioned it in his commentary on the *Bhakta Mala*.

It is also said that Tulsi once brought a dead man to life. This news travelled to the court of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, who sent for Tulsi and asked him to perform a miracle in his presence. Tulsi said he knew nothing except the name of Ram, but Jahangir was annoyed and he imprisoned him and said Tulsidas would not be set free until he proved his supernatural powers. Tulsi then prayed to Hanuman, who appeared with a great army of monkeys and caused great havoc in the royal fort. The Emperor was alarmed and asked Tulsi to have them removed. Tulsi once again prayed to Hanuman which calmed the monkeys but he requested the Emperor that as the monkeys had occupied the fort they should be allowed to live in it and he should build a new fort for himself. Describing the incident Priyadas says that henceforth the fort remained deserted. When Shah Jahan succeeded Jahangir, he built a new town in Delhi called Shahjahanabad and with it a new fort, which lends a certain amount of colour to this incident.

In Brindaban some one criticizing Tulsi's devotion to Ram said that Sri Krishna was a perfect Incarnation of God, whereas Ram was only a partial one, in which case he wanted to know why Tulsi did not worship Krishna instead of Ram. To this he replied, 'My mind was attracted to the enchanting form of Dasaratha's son. It is only now that I have come to know that he is even a partial Incarnation of God.' In this reply he tries to show that the true devotee does not love God



because he is great and good, but simply because he cannot help loving Him. The highest devotion knows no barter, seeks no gain, and loves for the sake of love only. This kind of love he has described in the *Dohavali* through the imagery of the *chatak* bird. The two following verses are quoted as illustration :

*Upala barashi garajata tarāji, dārātā  
kulisa kathor*

*Chitava ki chātak megh taji, kabahu  
dusari or*

'The clouds thunder in anger, rain stones, and allow hard lightning to fall. But the *chatak* does not look up to anyone but the rain cloud.'

*Sunu re Tulasidās, pyās papihahi prem ki  
Parihari chāriu masa, jo anchavai jala  
swāti ko*

'Listen O Tulsidas, the *chatak* is thirsty for love only ; so he gives up the (abundant) water of the monsoon, and drinks only if it rains when the *Swati* star appears.'

In Brindaban Tulsidas once accompanied Nabhadas to the temple of Madan Mohan. There he addressed the image in the following words :

*Kahā kahāun chhayi āpaki, bhale bane  
ho nāth*

*Tulasi mastaka jāb navai, dhanush  
bāna lau hath*

'O Lord, how shall I describe your beauty, you look so adorable ; but Tulsī's forehead will bend only when you take the bow and arrow in hand.'

It is popularly said that owing to the intense devotion of Tulsī the image changed from that of Sri Krishna into that of Ram with bow and arrow in hand as desired by Tulsī.

Another great man of those times whom Tulsidas met was Nanda Das the well-known poet of Brindaban and the author of *Rāsa Panchādhyāyi*. Beni Madho Das says he was a *gurubhai* of Tulsidas. Incidentally this poem confirms most of the incidents in the life of Tulsidas which have been related by Beni Madho Das.

*Srimattulasi dāsa svaguru-bhrātā pada  
vande*

*Sesha sanātana vipula jnāna jina pāyi  
ānande*

*Rāmacharita jina kinha tapatraya kāli-  
mala-hāri*

*Kari pothi para sahi ādareu āpa purāri  
Rākhi jinaki teka madana mohana dhanu-  
dhāri*

*Vālmiki avatāra kahata jehi santa prachāri  
Nandadāsa ke hridaya-nayana ki kholeo  
soyi*

*Ujvala rasa tapakāya diyo jānata saba  
koyi*

'I touch the feet of Srimat Tulsī my brother-disciple who is the joyful recipient of great knowledge from Sesa Sanatana, who has written the life of Rama which destroys the three miseries of the world and the impurities of *Kali*, whom Siva Himself gave glory by signing on his book, whose prayer Madan Mohan granted by accepting the bow and arrow, whom the holy ones declare to be an incarnation of Valmiki. He has given inner vision to Nandadas, and has poured purity in his heart as everyone knows.'

The well-known minister of Akbar called Nawab Abdur Rahim Khankhana was a great friend of Tulsī. The following verse is ascribed to him :

*Rāmacharita mānasa vimala, santānā  
jivan pran*

*Hinduāna ko veda sama, jamanahin  
pragata kuran*

'The pure *Ramcharit Manas* is the giver of life to the holy ones ; It is like *Veda* to the Hindus and like the *Quoran* itself to the Muslims.'

Madhusudan Saraswati, a follower of Sri Shankaracharya and a well-known scholar, was asked to give his opinion on the *Ramcharit Manas* by the pandits of Kashi who were envious of Tulsidas' reputation. He was delighted to read the *Ramcharit Manas* and wrote the following couplet in appreciation :

*Ānandakānane hyasminjangamastulasi  
taruh*

*Kavitā manjari bhāti Rāma-bhramara-  
bhushitā*

'In Kashi—the forest of joy—Tulsi is a walking Tulasi plant. His poetic blossom is full of beauty on which the bee of Rama is ever humming.'

Amongst the tributes paid to Tulsi by his contemporaries it would not be out of place to mention an appreciation of a modern English writer of the early twentieth century. In an article entitled *Tulsidas, Poet and Religious Reformer* Sir George Grierson writes : 'It would be a great mistake to look upon Tulsidas as merely an ascetic. He was a man that had lived. He had been a house-holder and had known the pleasures of a wedded life, the joy of clasping an infant son to his bosom, the sorrow of losing that son ere he attained his prime. He appealed not to scholars, but to his native countrymen as a whole—the people that he knew. He had mixed with them, begged from them, prayed with them, taught them, experienced their pleasures and their yearnings. He had wandered far and wide, and had contracted intimate friendships with the greatest men of his time—men like Man Singh of Amber, Todar Mall, Akbar's Finance Minister, and Abdurrahim Khankhana. No wonder that such a man who was at the same time a great poet and an enthusiastic reformer, at once sane and clean, was taken for their own by the multitude who lived under the sway of nature and in daily contact with her secrets, with flowers and trees, with beasts and birds, and with hunger and thirst. "Here" they cried, "is a great soul that knows us. Let us take him for our guide."'

During the reign of Jahangir (Samvat 1662-1684) Panjab was in the grip of a deadly plague for many years. It also spread to Agra and it took eight years to eradicate it. In the *Kavitavali* Tulsidas says :

*Bisin Viswanath ki visāda bado vārānasi  
Bujhiye na aisi gati sankara sahara ki*

'In the Bisi of Viswanath a great sorrow has shadowed the town of Kashi. The miserable

condition of the city of Shankara cannot be described.'

Babu Shyam Sundar Das in his *Life of Tulsidas* says that according to astrological calculations the Rudra Bisi referred to above fell between Samvat 1665-1685. We infer from this that the plague had also spread to Kashi. In subsequent verses Tulsidas has described the suffering caused by the plague and has prayed to mother Annapurna and Hanuman to free the town from this fatal epidemic. From the last verses of *Hanuman Bahuk* quoted at great length by Babu Shyam Sundar Das it is clear that Tulsidas himself had a severe attack of plague from which he almost died. Pain set in his arms, then a gland appeared with fever, and pain spread over his whole body and became unbearable. Medicine and prayer were of no avail. Tulsidas prayed to Hanuman and said, 'There is pain in the leg, pain in the stomach, arm and face, the body is weak through age and full of pain.' And having lost heart in the end he said, 'What I have sown I must reap.' However, it seems that after a long and painful illness Tulsidas recovered ultimately, but he was weak and in the Samvat year 1680 (1623 A. D.) at the age of 127 (according to Beni Madho Das) he cast off his old and ailing body, and having had his full share of the joys and sorrows of the world his spirit soared at the feet of his beloved master Ram. Tradition ascribes the following last verse to him :

*Rāma nāma jasa barani kai, bhayau  
chahata aba maun*

*Tulasi ke mukha dijiye, aba hi tulasi saun.*  
'Having described the glory of the name of Rama I am about to be silent. Tulasi leaf and gold will soon be put in the mouth of Tulsi.'

Beni Madho Das described the time of his death thus :

*Samvat soraha sau asi, asi ganga ke tir  
Shrāvana shyāmā tija shani, Tulasi tajyo  
sharir.*

'In the Samvat 1680, on the banks of the Asi-Ganga (Kashi), in the month of Shravana.

Saturday, the third day of the dark fortnight, Tulsi gave up his body.'

We do not know how many hearts Tulsi left desolate and how many people mourned his death but we do know that 'our own heart trembles like a leaf' (*Pipara pāta sarisa mana dolā*) in the wind at the sudden darkness that must have descended upon the earth at the departure of this gentle and loving saint from our physical and material world into the realm of the spirit. As we think of him we cannot help but being reminded of the great gulf that separates his life from ours ; in deep anguish at our inability to follow in his footsteps we can only cry out from the depths of our hearts in the inimitable words of his own song in which he not only describes an ideal for us to follow, but seems also to state his own mode of life in simple and appealing language :

*Kabahunka haun yahi rahani rahaungo*

*Sri Raghunātha-kripāla-kripā ten santa-subhāva gahaungo.*

*Jatha lābha santosha sadā, kāhun saun kachu na chahaungo,*

*Para-hita-nirata-nirantara, mana karma vachanā nema nibahaungo*

*Parusha vachana ati dusaha shravāna suni tehi pāvaka na dahaungo*

*Vigata māna, sama sitāla mana para-guna nahin dosha kahaungo*

*Parihari deha-janita chintā, dukha-sukha samabuddhi sahaungo*

*Tulasidāsa prabhu yahi patha rahi, avichala hari-bhagati lahaungo.*

'When will I live this way of life ! When through the compassion of Shri Raghunath, the Compassionate, I will imbibe the traits of the holy ones. Contented with what I get I shall not expect anything from anyone ; ever intent on doing good to others, I will fulfil this vow with mind, word, and deed ; hearing harsh and unbearable words I shall not burn in the fire (of anger). Without arrogance and with cool and unattached mind, I shall not look upon the virtues of others as faults ; giving up all anxiety for physical well-being, I will accept pleasure and pain with equanimity ; O Lord, thus walking on this path I will gain devotion to Thee.' (*Vinaya Patrika*)

(Concluded)

## VEDANTA—A PHILOSOPHY OF WORLD-UNDERSTANDING

BY PRABASJIVAN CHAUDHURY

The world today needs a philosophy comprehensive enough to include and reconcile from a higher standpoint the various conflicting philosophies with their diverse ideologies. This has been well-recognized in the second Inter-American Congress of Philosophy (held at Columbia University, New York City, in December 1947) where Cornelius Kruse (the Chairman) said, 'Particularistic philosophies no doubt effectively unite a given group, but they disintegrate the world. The task before philosophy and before us, its bearers and ministers, is to discover if possible whether we

can cooperatively find a philosophy, or at least a philosophy in the making, that would unify the world.' In the present paper an attempt is made to construct the outlines of such an ideal philosophy, which, it will be evident, does not essentially differ from Vedanta.

Let us start from what we think the least philosophical but the most influential of the world philosophies, namely, logical positivism, which is ruling the scientists and other tough-minded classes of men. The logical positivists are empiricists believing only in sense-data and logic and holding metaphysics to be an

idle speculation. They believe in positive science with its concepts having explicit and verifiable reference to sense-data and condemn self, substance, causality, etc. as pseudo-concepts having no factual content or verifiable meaning. Science is to them the only knowledge possible and it is but the sense-data systematized by logic (which includes mathematics). This logic too is but a set of conventions as to how to combine the data. And there may be many alternative logics leading to alternative systems out of which the simplest and the most inclusive is to be chosen as the true till a simpler and a more inclusive one is found. Thus there is no absolute truth, the criterion of truth being coherence and simplicity.

Now this philosophy, according to our view-point, is at the first stage of philosophical consciousness in which sense-experience alone is accepted as the ground and content of reality and discursive understanding as supplying some formal rules to order the mass of sense-experience. The formal part is held incidental and not essential to reality. But this outlook is incomplete. For it leaves many loose-ends or unanswered problems: (1) Why is this stream of sense-data and why are these logical forms to hold them together? (2) Why are there stability and uniformity in the sense-data and the same in the understanding that orders them into stable and uniform schemes? The first question leads to the problem of the source of sense-data (which itself cannot be a sense-data) and to the source of logical activity (which itself must be beyond logic). The former source is what is called matter or substance and the latter is mind. Both are metaphysical entities in the sense that they transcend sense-experience and logic. The first question thus leads to the metaphysical question of mind and matter and their relation. The second question leads to the problem of the categories such as substance and causality on the one hand and to that of an identical mind or consciousness on the other. These are

presupposed by any account of positive science and a positivistic philosophy. Thus logical positivism logically leads to metaphysics which it forbids. It is, therefore, a partial philosophy that attains a certain degree of neatness and simplicity by limiting philosophical discourse. We cannot, however, rest satisfied with a fragmentary philosophy (which necessarily breeds a particularistic ideology) but must go ahead with the problems that issue from it.

So we plunge ourselves into the metaphysical problem of mind, matter, and causality. Looked at from the first stage of philosophical awareness discussed before these are but hypothetical constructs of imagination having no basis in experience and are gratuitous; the description of experience in terms of verifiable concepts and laws is warrantable knowledge, the search for some underlying core or substratum of experience is chimerical and useless. But from a second stage of philosophical awareness this search is natural, and mind, matter, and causality are not imaginative constructs but are ontological entities intuited by rational insight and, so, not less veridical than sense-data. These are not *a priori* and analytical like logical laws but are *a posteriori* and synthetic. And, so, they are like scientific laws which are necessary not in the logical sense in which any violation is inconceivable but in an empirical sense in which any violation is a miracle, or a freak of nature is not impossible in itself. Thus causality is an objective characteristic of reality and not a subjective rule for ordering our experience. As regards mind and matter they are the substances underlying the knowing activity (with its logical and mathematical rules and calculations) and the knowable objects respectively. The question of their relation leads us to the two rival philosophies, realism and idealism. The former holds the objects as independent of the mind while the latter holds them dependent on the mind. (Pragmatism and Marxism are respectively idealistic and realistic.) The solution of this

age-old controversy can be found thus. On the empirical level of philosophical awareness (our second stage) the objects are certainly independent of the mind which knows not itself but some thing 'other' than itself. Shankara has urged against the Buddhist subjective idealists (*Vijnanavadins*) his own empirical realism that fire cannot burn itself and the 'otherness' in objects known is given and cannot be explained away. Kant, too, was an empirical idealist (see his 'Refutation of Idealism' in his *Critique of Pure Reason*). If the object is what the mind make it, how is it that we cannot see whatever we wish, for instance, cannot see a bird when faced with a tiger in a forest. So that at the stage of empirical knowledge we have to admit realism. But then we have also to answer some cognate questions. How is it that the mind knows an object which is other than itself? What is their relation in knowledge and in reality? These questions cannot be answered on the second stage of philosophical awareness we are so far dealing with. But that these questions are at all asked shows that there is a third stage of awareness implicit in the second. From the third stage one can view both mind and matter and grasp their relation. For this stage is a higher one transcending the duality of those relatively empirical entities of a lower grade of reality (*Lower grade because explainable from and founded on a higher standpoint*).

In this third stage both mind and matter are realized as bifurcated branches stemming from the Self which is one Self-identical consciousness, free and full of play (*lila*). The figure of the tree is rather crude because mind-matter and the Self are in different planes of reality. The mind is the subjective attitude of the Self while matter is its objective or self-projecting attitude when empirical knowledge occurs. Just as the empirical mind can create dream objects so can the Self create empirically real objects of the waking consciousness. But the Self is only playing or dreaming while adopting these attitudes, so that there is no causal

nexus or any continued identity between the Self and mind-matter. Thus it is that though a transcendental type of idealism asserting the ultimate identity of mind and matter is acceptable, it is confounding matters to argue for an empirical idealism holding objects of empirical knowledge (tables, chairs) to be but ideas or mental stuff. Transcendentally speaking they are one and the same but then they are not even seen as different and real. Empirically speaking they are real and different and not seen as identical. Shankara insists that one has no right to declare the world as *maya* unless and until he has realized it as such by realizing his Self as Brahman. The dream is real while one is dreaming and it is a dream only when he has awakened. However, since the waking experience is relatively more stable and on its basis the dream experience is explainable, it is a higher grade of reality. Similarly the Self is the higher reality relatively to mind (the knowing self) and matter (the knowable self). The *Upanishads* tell us to see the Self as real and nothing else, no differences, which are but names and forms, *maya*. The Self is the Brahman, the highest reality which is indescribable by any known predicate for each represents a lower grade reality. The Self or Brahman, therefore, is describable only as 'not this, not this' (*neti, neti*).

We have thus tried to show how proceeding logically from the least speculative philosophy of our time (logical positivism), and finding its limitations and implications, we reach the two fundamental rival philosophies (idealism and realism), and from them to our ideal all-inclusive philosophy. This philosophy can point out from a higher standpoint the relative merits and limitations of each partial system, its relative truth and error. Our ideal comprehensive philosophy with its broad outlook will find a rightful place for each of the ideologies associated with a particularistic system of philosophy and will explicate its limited scope and validity, that is, relative worth.

Implicit in our method is the faith in grades of reality corresponding to levels of philosophical consciousness, the highest level being identical with that of Self-realization and salvation. Again, we have assumed that philosophy is not airy speculation, rather it is nothing if not intuitively grounded; the so-called principles and categories of philosophy must be directly perceived before being asserted. This means philosophy is not discursive or imaginative wandering within the limited field of our ordinary vision provided by our ordinary faculties; instead it is a call to our higher faculties latent in us, a demand to see for ourselves reality as it is in place of conjecturing about it from a distance with narrow mental capacities. To know Brahman we have to become Brahman, say the *Upanishads*. Philosophy is thus not merely an intellectual discipline but also, and essentially, a spiritual discipline, *yoga*. No philosophical truth can ever be attained through mere intellectual arguments based on sense-data, there will be but a multiplication of rival theories, polemics, opinions, and mere verbal quibbles. Nothing is true unless it is experienced and philosophical truths, just like ordinary factual ones, must be experienced. The only difference is that while the latter kind is given to the senses, the former is given to higher

faculties. So that the logical positivists are right in their principle of appealing to experience, only their idea of experience is limited to sense-experience. Now to attain the highest philosophical truth, the Self, one has to transcend his empirical mind and the objectivity of empirical reality and has to realize the spontaneity of the Self that is his real essence which is also the essence of all things. Therefore, to attain an all-comprehensive philosophy which will unite the world the philosophers have to adopt a spiritual discipline of the type of *yoga*. It is a serious error and limitation on the part of West philosophers to think that such a great truth as an all-inclusive harmonious philosophical ultimate wisdom uniting mankind, is merely an intellectual feat, as if it is finding a suitable formula to fit a certain series of facts. We cannot get a real solution of our problem so easily, a remedy for our fundamental social ills so cheaply. We have to change ourselves, develop and reform, in order to gain the ultimate truth, and yet, paradoxically, after passing through all these changes we will but discover ourselves, our real Self, the truth of our being and of all things. 'That Thou Art' and 'Knowing that you know everything', say the *Upanishads*.

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## THE MARCH OF HISTORY (IV)

BY P. S. NAIDU

(Continued from the October issue)

### XVII. GERMANY AND MILITARISM

Among all the European nations that have continued to stay on at the concrete sentiment level or have tended to move down to a lower level, I shall take up Germany and Russia for special consideration. The former is the God on earth of our triadic dialectician, and the latter is the heir-apparent to the greater

disciple of the great dialectician, who succeeded in destroying whatever that was noble and spiritual in his master's thought. The loftiest expression of Germanic culture is *militarism*. It is the concrete sentiment wherein the fiercest type of self-assertion is wedded to crude acquisitiveness to produce intolerant egotism and ruthless brutality. Let me quote

from an article which I published in one of the Madras papers at a time when Germany was marching triumphantly into Russia and many fondly hoped that she would emerge out of the world conflagration as the only mighty power. 'A careful study of the national characteristics of the Germans brings out the fact that *depth* is the outstanding feature of their racial mind. This depth has been reached at the cost of breadth. We know that the Germans excel in science. Precision instruments are obtainable only from Germany. The net result of the over-development of one aspect of the German mind at the cost of others is that when nature demands the satisfaction of the numerous impulses that she has implanted in all of us, the Germans, unable to meet the demand, fly into hysterics and regress to a primitive childish level of obstinacy, cruelty, and brutality. That delicate sense of balance, that golden mean between over-indulgence and impotence which the democratic nations have achieved, is an eye-sore to Germany and a constant irritant of her envy.

'One of the most fruitful devices for getting at the deep-seated motives to a nation's cultural organization is the analysis of its myths and folklore. These legends and tales of fancy are the crystallized dreams of the racial mind, and psycho-analysis has taught us how to interpret them with a view to get at the real motives hidden in them. The Nibelungen legends are the typical folk-tales of the Germans, and in them we find nothing but unrelieved savagery, gloom, and despair. The delight in mere physical prowess, idolization of war, the hacking of Balder, and the cult of Valhalla, dearly beloved of the Teutonic mind, these are but the outward manifestations of the sadistic impulse generated in the German mind by the primitive unsatisfied longings belonging to the lowest level of culture.

'It is a remarkable fact that Germany lacks humorous literature of the better type. The German mind can create a *Faust*, but not *Punch*. And the racial mind of the Teuton

seems to indulge in unholy glee at this very failing which is really an index of cultural degeneration. In the early stages of the second World War one of the German papers gleefully printed in bold letters, "The English should know by now that the Germans never joke." Yes, not only the English but the whole cultured world knows now that for a German even to see, let alone make, a joke it must be about as long as it is broad. Hitler, the ex-Kaiser, Bismarck away back into the dark record—you will find nothing but a procession of mirthless braggarts ruling over dreary robots. The ability to laugh not only at others but at one's own failings is one of the rarest gifts of nature. It can operate only in a well-balanced mind wherein the natural impulses are under proper control. The ill-balanced and hysterical mind of Germany is incapable of developing this sense of humour.

'Since the year 1939 I have been making a careful psychological study of the racial mind of contemporary Germany, and I find that totalitarian Germany is the clearest example of psychic regression. It is a notable fact that man hates not only those who cross his path when he is engaged in the pursuit of his natural goals, but also those who possess and enjoy the objects which he desires keenly, but has not the capacity to secure for himself. Herein lies the secret of the senseless hatred of Germany for the Jew and the democratic nations. Three things occupy the focus of passionate desire in the German mind, land, money, and woman. The German is intensely lustful, but impotent; the German greed for land knows no bounds, but the German is powerless to acquire and keep that land; the German avarice for wealth is enormous, but the capacity for satisfying this inordinate desire is not there. Irritated by failure and cowed down by frustration, the German tries to pour the phials of his wrath on the Jew and the democratic nations who have had the good luck to get and enjoy these objects. It is impotence, physical and psychical,—psychical more than physical—that is the

root-cause of the hysterical behaviour of modern Germany.'

We may sum up, then, the unconscious motives to German brutality in the one word impotence. This impotence operating from the hidden depths of the German racial mind urges the Teuton on to two types of behaviour. One of these leads to compensatory achievement in fields where other nations have not excelled, and the other to destruction of peoples who have succeeded in just those fields where success is desired passionately, but is unattainable. The first is the fountainhead of German militarism, while the second is responsible for the second world war. Lust and greed, the concrete sentiments organized round sex and acquisitiveness, and the impotence to satisfy these fiery passions, are the keynotes to the understanding of the neurotic behaviour of Germany today. German culture should serve as a grave warning to the rest of the world, and to the Asiatics in particular, who seem to be enamoured of the self-regarding sentiment which is the undoing of the West.

### XVIII. RUSSIA : AN EXAMPLE OF PSYCHIC REGRESSION

After totalitarian Germany, totalitarian Russia. Russian culture, too, is a notable example of psychological regression. I have used this word *regression* so often in the last few paragraphs that a word of explanation seems to be called for here. We have seen how the powerful impulses of the primitive level are steadily organized, and raised to the higher level of sentiments. These cultured sentiments demand constant vigilance and effort, not only to lift them higher but also to prevent them from sinking down to the lower stages of animality and brutality. Often they do sink down giving rise to neurotic troubles of various kinds and degrees. And in a few cases the sinking is so deep that sub-human levels of primitive animality are reached. The plurality of instincts with which we start our life on earth have passed through a long course of evolution. They have all

arisen through gradual differentiation from the primeval instinctual matrix, the *elan vital*. Psycho-analysis has made a special study of these sub-human levels operating between the elemental life-urge and the instincts with which all of us start our lives. When the mind of a cultured person or of a cultured race occupying a high sentiment level begins to disintegrate, then it sinks or regresses first to the instinctual level, and then to the sub-human depths. It is then that various types of insanity ranging from mild nervousness to the severest form of lunacy are generated. Regression, then, is the psychological process of mental degeneration by which both the individual and the racial or group-mind are dragged from civilized levels, first to the lowest conceivable human level, and then to sub-human animal level resulting in the loss of sanity in the case of individuals, and in the loss of cultural achievements in the case of nations. German culture, as we have noted just now, is an example of extremely morbid insanity. Russian culture too is an example of regression, but of a milder type. Just now it is in the borderland between the normal and the abnormal, wherein it is rather difficult for the ordinary man to detect any symptoms of insanity, but any day it may sink lower and share the fate of Germany.

These remarks about the sorry state of Russian culture will provoke, I am sure, the most hostile reactions in the minds of many of my friends engaged in psychological studies. Not long ago I was inclined to rate very high indeed the new civilization of Soviet Russia. I was impressed by the contributions of Russia to literature, to art, and to science. The saintly figure of Tolstoy, the charming personality of Madam Pavlova, and above all the genius of Ivan Pavlov caught my imagination and made me see in modern Russian group-culture an attempt to rise above the concrete to the abstract level. But I was sadly disappointed. The new economic doctrine of the Soviet is uninfluenced by the fine personalities mentioned above. I find



that in Communistic culture collective greed has taken the place of individual greed. As a recent writer on Communistic economics rightly points out, 'Communistic ideals can be realized only by stimulating the collective selfishness of the working class and its collective hatred of the property-owning class.' Can one ever get to a superior state of society based on cooperation, love and spirituality by appealing to collective selfishness and collective greed and collective hatred? The Communist has thoroughly misunderstood the structure and function of the human mind. He believes that the end of the good life is constant titillation of the sense organs. Instead of guiding the fierce sex, food-seeking, combative, acquisitive, and other animal propensities in man towards Para-Brahman, the Communist arrests the growth of human personality at the low level of concrete sentiments and allows it to regress to neurotic depths.

There is one invaluable act of service which Communism could have rendered, had it been inspired by spiritual ideals, and that is the annihilation of the acquisitive instinct. Whereas many of the other propensities may be ennobled, or spiritualized, or at least sublimated, this one, which has more of animality in it than even sex, resists all the finer influences of higher culture. So, it must be rooted out of the human mind and completely destroyed. The destruction of the sense of proprietary right over things and persons is the first condition of progress towards spiritual freedom. Communism could have achieved this freedom had it worked for the annihilation of the acquisitive propensity. Instead, it has only succeeded in stimulating the dread propensity of possessiveness under the cloak of abolishing private property. The worker or labourer is called upon to give up what little he has in order that he may enjoy a bigger share in what his neighbour has. Nationalization of land or the tools of production only means that every one is invited to enjoy what every one else has or is capable of producing and to have one's own acquisitive propensity

stimulated as often and as fiercely as one may desire. Communistic culture, therefore, is, in the true psychological sense, worse than other types of European culture. With his contempt for religion, his aversion for philosophy, and his impatience at healthy moral restraints, the Communist is pushing his nation down steadily to neurotic levels.

Recently, most damaging and at the same time most revealing charges have been brought against contemporary Russia by thinkers of outstanding merit. Bertrand Russell levels against Soviet Russia the charge of reverting to aggressive imperialism. Let me digress for a moment and draw your attention to the abolition of the Comintern. This master-stroke of diplomacy is not so innocent as it appears at first-sight. The Comintern is the bond maintaining the international character of the worker's organizations in Russia. Its abolition is the first step towards regression to narrow nationalism. The incident is in fact an indication of deep-seated collective selfishness, separativism, and collective greed in the Russian mind. Let me now quote Prof. Russell. 'I know' says the learned Professor, 'that many people deny altogether that the Soviet Government is imperialistic. They say that imperialism is an outcome of private capitalism, and since private capitalism has been abolished in Russia, there cannot be imperialism in that country. This argument is scholastic and *a priori*; the facts refute it. Russia has annexed Eastern Poland, and the Baltic provinces, has established subservient governments in Poland, Bulgaria, and Rumania, and is demanding Port Arthur, and half a share of the Chinese Eastern Railway. If this is not imperialism, what is it?

'This is not the end of Russia's ambitions. Ancient designs against Turkey and Persia are being revived. There are reasons for suspicion as to Russia's intentions in Eastern Germany', and I should add India is not beyond the pale of Russia's sinister intentions. Louis Fischer is much more outspoken than Prof. Russell. In a carefully written article

of very recent date this famous writer shows that grabbing of territories in Asia and Europe, forcible economic exploitation of the territories thus acquired by unholy means, opportunism and aggressiveness, the discarding of the sham cloak of internationalism and the shameless display of arrant nationalism are the motive forces in Russia's foreign policy. In the absence of the healthy checks which operate in democracy, Russia is steadily degenerating to primitive levels. This regression is specially noticeable in recent Russian literature and Russian art. The man of letters and the artist are forced to play to the gallery. Any attempt on their part to lift the masses above the level of vulgarity is immediately condemned as bourgeois. Nothing better, however, may be expected of a nation inspired by the earthy ideology of Marx, which in its turn draws its inspiration from anti-spiritual elements in the Hegelian dialectic. Of the noble, inspiring, and uplifting spiritual ideals we find no trace in Soviet art.

In spite of certain outstanding differences between them, the Communist and the Fascist are really first cousins. The cultures of Germany, Italy, Russia, and Japan are unmistakable examples of regression, and like all such regressions in the past they are bound to perish in the near future. Russia should take a warning, before it is too late, from the fate of Germany and Japan.

To me it is an event charged with deep psychological significance that the National Congress has decided to expel Communism from its fold. The Congress has evidently been inspired by political motives, but our leaders have, without being aware of it consciously, effected a cultural purge of our national mind. The cultural future of the world undoubtedly rests with us. Sooner or later we have to assume leadership of the world. And it is in the fitness of things that the Para-Brahman-regard of our group-mind should throw off the dead weight of regressive materialistic Communism to rise higher and become fit for world leadership.

## XIX. DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES AND INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

Among the Western peoples the democratic nations alone have risen above the concrete to the abstract sentiment level. The famous Kantian dictum that 'man is never to be treated as a means, but always as an end in himself', has received full support only in the democratic countries. The spirit of true liberty has flourished only inside democracy; the sanctity of personality and individuality has been cherished only by democratic countries. The literature and art, created by the gifted men and women of these countries, the social, commercial and governmental institutions organized by them, the philosophies which they have produced, and, above all, the dignified bearing of the humbler citizens of the democracies in their daily intercourse with their fellowmen bear evidence to the fact that the atmosphere of democracy is eminently suited to the development of the various mental powers in an equal measure and to the maintenance of a harmonious balance between them. Democracies aim at and excel in social virtues. We have noted that the German mind is oppressively scientific; the democratic mind on the other hand is delightfully shrewd and business-like. Above all, it is in its conception of the function of the *state* that democracy outshines other types of national organizations, and that conception was voiced forth in impressive terms by Jules Simon who, at the dawn of liberalism, proclaimed that *the state must labour to make itself unnecessary* and prepare the way for its own dismissal in proportion as the individual citizen realizes the full measure of his innate spirituality. That is the highest contribution which democracy has made to the unity of human civilization. I do not for a moment deny that democracies have fallen far short of their ideals and have blundered woefully in their dealings with the Asiatic and African peoples. That failure is the result of a deeper failure in their inner nature. The innate Western materialism of these nations is an ever-present menace to the full develop-

ment of their spirituality. Just now, the impact of Fascistic totalitarianism as well as Communistic totalitarianism is steadily extinguishing the fire of spirituality in them. The embers need to be fanned into a flame before they die out completely, and the breath that can blow on them and make the flaming tongue of spirituality leap out must come from the land which has hitched its hopes and ambitions and aspirations to Para-Brahman-regard. It is up to us, of this land, the inheritors of the purest type of Vedanta, to spiritualize democracy and make it fulfil its high destiny.

## XX. EGYPT AND IMMORTALITY

In our psycho-philosophical scale of values Egypt and China occupy a much higher place than all the countries of the West. The soul of Egyptian culture expresses itself in her struggle for spiritual immortality. The pyramids and the sphinx have been taken, quite legitimately, to the fullest outer expressions of the inner organization of the Egyptian group-mind. What do these ancient monuments represent? Scholars have puzzled their minds in vain over unnatural hypotheses bearing on these sacred structures. The pyramid is neither an astronomical edifice meant for taking observations, nor is it merely a tomb for the repose of the departed monarchs of the land. Paul Brunton has resolved the mystery of these colossal structures in his marvellous book *Search in Secret Egypt*. He, there, points out that the pyramid was built for the purpose of securing the very exacting environment demanded for the initiation ceremony—the *participation mystique*—in which the individual soul was made to realize its oneness with the divine soul. The Ancient Egyptians, too, had organized their sentiment values in much the same manner as the ancient Hindus of the upanishadic age. For both these mighty minds of old the supreme ideal in life was the realization, here and now, of the unity of the individual soul with the cosmic soul. Hence it is that we find the colossal pyramid and the Indian temple towering high over every

other monument and ending in an apex signifying the eternal aspiration of the self for union with the Godhead. The Sphinx too is not the puzzle-propounding monster, intent on devouring the unwary passersby, but the beneficent guardian-spirit welcoming the individual ripe for final initiation and keeping watch over the secret entrance to the participation chambers in the heart of the pyramid. I have not touched on the significant aspects of Egyptian art and architecture, and on the outstanding incidents in Egyptian history. But all of them point to the same passionate desire for immortality and for union with the Divine soul as the main spring of Egyptian culture. Truly may it be said that *tattvamasi* was the inspiring ideal of the culture that gave birth to sentiment values which were expressed outwardly in the colossal Egyptian pyramids on the one hand and the massive Indian temples on the other.

## XXI. CHINA AND ANCESTOR WORSHIP

China occupies in some senses a higher place in our scale of values, and in other respects a lower place, than Egypt. But in all respects she is superior to the Western nations. In regard to the organization of the lives of her sons and daughters on the political and social planes, China is superior to Egypt, but in matters touching the nature of pure spirit she seems to lag behind her African sister. The concept of the family, as we are aware, occupies a very peculiar place in Chinese life. It is not the concrete institution with quite real relationships subsisting between concrete individuals. It partakes more of the abstract, reaching out to post-mundane stages of ancestral existence, explicitly formulated in a definite cultural scheme. Hegel, in spite of his strong prejudice against Oriental cultures, is constrained to admit that 'the Chinese have a philosophy whose elementary principles are of great antiquity. The fundamental principle recognized is reason. They (the Chinese) believe that he who is acquainted with Reason possesses an instrument of universal power, which may be regarded as all-powerful, and

which confers supernatural might ; so that the possessor is enabled by it to exalt himself to heaven, and is not subject to death.' It is Lin Yutang, that strangely gifted Chinese writer, who combines in himself the best of what China and the West have to give to the world, who has coined a most attractive formula for Chinese culture. 'My formula for the Chinese national mind' says he, 'is  $R_4 I_1 H_3 S_3$  ; 4 grains of realism, 1 of idealism, 3 of humour and 3 of sensitivity.' And, in commenting on this formula, the Chinese scholar says, 'There are three religions of China, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, all magnificent systems in themselves, and yet robust common sense dilutes them all and reduces them all into the common problem of the pursuit of a happy human life. The mature Chinese is always a person who refuses to think too hard or to believe in any single idea or faith or school of philosophy wholeheartedly.' These observations of Lin Yutang are profoundly true, and that is the reason why I am inclined to rate ancient Chinese contribution to world culture slightly lower than the Egyptian. China is, however, bound to make a great contribution to the impending spiritual revival of Asiatic nations.

## XXII. INDIA AND PARA-BRAHMAN-REGARD

With China I have come, after many omissions, of course, to the end of my survey. India alone remains. Let me now sum up. I have taken you on a whirlwind tour, as it were, of the vast regions of world history. Sometimes I have taken you, hurricane-like, past mighty civilizations such as those of France, Spain, Arabia, America, and Australia, without permitting you to have even a passing glimpse of their contributions. At other times, I have halted for a while to let you see the high landmarks of national cultures. The beauty culture of Greece ; the genius for concrete organization, administration, and law of Rome ; the neurotic militarism of Germany ; the regressive acquisitiveness and collective

possessiveness and greed of the Soviet ; the fostering of individuality, of freedom and spirituality of democratic countries ; the struggle for immortality of Egypt ; and the ancestor-worship cult of the Chinese have all been noted, assessed, and given their due place in our scheme of cultural values. Each nation has something definite to contribute to the cultural unity of the world. Even those that are now set on the regressive path, such as Germany and Japan, have some elements of lasting value in their mental organization. Each nation has brought into existence some valuable sentiment scale. But those scales are in many instances quite antagonistic to one another. They are all governed, except in the case of the Asiatic nations, by self-regard. Now the most burning question of the present moment is how are these national cultures to be reconciled one with another and integrated in such a manner that each may make its most effective contribution to the final unity and peace of the human race. The psycho-philosophical formula framed by us shows how this result may be achieved. It has revealed to us the stages in the growth of the free, creative powers of the human mental structure, integrating the acquisitions of each level in turn, transcending them, and leading them finally to the divinely appointed goal of self-realization. Man is no longer to be viewed as a bundle of faculties. That was the fault of the nineteenth century psychology. Nor is human culture and its development to be interpreted in terms of dialectical logic, mechanistic biology, or positivistic sociology. That was the fault of Hegel, Spencer, and Comte. Man progresses by organizing himself first into social groups. Each such cultural group is an interlocked organization of individual feelings, thoughts, and actions, and all of them constitute a hierarchy from the lowest emotional level to the highest level of refined sentiments, and all of them are finally subordinate to the supreme master-sentiment of Para-Brahman-regard. Mankind have not reached this stage but are struggling at the next lower stage, groping

blindly towards final unity. Each nation has thought out its own contribution; and there must be a master-mind to think out the synthesis of all these contributions. It is here that India comes in as the resplendent queen of cultures and as the undisputed Empress in sole possession of that priceless cultural gem of purest ray serene, the Para-Brahman-regarding sentiment. It is our nation with its national mind fostered in the age-long tradition of the spirit of the highest Vedanta, it is our country with its car of progress hitched to Para-Brahman, it is we in this land of highest spirituality, it is we alone who can point the way to unity and peace.

It used to be, and perhaps is still in many quarters, the fashion to ridicule us as pessimists, unworldly, and far too absorbed in abstract philosophical speculations to be effective leaders of the world. I put it to these critics of small understanding, can a pessimistic nation create the marvellous beauty of Ajanta and Ellora? Do the frescoes of Sittannavasal and Tanjore recently brought to light betray any trace of emaciated and dry intellectualism? Could the luscious cadences and passionate melodies of Carnatic music be produced by a nation whose heart has dried up? Is *bharata natya* the cultural expression of abstract and soulless philosophy? Are our temples, pulsating with social life, the centres of dry abstractionism? Is the ultra-refinement of our ladies in regard to their exquisite drapery, ornamentation, coiffure, and toilet extending down to the minutest details of manicuring, the outward expression of a culture lacking in appreciation of sensuous beauty? I can go on multiplying my examples without end. I am afraid that the critic who is blind to the true significance of these manifestations of aesthetic refinement is himself devoid of the aesthetic sense.

The contemplation of these outward signs of refinement and of our achievements in the

exceedingly mundane realms of *artha* and *kama* should not result in a self-complacent tendency to pat ourselves on our back and to go to sleep on our ancient laurels. India is in a state of dangerous transition. The impact of Western culture, particularly of the near West, on our hoary heritage is rather unsettling. The Para-Brahman of Vedanta is sought to be displaced by the clay-footed gods imported from regions not far removed from our country. We must guard steadily against this ever-present danger to our national culture. Without losing our hold on Para-Brahman and without giving up our hard-won achievements in the literary, social, aesthetic, and moral realms, we have to assimilate the contributions of Western positive science and evolve a perfect unity of the spiritual and material elements in world culture. With a scale of sentiment values, wherein the various elements of lasting value in Western culture are fused harmoniously into a well-knit whole and are leavened and vivified by the spirit of the highest Vedanta, we shall be in a position to lead the whole world. But, we have got to assimilate this scale first; we have got to live it in our lives; and by our example infect the whole world with a passionate desire for realizing Para-Brahman. Para-Brahman-regard, then, is indicated as the goal of the historic process. The one increasing purpose running through the ages is none other than the ever-increasing realization of Para-Brahman in the cultural evolution of the human race. And the onerous responsibility of rousing up the slumbering spirituality of the world and of guiding the historic process aright rests on us, the citizens of this ancient land of eternal spirituality. That is the lesson that I have learnt from a philosophical study of the history of the world, and that is the conclusion that I wish to commend most earnestly to you for your serious consideration and acceptance.

(Concluded)

## JOSEPHINE MACLEOD OR TANTINE

On Friday 14 October 1949 Miss Josephine MacLeod, affectionately known as Tantine to the Ramakrishna brotherhood, passed away peacefully in Los Angeles, South California, USA. The following day the sad news was received at the Belurmath through a cable. She was nearly ninety when she died.

The death of Tantine removes an inspiring figure and an important landmark in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement. The loss will be widely felt and grieved. She meant so much to so many for so long.

We have not received, at the time of writing, details of her last days ; they will come in time and will doubtless make a glorious finale to her long life of purity, love, and dedication to the cause of Swami Vivekananda. They will form part of a fuller account of her life, her relations with Swamiji and his Order, her numerous services to India, which will be published in these pages in due time.

Miss J. MacLeod formed for long a most vivid link with Swami Vivekananda. Though she disclaimed formal discipleship, she was full of Swamiji all her life and consistently served his cause with remarkable loyalty and devotion. Friend or *guru*, Swamiji, from the day she first met him, filled her life in a way as nothing else did. Perhaps according to her ideas and the-ideas of her society, friendship means much more than *guruhood*, a relation of the most intimate character. This is what she says of her first meeting with Swamiji and what he meant to her since then. This quotation and the other are from her unpublished reminiscences of Swamiji, a document as inspiring as profound meditation, and which will be published in full next month. Says she :

'On the twentyninth of January, 1895, I went with my sister to 54 West 33rd Street, New York, and heard the Swami Vivekananda in his own sitting room where were assembled, fifteen or twenty ladies and two or three gentlemen. The room was crowded. All the arm

chairs were taken so I sat on the floor in the front row. Swami stood in the corner. He said something, the particular words of which I do not remember, but instantly to me that was truth, and the second sentence he spoke was truth and the third sentence was truth. And I listened to him for seven years and whatever he uttered was to me truth. From that moment life had a different import. It was as if he made you realize that you were in eternity. It never altered. It never grew. It was like the sun that you will never forget once you have seen.'

What more can discipleship mean ?

She was in touch with Swamiji for seven years and helped him in numerous ways in his mission to the West. The Swami has referred to her services in glowing words and ever remained grateful for them. Some of the Swami's most inspiring and magnificent letters were written her. One such is the famous letter dated the 18th April 1900, from Alameda, California, where the great Vedantin talks so movingly of his extreme detachment, of peace and calm and retirement from work. The Joe-Joe of the letters is Miss MacLeod. A further glimpse of Swamiji's relation with her is provided by the poem which he wrote to her, while in the West. The poem, published in *Prabuddha Bharata* in October 1948, is given below.

The poem was superscribed *To My Own Soul* and handed personally to Tantine at Ridgley Manor, New York, 1899.

Hold yet a while, Strong Heart,  
Not part a life-long yoke  
Though blighted looks the present, future  
gloom.

An age it seems since you and I began our  
March up hill or down. Sailing smooth o'er  
Seas that are so rare—

Thou nearer unto me, than oft-times  
I myself—

Proclaiming mental moves before they were!  
Reflector true—Thy pulse so timed to mine,

Thou perfect note of thoughts, however  
fine—

Shall we now part, Recorder, say ?

In thee is friendship, faith,

For thou didst warn when evil thoughts  
were brewing—

And though, alas, thy warning thrown away,

Went on the same as ever—good and true.

She was one of those who engaged the services of Mr. Goodwin for taking down Swamiji's lecture in the West. She records :

'Mr. Goodwin was the stenographer who had been engaged at 54 West 33rd Street to take down the lectures of Swami Vivekananda. Mr. Goodwin was a court-stenographer, which means two hundred words a minute and he was very expensive ; but as we did not want to lose any of Vivekananda's words we engaged him. After the first week Mr. Goodwin refused any money and when they said to him : "What do you mean ?", he said : "If Vivekananda gives his life, the least I can do is to give my service". He followed Swami around the world and we have seven volumes hot from his lips that Mr. Goodwin took down.'

Her sister Mrs Legget was married to a wealthy New York businessman, but marriage for her became unthinkable after she had met Swamiji. She did not have large means for many years. Still she saved eight hundred dollars over a period of several years which she gave away to Swamiji. The first *Udbodhan* press was bought with this money by Swami Trigunatita.

Later when her means were improved she gave large sums periodically for helping the Math and Mission in numerous ways. Her services in other directions were, perhaps, from wider standpoints, still more valuable and will be for ever remembered with gratefulness.

Tantine loved India because India was Swamiji's. Her attitude towards her was one of consistent constructive help without criticism. It was formed before her first visit

to the country. She had written to Swamiji before coming here for the first time, 'Shall I come to India ?' And his answer was : "Yes, come, if you want filth and degradation and poverty and many loin cloths talking religion. Don't come if you want anything else. We cannot bear one more criticism."'

She never forgot this and she would talk of it frequently to young members of the Order. On her arrival in India she made a casual remark about Alasinga's Vaishnavite marks on the forehead. This did not mean any deprecation or criticism. But Swamiji did not let this pass unnoticed, and so this, forever, fixed her attitude. The incident, in Tantine's own words, is as follows :

'We arrived in Bombay on the twelfth of February where Mr. Alasinga met us, who wore the vertical red marks of the Vaishnavite sect. Later on, once when I was sitting with Swami on our way to Kashmir, I happened to make the remark : "What a pity that Mr. Alasinga wears those Vaishnavite marks on his forehead!" Instantly Swami turned and said with great sternness : "Hands off ! What have you ever done ?" I did not know what I had done then. Of course I never answered. Tears came to my eyes and I waited. I learned later that Mr. Alasinga Perumal was a young Brahmin teaching philosophy in a college in Madras earning 100 rupees a month, supporting his father, mother, wife and four children, and who had gone from door to door to beg the money to send Vivekananda to the West. Perhaps without him we never would have met Vivekananda. Then one understood the anger with which Swamiji met the slightest attack on Mr. Alasinga.'

She was in Europe when Swamiji passed away. She was informed by a cable. She says of this :

'They cabled me on the fourth of July : "Swami attained Nirvana." For days I was stunned. I never answered it. And then the desolation that seemed to fill my life made me weep for years and it was only after I read

Maeterlinck who said: "If you have been greatly influenced by anyone, prove it in your life, and not by your tears", I never wept again; but went back to America and tried to follow the traces of where he had lived. I went to Thousand Island Park and became the guest of Miss Dutcher to whom the cottage belonged, who gave me the same room that Swami had used.

'Fourteen years elapsed before I returned to India. Then I went accompanying Professor and Mrs. Geddes. I then found, instead of India being a place of desolation, all India was alive with Swamiji's ideas, with half a dozen monasteries, thousands of centres, hundreds of societies. Since that time I have been going frequently. They like to have me at the monastery guest house because I keep the Vivekananda alive, as none of these young men have ever seen him. And I like to be in India, remembering once when I asked him, "Swamiji, how can I best help you?" his answer was, "Love India!" So the upper floor of the guest house at the monastery is mine where I go and will probably go winters, until the end.'

The above few moving words tell better

than all which can be said by others, however eloquently, her relation with Swamiji, her attitude to India and her estimate of Swamiji's influence on India.

Tantine truly recalled something of Swamiji's spirit vividly to all those who met her. Because of her love of Swamiji the monastic members felt her as one of them, and this was remarkable in those days when so much stood between a correct understanding of East and West. She was always self-reliant and retained wonderful vigour till her extreme old age. She always left upon one the impression that she was full of Swamiji and that she always tried her best to radiate Swamiji's strength, love, and purity to all who came in contact with her. She came to India for the last time before the last war and though she hoped to come again, age and other things prevented it. But in America she continued till her end to be a source of great inspiration and help to the Swamis of the Vedanta Centres in that country.

An inspiring life of purity, love and service has come to a quiet close, but her memory will ever remain green wherever Swami Vivekananda will be read and loved.

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## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

*Nature of Man and Religious Disciplines* by Dr Taraknath Das of the Columbia University of New York is an address delivered in connection with a series of lectures on the *Nature of Man*, held recently under the auspices of World Alliance for International Friendship through Religions in New York.

### POWER IN MODERN SOCIETY

The problem of power has assumed a most sinister aspect in the modern world. The feeling is widespread among thinkers in the

West that power today constitutes the greatest threat to peace and civilization. Technical advances and vast organizations made possible by them, have placed tremendous power in the hands of a few individuals. It is this concentration of power which is feared, since it depends on the whims or fancies of a few individuals at the top to start destructive action on a colossal scale.

In a recent series of broadcast from the BBC Dr Alex Comfort emphasized the above point in particular. Said he: 'The forces in nature which threaten humanity, such as disease and bad weather, are not the threats



which worry us most today. If this is the Age of Anxiety, that anxiety is over the problem of power. In the first place, unless we achieve some very rapid changes in the pattern of political society, more of you may be killed by war than by physical disease. In the second place, the one factor which could seriously delay, and perhaps prevent altogether, the extension of scientific knowledge, would be a further growth in our society of military barbarism, of the permanent war economy, with its secrecy, its witch hunts, and its hysterical and destructive attitudes.'

The speaker's thesis is that a centralized urban society is incapable of fulfilling the assumptions which democracy makes. 'Power and order, or power and sociality, are not, in this context, compatible. ... The centralization of power, and the enormous consequences of individual decisions in a modern state, impose a strain on the adjustment and the judgment of the individuals in office which they cannot carry. ... Not only does power attract abnormal, but no man is sufficiently normal to be safely entrusted with the degree of power which exists today, either as a tyrant, an expert, or a delegate. And a fool or a lunatic in office spells disaster'.

It is true, as the speaker says, that modern politics attract abnormal individuals whose only aim is to dominate over others and who do not possess special abilities in other fields. Psychopaths of this type do really spell disaster. Recent fascist states have given ample evidence of this, but they are not peculiar in this respect, since the same thing is prevalent in a less obvious form in other modern governments as well. Modern politics is largely a game of power; its true function is hardly ever realized by the vast majority of those involved in it. Still, the desire for power is, we believe, common to all men. The psychology is one of search for security. We shall therefore never satisfactorily solve the problem of power unless we can find out a true answer to the question of security and fulfilment.

How deep-seated is the attraction of power for individuals and how dangerous are the consequences of the pursuit of power as an end can be seen from the warning given by the Scriptures to aspirants against spiritual varieties of them. By the pursuit of power we not only miss the true and higher goal of life, the goal which alone can give us permanent security and ultimate satisfaction, but also lose in the end the very power we pursue, since beyond a point such pursuits become self-refuting. There is something in the structure of the universe which will cast down a man who thinks he is lord of the universe. Such 'cosmic impiety' never goes unpunished.

Further, an Oriental cannot but be reminded of another thing by such discussions. The power philosophy, by which we mean a scheme of life that makes power an absolute end, has dominated the West for over two hundred years, during which the rest of the world was trampled upon by it. What this has meant to vast sections of humanity in terms of suffering and degradation is too patent today. Now that the time-process has laid bare the self-refuting character of this philosophy, the West is seeking a new philosophy of 'sociality'. We think the West is less secure today than the East. It is the contribution of their secular ideology. Scientists in the last century proclaimed that they would gradually bring heaven on earth. Today many of them are tame experts employed by their political bosses to manufacture arms which may wipe out humanity from it. Yesterday many of them had ridicule for religions and would put themselves on a level higher than that of saints and prophets. Today their rationality cannot prevent them from prostituting their knowledge for immoral ends. It is clear science is secondary and cannot help us in matters which are of utmost importance to life.

How can power be limited? There are obviously two ways, institutional and individual. One is reformation of society, the other is reformation of the individual. A

decentralized democratic society is a question of long-term planning and will not, further, be achieved except on a worldwide basis, through renunciation of national and group sovereignties and construction of a world-order. Modern industrial operations have knit the world together; these demand an appropriate political structure. Isolation is unthinkable unless we are all bent upon reversing the forces of world economy. But that will be merely temporary and will not be progressive. A society in the modern world is not able to solve its problems in isolation, and and it will react to the threat of centralized power outside by trying to develop similar power within itself. Meanwhile how are we to escape from this circular movement of violence and counter-violence, power and insecurity. Dr. Confort, with whose religious views we do not agree, suggests an 'individual' way out of it. 'But for us,' he says 'as individuals, the immediate defence against official delinquency lies in our own action. . . . There is one revolution we can all produce at once, in the privacy of our houses. We may not be able to prevent atrocities by other people but we can at least decline to commit them ourselves.'

This is, of course, a resounding platitude. Though 'rational' scientists talk like that, in action they seem powerless against tyrannical forces. Consider the case of the tame experts mentioned above.

Still we believe the individual way is the fundamental way. There cannot be enough inspiration for overcoming the temptations of power from a mere social aim. A Vedantin will say that the desire for power cannot be finally overcome by worldly aims. He will say all our worldly aims, and not the pursuit of power alone, are pathological, if they do not allow us to go beyond them. All these cravings arise in a very deep sense from a feeling of frustration. Because we have no conception of the true aim of man and want to stabilize human development at our own levels, we are making, and bound to make, wrong use of science, technology, and organization. We do not say institutional changes or technical progress are not necessary. They are necessary and inevitable, but we need a right aim to to make a right use of them. And if the aim is to be more than a mere sentiment which appeals only for rhetorical reasons, it must be grounded in an objective truth that is verifiable by experience. Vedanta offers this basis.

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**GIRISH GHOSE AND HIS DRAMAS.** BY SWAMI JAGADISWARANANDA. *Published by The Book House, 15 College Square, Calcutta. Pp. 162. Price Rs. 3/-*

This is an outline of the life and work of one of the most extraordinary personalities the world has produced in the last century. Girish Ghose, the master poet-dramatist of Bengal, was a man of most varied and apparently contradictory experiences in the world. Commanding respect and admiration from the great ones in all fields, from East and West alike, he was, as the author puts it, '.... a curious combination of contradictory qualities. He was indifferent and assuming, idle and energetic, patient and impatient, brave and cowardly, proud and humble, furious and forgiving, discriminating and sentimental, showy and modest, believing and doubting, religious and worldly, godly

and demoniac, passionate and dispassionate, equally moved by good and evil, fond of self-effort and at the same time dependent on divine grace....' (p. 11).

He was undoubtedly a versatile genius. For his productions as well as his representations are fascinating. His unmatched power of reproducing characters was the result of a deep knowledge of human psychology, intuitive and experienced.

A great part of the book is dedicated to a lucid comparative study of Ghose's personality and work, and of those of the very greatest in the world's literary sphere. Shakespeare, Goethe, and other giants of this calibre are elaborately dealt with. In comparing Ghose's works with those of some Western masters of the pen, the author goes, however, too far. The rating of Ghose's buffoons—masterpieces though they certainly

are—over the Shakespearean ones seems to us a bit improper and also anachronistic—almost four centuries lie between these two. We wonder whether Elizabethan audiences would have appreciated the nineteenth century buffoonery. Further, the author deplors some of his Western colleagues for dwelling on the corrupt and immoral ways and social habits of their countries in a naturalistic manner. Crude though these depictions may seem, their creators definitely meant to exhibit them as a deterrent—we do not surmise that Ibsen meant to propagandize incest in his *Ghosts* (p. 52).

The magical transformation of the atheist into a profound mystic, as a sequel to his contact with the Saint of Dakshineswar, finds an able description in this volume.

Another wondrous fact is the almost incredible productivity of Ghose. Seven hundred characters, all of them unique and unlike, range from the prostitute to the prophet in his eighty dramas. Nearly a thousand songs have been written by Ghose. Besides, he has rendered Shakespeare's *Macbeth* into Bengali in a masterful way and has also displayed his erudition in many other fields. Ghose's best dramas *Vilwamangal* and *Tapabal* have been dealt with *in extenso*.

An appendix gives us valuable clues of a comparative and more general kind closely connected with the subject of this book. R.

**PUBLIC FINANCE AND OUR POVERTY.** BY J. C. KUMARAPPA. *Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad.* Pp. 112. Price Rs. 1/8.

Even a layman knows that prosperous conditions prevailed in India till the very recent past. He hears them related by older people and he discovers that the more he goes into the past, the more prosperous he finds India, and if the man is sufficiently old he realizes how the conditions of living have deteriorated even in his own life-time. He only sees the result but does not know why it is so. A man with some knowledge of history knows that this process of deterioration started with the beginning of the consolidation of British rule in India about two centuries ago and has been ever after progressively worsening. But he also does not know in any clear way how this ruin has been wrought. He only finds that the gay and prosperous India found in the literature of the past has vanished. It is because the ways of exploitation employed by the British are subtle and only a keen economist can dive into the secret and lay the facts bare.

And in J. C. Kumarappa we have such an economist. In this book he traces the progressive economic decline of India during the British rule with facts, figures, and quotations from reliable authorities, mostly Europeans. He shows that the ways of public finance are subtle and mysterious. It covers its real nature under a heap of confusing figures and technical terminology. The majority do not understand what is the exact effect of a financial

policy on the living conditions in the country. A coloured paper may be put in our hand dispossessing us of the very means of subsistence without our being aware of it. It is incredible, and yet that is what has taken place. The creation of the Sterling Securities is a case in point, which is a direct cause of the enormous inflation in the country and the consequent hardships that we are experiencing at present. We have got paper money with which we cannot buy what we want. The author discusses in detail many such points which arise out of the policy of Public Finance adopted by the British India Government under the heads: 'Public Expenditure', 'Public Revenue', 'Public Debts', 'Sterling Credits', etc. bearing on the poverty of India.

**EDUCATION IN MODERN INDIA.** BY ANATH BASU. *Published by Orient Book Co., Calcutta 12.* Pp. 184. Price Rs. 4/-.

The problem of a thorough overhauling of the educational system is worrying our statesmen and educationists. But it seems, while there is no dearth of plans and schemes, commissions and reports, nothing happens. However, the need for good planning is real. And Mr Basu's book is a brief, lucid, and critical exposition of the main ideas about educational reconstruction of India. It also describes the earlier educational policies. Mr Basu advocates a national system of education. His ideas are broad and practical. We agree with him that religious instruction is difficult to impart in schools because of the differences in religion which, if reduced to the greatest common measure, yields but an abstract philosophy. But we have one remark to make. He himself speaks of making the students aware of our cultural heritage. But how can they be aware of it if they do not read religious literature, the repository of Indian culture? We hold that any Indian, whatever his religion, should have a rudimentary knowledge of the principal *Vedas*, *Puranas*, *Epics* and *Smritis* in order to qualify himself as educated. Is it possible for anybody to understand the West without reading the *Bible*? We believe portions from our religious classics (in translations) should be included in the school syllabus and taught as literature and cultural history. We do not believe that any non-Hindu will rationally object to it on religious grounds. Nobody objected to selections from the *Bible* being included in the college course of the Calcutta University.

P. J. Chaudhury

**INVOCATION AND OTHER POEMS.** BY H. K. CHALLONER. *Published by the author, Westlands, Beckley, Sussex, England.* Price 3/6d.

It is very rarely that one now comes across poetry that acts like charm or incantation, or poetry that is inspiration and power. Modern English poetry is becoming more and more intellectualized. Strident unintelligibility is one of its characteristic features and

the poets are given to glorying over their power of clustering together dissociated images with syncopated or jazz music or no music at all. Mr Challoner's verses remind us once more that poetry is born of divine afflatus and that it can sing in tunes that appeal more to the spiritual sense of man than act as incentives to his intellectual perversities. Mr Challoner has both originality and the power of absorbing and assimilating new wisdom for the West. His small book consisting of forty-five poems is a remarkable production from the point of view of metrical harmony and vision, just the two elements that modern poetry in general lacks. He reminds us in places of A.E. (George Russel) and Yeats. His inspiration has both Celtic and Hindu strands. To mention only a few, poems like 'Reincarnation', 'The Great Play', 'Before an Image of the Buddha', 'Ancient Wisdom' or 'Initiation' have not only charm and lucidity but great spiritual insight. Though he may lack the master's touch in everything that he writes, the majority of his poems in this book are distinguished on the whole for their plasticity of technique, clarity of image and quiet affirmative spiritual strength of a kind which is an enigma to those who are brought up entirely on orthodox Christian traditions.

D. M.

**NATIONAL FOOD PLANNING.** BY L. RAMACHANDRA SARMA. *Published by The Nature Cure Publishing House Ltd., Pudukkottai, S. I. Ry. Pp. 42. Price As. 12/-.*

Shri Ramachandra Sarma points out in this little booklet that food for all is equivalent to health for all. He has dealt with the problem of food, giving appropriate quotations and many instructive tables and statistics showing the food condition in India both as regards quantity and quality as also the nutritive value of the various kinds of food. Stress is laid on the necessity of food that suffices not only in quantity, but in quality as well; food which fills the stomach daily can cause havoc to the system unless it contains the essential nutriment. In order to achieve a sound state of affairs in feeding the people, the enhancement of fruits and vegetable-growing schemes as well as the increase of milk-production must be aimed at. The author has given a very sound plan which should certainly be considered by the competent authorities.

**HOUND OF THE HEART.** BY GURDIAL MALLIK. *Nalanda Publications, Bombay. Price Rs. 3/-.*

This is a volume of devotional and mystic poems, translated from the original Hindusthani songs composed by Mr Mallik. We agree with the poet that its essential weakness is the absence of music. There is little reason to doubt the sincerity and spontaneity of these poems, but they are a little too reminiscent of Tagore, e.g. 'Today the Divine Beloved has come to my door', 'Thy door is ever open, O Lord', and 'I am

sitting outside the door of Thy temple,' etc. So many 'admirers' of Gurudev have taken the hackneyed path of imitation without a spark of feeling that there is real danger of Mr Mallik being classed among them, unless he publishes the Hindusthani originals and sets them to music. Only thus can he avoid the crude mixture of unpoetic words and familiar slang that often crops up in the English version, as in: 'the five elements have hatched a conspiracy and they cause me any amount of harassment', 'the three qualities have kicked up a continuous row.'

A. V. R.

**HINDU FASTS AND FESTIVALS AND THEIR PHILOSOPHY.** BY SWAMI SIVANANDA. *Published by The Sivananda Publication League, Rishikesh. Pp. 158. Price Rs. 3/4.*

Fasts and Festivals play an important part in the life of an average Hindu. They date from very ancient times and their number has grown very large in course of time. The author has brought together some of the important ones in this book and has given a brief account showing their origin and significance. He has treated the subject under classified heads such as Festivals, Jayantis, Vratas for Ladies, Melas, and Special Observance, arranging them in an alphabetical order.

#### BENGALI

**DIVYA-JIVAN, PART I.** BY SRI AUROBINDO. TRANSLATED BY ANIRVAN. *Arya Publishing House, 63, College Street, Calcutta 12. Pp. 344. Price Rs. 8/-.*

This is the Bengali translation of Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine* which needs no introduction to the thoughtful. It is a great message from a great sage, full of large utterance and high thinking befitting a great thinker and our modern thought-tortured culture. The Vedic age of wonder and child-like simplicity and the mediæval age of unlesioned saints is past; this is the age of sophistication, of symbolic logic, positivism, and secular state, of all kinds of cults and faiths, rituals of grips and passwords and, above all, of doubts and dilemmas. A modern saint has to appeal to us in a phraseology that is drawn from the diverse disciplines of man and is so rich in meanings and suggestions, much of which remains vague as music. Terms defined in a particular discipline and stretched beyond their elastic limits give overtones of meaning. Thus we have such words as force, energy, magnetism, mutation, transformation, evolution, and others. Sometimes a whole argument rests on a concept which is but a metaphor and whose objective reference is hard to find. This is the inevitable consequence of thought and language attempting to probe into metaphysical depths. Sri Aurobindo is a thinker with a vision but still he is a thinker addressing the intellect of man. And so far as he is original his phrases dazzle no less than they illumine.

The book is perplexing to those reared in our traditional religious ideas. Our ideas of world, soul, God,

body, mind, Yoga and liberation get shaken and until we attain a new coherence we feel miserable in our state of doubt. And most of us do not attain this new harmony after the old one is disturbed. But there is an integral vision underlying the work, and those few who can grasp it get ample reward for their labours. It is not Sri Aurobindo's arguments that convince but his deep tone and quiet power that evokes in us a mood in which we see and believe much that we understand not. His arguments are mostly rhetorical. For example, the argument that we will have another far more developed body and mind from the fact of our past development and of mutations observed in biology, is analogical, and its force is psychological rather than logical. It is like arguing (as some popularizers of science have done and have been fully exposed) that we have a fourth dimension of space because we have already three! To believe in Sri Aurobindo's thesis that our body will transform and God will descend in us and that matter is not an illusion but is cognate with ultimate reality is purely a metaphysical choice between many alternatives. There can be no *a priori* proof, nor a proof from common experience or science. He has given us a theoretical basis for a psycho-physical experiment he and his disciples are performing. Before the results of that experiment are out, what a traditionalist will ask is this: Is the new metaphysical scheme (a new interpretation of the *Vedas*) simpler and closer to the revealed texts than its rivals? The readers will judge it themselves. For us it is difficult to give up Shankara and Patanjali though the new scheme has got its own peculiar charm

and modernistic appeal. The issue between the Vedantic approach and the newer one is sharp and of fundamental importance to modern Indian thought and culture. No future philosophy of religion can bypass *Life Divine*.

And no thinking soul can afford to ignore it. For it is a masterpiece of our time, rich in profound thoughts and sublime moods. In spite of a certain haze about the meaning the reader is invariably moved by the inspired tone of the writing and is lifted into a bracing atmosphere where ultimate truths appear not as forbidden mysteries. The Bengali translation, which itself is a great achievement of vast scholarship, has reproduced that effect, though it could not avoid a few apparent jargons and incessant inversions. The book is not meant for the common reader and simple, pious souls. It may do them more harm than good. It is for the brave adventurers in ideas who have not been able themselves to find out satisfactory answers to their searching questions of life in our traditional religio-philosophical literature.

P. J. Chaudhury

YOGA-CHATUSHTAYA. BY SWAMI SUNDARANANDA. *Published by Udbodhan Karyalaya, Baghbazar, Calcutta. Pp. 136. Price Rs. 2/-.*

This is a reliable introduction to the four kinds of Yoga: Bhakti, Raja, Karma, and Jnana. The author has made full use of his erudition and has based his exposition on copious quotations from authorities both classical and modern. He shows capacity for analysis as well as of synthesis. The exposition is lucid.

P. J. Chaudhury

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION CALCUTTA STUDENTS' HOME

REPORT FOR 1948

The Ramakrishna Mission Calcutta Students' Home started in a small way in 1916 and affiliated to the Mission in 1919, has grown into a large and beneficent institution rendering a rare service to the country. Its aim is not only to help poor and meritorious students through college education, but more important still, to supply to its inmates the vital elements which the present system of education even now fails to give. In a word it tries to develop its inmates into rounded personalities. Modern Indian education which arose chiefly with the object of training up a personnel for serving British administrative needs completely lacks this aspect. The idea of education as a means to the development of personality and as designed primarily to conserve the true values of the culture of a society it is intended to serve finds no place in it. Its disastrous effects are too plain today to observing minds to need mention.

Swami Vivekananda suggested the broad maxims

according to which our education should be reconstructed. He pointed out that the ancient ideals of the Gurukula system had value for all times and that they should be combined with the new knowledge which gave us understanding of nature and power over it. The institution was started with this inspiration and has been serving the basic aim of education in a humble way. This it does by giving a moral and spiritual background to the college education that the boys receive in the academic institutions.

The important features of the Home are the following: It is run by competent monks of the Order. Licensed by the Calcutta University it is intended specially for poor and meritorious matriculates who are helped through their college course with free board, lodging, books and other necessaries as far as possible. Systematic efforts are made to supplement the academic education of the University with the training necessary to develop character and efficiency among its inmates. Needy meritorious youths get here an opportunity of receiving secular as well as spiritual education under

the care and guidance of Hindu Sanyasins so that they may become real men, efficient and willing to rehabilitate their own families and also to do their best towards the uplift of the country. The students do all the work except cooking and learn to combine simple living with high thinking. No distinction is made between paying and non-paying boarders. The students are acquainted with the fundamentals of their culture through classes, talks, festivals and regular prayer, worship etc. A manuscript magazine is edited and conducted by the students.

The success that the Home, considering its size, has achieved in its efforts is phenomenal. Many distinguished visitors interested in the education of our young men have recognized the Home as a much-needed educational institution of unique value.

The Home is at present located at 20 Harinath De Road, Calcutta, and it further maintains another establishment in a garden house at Sodepur. Efforts are being made to acquire a suitable suburban area for permanently establishing the Home there.

At the beginning of this year there were altogether 49 students of whom 24 were free, 13 concession-holders and 12 paying. During the year 20 students left the Home and 19 students were admitted. Thus at the end of the year there were 48 students, of whom 26 were free, 19 concession-holders and 13 paying.

During 1948 four students appeared for B. Sc, six for B.A., 5 for I.Sc. and 2 I.A., all of whom passed except one in B.A. In B.Sc. one passed with 2nd class Hons. in Chemistry and one with distinction; in B.A. one with 2nd class Hons. in Economics; in I.Sc. all passed in the 1st division, one standing fourth in order of merit and securing a Govt. scholarship; and in I.A. one in the 1st division and one in the 2nd division.

Rs. 260/- were spent during the year by way of monthly stipends to six students at a time, for needy and deserving college students residing outside the Students' Home. Rs. 820/- were given by way of help for examination fees.

The manuscript magazine *Vidyarthi* was conducted by the students. Saturday classes and occasional debates were held when the students met to discuss socio-religious topics. In addition religious classes and celebrations also were held.

A Library containing more than 1550 well-chosen books on various subjects afforded the students facilities for extending their study beyond their college curriculum. 490 books were issued during the year. Besides, from the text-book section of the Library 1269 books were lent to the inmates.

The ex-students of the Home also conducted a magazine *Praktani* for distribution among all ex-students and present students. They also held as usual the *Nava Varsha Sammelan* and *Vijaya Sammelan*.

The present monthly subscription strength requires to be increased at least by Rs. 100/- to meet the running

expenses. Those who feel interest in this work are requested to help the Home by paying their mite in the form of regular subscription or donation. An endowment of 3% G.P. Notes of the face-value of Rs. 10,000/- that will go to maintain and educate one free student at a time may be made in the name of any of the donor's living or departed relatives. Besides, the Home needs funds for the proposed new building for the Students' Home.

All contributions, however small, will be thankfully received by the General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, P.O. Belur Math, Dt. Howrah, or by the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, 20 Harinath De Road, Calcutta 9.

## THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA, KANKHAL, HARDWAR

### REPORT FOR 1948

This Sevashrama which was started early in 1901 in a small hut, under the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda, to serve the people who flock to Hardwar from all parts of India and fall victims to diseases there, has now developed into a fully-equipped Hospital with 50 beds from small beginnings. It also does immense service to pilgrims who gather in lacs during the Kumbhamelas held in Hardwar once in 12 years.

The following is a brief report of its various activities during 1948.

During the period under review the Sevashrama had to work under great strain both on account of the rush of patients due to the influx of refugees from the West Punjab and N.W.F.P., and, financially, due to the extra patients and all-round increase in prices. The Sevashrama, however, could tide over the difficulty thanks to the support from the generous public and Government help.

*Hospital:* The total number of cases treated during the year was 88,857 as against 75,621 in 1947. The daily average attendance for the year in the Indoor and Outdoor departments of the Hospital rose to 240.

Patients in the Indoor and Outdoor Departments include pilgrims from all the provinces of India, in addition to the inhabitants in and around the locality. Diet, medicine, nursing and treatment under qualified doctors are provided free and without distinction of caste, creed, or community.

*Medical Relief for Refugees:* The medical relief work for refugees which was started in May 1947 was continued throughout the year 1948. In the Indoor Hospital 138 serious cases were admitted and treated, and as many as 54,712 patients attended the Outdoor Department. Many deserving cases were given barley powder, woollen blankets and also some help in cash in addition to medicines. Even now Hardwar and its neighbourhood have a population of more than 30,000 refugees, and this necessitates continuation of the relief work.

*Night School:* The Night School for Harijan boys functioned as usual at the beginning of the year, but

as the local Municipal Board is taking steps for compulsory Primary Education, the number of students went down considerably towards the end of the year.

*Library:* There were 3771 books in the Ashrama and the Patients' Libraries. Both the Libraries were well utilized, the number of books issued during the year being 3238.

*Feeding of Dar'dranarayanans:* About sixteen hundred persons, mostly Harjans, were entertained with food during the Birthday Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

*Finance:* Income for the year under General Fund was Rs. 50,753-4-3 and expenditure Rs. 52,235-14-10, leaving a deficit of Rs. 1,532-10-7. Under the Building Fund and Special Funds, the income came to Rs. 2,005-0-0 and Rs. 19,253-14-0 respectively, and expenditure under these two heads was Rs. 2,670-15-11 and Rs. 4,961-1-3 respectively.

*Thanks:* The Sevashrama takes this opportunity of offering its grateful thanks to all donors, subscribers, and friends who have helped the institution in various ways.

*Needs:* The important needs of the Sevashrama are:

	Rs.
1. Underground drainage with improved Sanitary arrangements .. .. .	85,000
2. One Cow Shed (Goshala) estimated to cost Rs. 22,000 .. .. .	10,000
3. A Kitchen Block with store room and dining hall .. .. .	15,000
4. Doctors' Quarters .. .. .	15,000
5. Electric Motor Pump with overhead tank for the main well .. .. .	12,000
6. Twenty additional beds with necessary equipments .. .. .	6,000
7. Pantry, Bedding and Linen Room for patients .. .. .	5,000
8. Thirty-three beds in the Indoor Hospital have not yet been endowed, and the cost of endowing a bed is Rs. 8,000. Beds may be endowed in memory of near and dear ones.	

In addition to these, the immediate need of the Sevashrama is for funds for its day-to-day expenses. Due to the enormous rise in prices of foodstuffs and hospital requisites, side by side with the increase in wages and salaries, the cost of maintenance of the hospital is shooting up year after year. The volume of work also is expanding. The Sevashrama therefore requires at least Rs. 50 000 to carry on its normal activities.

*Purna Kumbha Mela at Hardwar in April 1950:* The famous Purna Kumbha Me'la held at Hardwar once in 12 years will take place this time in 1950 in March and April. A congregation of 10 to 12 lacs of pilgrims is expected as usual.

Over and above its normal activities, the Sevashrama has been organizing Special Medical Relief Work during

these Melas. Both men and money are required to carry out the relief work successfully. An expenditure of Rs. 25,000 is estimated for this purpose. The success of the work depends upon the generous public and the Sevashrama hopes that they will extend their helping hand for this humanitarian cause. Contributions for this purpose may be specified accordingly.

Contributions for any of the above purposes may be sent to one of the following addresses:

1. The President, Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math P.O., Howrah Dist., (West Bengal).
2. The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal P.O., Saharanpur Dist., U.P.

### THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA, VRINDABAN.

REPORT FOR 1948

Established in the year 1907 in holy Vrindavan, this institution has constantly aimed at realizing the great spiritual ideal preached by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda—the ideal of worshipping the Divine in the suffering humanity. From a very modest beginning the Sevashrama has now grown into an up-to-date hospital with 55 beds, and is furnished with many modern equipments.

Relief is given to the suffering humanity without any distinction of caste, creed or religion. Services are therefore available to the public in general but the poor in particular, free of all charges.

The following is a brief report of its activities during the year:

*Indoor General Hospital:* The total number of cases (including eye cases) admitted during the year was 1364. Of these 1250 were cured and discharged, 64 were relieved and discharged otherwise, 21 died and 29 remained under treatment at the end of the year. The total number of surgical cases was 2146.

*Nanda Baba Eye Hospital:* The Eye Hospital is a special feature of the Sevashrama. It was established in the year 1943 by Seth Sri Banarsidas Bhagwandas and Seth Sri Pahladrai Rameshwardas of Bombay, two great devotees of Nanda Baba, and is since then being maintained mainly by them. As diseases of the eye are very common, particularly in the villages adjoining Vrindavan, this Department has proved itself to be a great boon to the rural population. The reputation of marked success in eye operations has widely spread, and many patients from far-off places come here for treatment.

*Outdoor Dispensary:* The total number of new cases treated during the year was 28,966 and the total number of repeated cases was 63,892 as against 21,707 and 34,555 respectively in 1947. The total number of surgical cases including those of the Eye Department was 1,333. During the year under report there was a total increase of 36,593 cases over the cases of the preceding year. One of the main reasons for this heavy increase is the influx of refugee patients.

**X-Ray Department:** The X-Ray plant purchased in 1947 through the unselfish efforts of Seth Sri Ratansey Champsi and Seth Sri Natvarlal M. Chinai of Bombay started working during the year under report. It has removed a long-felt want of Vrindavan and the surrounding localities. The total number of cases examined was 74.

**Clinical Laboratory & Inductothermy:** 754 samples of blood, urine, stool, and sputum were examined during the year in the Clinical Laboratory. 34 cases were treated by Inductotherm-therapy.

**Refugee Relief:** The total number of refugee patients admitted into the Indoor Hospital was 49 and the total number of Outdoor patients treated was 15,010.

**Finances:** The total receipts for the year amounted to Rs. 66,998-1-0 and the total expenditure was Rs. 67,644-6-3. The prices of all commodities having gone up the expenditure increased by some thousands of rupees. The Government of U.P. very kindly increased their recurring annual grant from Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 6,000 for which the Sevashrama feels very grateful to them. But the finances of the Sevashrama are still far from satisfactory.

**Thanks:** The Sevashrama offers its sincere thanks to the kind donors, subscribers and sympathizers of the institution for their ungrudging help and active support to it in running this charitable institution in the face of many difficulties.

**Immediate Needs:** The Sevashrama being situated right on the bank of the Jamuna is threatened every year with floods. In 1947 the whole of the Sevashrama remained under water for about four days and all hospital activities had to be suspended for a period. Moreover, the present site of the Sevashrama is in an out-of-the-way locality. Because of its remoteness patients cannot avail themselves of its services easily and that also to the desired extent. To obviate these difficulties, it has been decided to shift the Sevashrama to a more prominent and safe site near the Mathura-Vrindavan main road. This shifting of the Sevashrama and the new construction of the Hospital buildings, etc. will necessitate very heavy expenditure, and the Sevashrama therefore appeals to the generous public kindly to contribute liberally for this purpose so that the institution may soon be shifted to its proposed site.

**Permanent Fund:** The annual expenditure of the Sevashrama amounts to Rs. 40,000 out of which it gets about Rs. 20,000 by way of grants, subscriptions etc. To raise the balance of Rs. 20,000 is a hard problem which the management of the Sevashrama have to tackle every year. It is, therefore, essential that the Permanent Fund of the Sevashrama should be considerably strengthened, so that its finances may be stabilized to a reasonable extent. Persons desirous of endowing beds in memory of their friends and relations may do so by kindly contributing Rs. 5,000 per bed.

Contributions either in cash or in kind, however small, may kindly be sent to the following addresses:

1. The President, Ramakrishna Mission, P.O. Belurmath, Dt. Howrah, (West Bengal);
2. The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban, Mathura, U.P.

### THE SRI RAMAKRISHNA ADVAITA ASHRAMA, KALADY

#### REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1948

This Ashram is situated in the birthplace of the great Shankaracharya, and aims to revive the cultural tradition of that sacred place. Its chief activities are educational, all education being imparted after the manner of the *Gurukula* system.

In the period under report the Ramakrishna Gurukula School has been shifted to a new building, mainly meant for Harijan boys. The building for a proposed Free Public Library and Reading Room has been constructed.

Not less than eleven schools are being conducted by the Ashram, the Brahmanandodayam English, the Brahmanandodayam Sanskrit High Schools at Kalady proper, and the Vivekodayam Sanskrit High School at Eravinallor being the three most outstanding ones. Apart from these, the Sri Ramakrishna Gurukula deserves particular attention. Here the Gurukula system is strictly followed, the pupils living in close association with their teachers according to the high ideals of purity, service, and equality. No distinction at all is made on the basis of creed, caste, or religion.

There are three libraries. One of them, the Sri Vivekananda Religious Library and Reading Room, containing 1400 volumes in various languages, has been opened in the new building during the period under report.

During the year, lectures and religious classes were regularly held, several articles were published in the South-Indian papers and magazines, and one book was published. The monthly magazine *Amritavani*, run by the Ashram, has entered into its third year of publication.

The Ashrama has 128 acres of arable land where intensive paddy cultivation is going on under its supervision.

Special care is taken of the Harijans. The milk-canteen has supplied milk and vitamin-tablets to some 75 poor children in the latter half of 1948.

The Institution needs the support of the generous public. Due to its expanding educational activities, the Ashrama has incurred a debt of about Rs. 13,500, and its first objective is to get it cleared. It also needs funds for some urgently needed constructions and repairs.

Cordial thanks are extended to H.H. The Maharaja of Travancore, who has shown great interest and sympathy, and to other noble wellwishers who have rendered valuable aid to its sustenance.