

# Prabuddha Bharata

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

*Katha Upa. I. iii. 14.*

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

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

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## TALKS WITH SWAMI TURIYANANDA AT BENARES

*7th February, 1921.*

It was the day following the birthday anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The Swami was naturally full of his thought and American reminiscences. He spoke in high praise of Mrs. W— of Montclair, America. He said: "She was elderly and absolutely deaf ; but extremely psychic and intelligent. She could understand one's meaning from the movements of one's lips, and would herself look after every detail of her household. I lived with her for six months. Her first acquaintance amongst us was S — Maharaj. When I was in England with Swamiji, I received an unexpected letter from her, in which she said, 'Swami S — is my brother. You are his brother, I request you therefore to consider my home as your own.' From England I went over to America in the company of Swamiji, where we became guests of Mr. L — at Ridgely Manor. After a few days, Swamiji

suddenly said to me, 'My purse is rather thin. I am going to San Francisco where I shall live with my friends. You must see your own way.'\* I was then in a peculiar mood. I readily replied, 'All right, I will.' 'Where would you go to?' Swamiji asked me. I just then remembered Mrs. W—'s letter of invitation and I told him of that. He said, 'Very good. Open a centre there.' But I was angry and refused to do anything of the kind. I said, I would simply live there. 'That is,' Swamiji replied, 'what is meant by opening centres. Wherever you will live, that will be a centre.'

'I wrote to Mrs. W—. She replied requesting me to go over to her place, alone, after seven days. I reached her house duly. Her daughter received me. When she herself met me, she took my hands into her own and said, 'I am your sister, my house is your own. Say you will look upon me as your sister?' I assented. She gave me a room. There was a fine library in her house. And she would secure invitations for me from many places and accompany and introduce me to the people. She induced me to accept an invitation from Dr. Lewis Jones to speak at the Brooklyn Ethical Association. After returning from engagements, I would ask her how I behaved. She would say, 'Perfect! You are more civilised than all the people here. Be perfectly natural. I am sure you cannot do even unconsciously any wrong.' When I complained of the discomfort of wearing a collar, she said, 'You need not wear it. Be at ease.'

'I once received a letter from S — Maharaj from India detailing the harrowing tale of a famine. After a while Mrs. W— came and asked me, 'Swami, what is the matter with you?' When I said that it was nothing, she rejoined, 'No, it must be something. Have you received any letter? Let me see it.' We never concealed anything from each other,—I gave her the letter. After reading it, she went into the shrine where she had installed a picture of Sri Ramakrishna, and returning in fifteen minutes, she

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\* That was evidently to launch Swami Turiyananda into independent work.



said, 'All spirituality from you, but no money. Don't worry.' She wrote a few letters to some of her friends. In a short time \$1000 were collected and handed over to me. Something more was added afterwards. All this she collected from her mother, her husband, herself, Mrs. Bull and other friends.

"Her husband was a Royal Engineer. Finding him boastful of his powers and abilities, she said to him, 'Don't boast, John. What can you do? It is through the grace of the Lord that you are earning your money!' Mr. W— understood and kept quiet. It was quite surprising to see them communicate with each other through mere signs, sitting on the opposite sides of the table. He would only move his lips, but she would at once understand and answer him.

"Swāmiji also was invited and lived with them for some time. Almost all of us have been at one time or other their guests. I do not know if she is still living. Oh how she would care for me! Not even a mother or sister could care like that. She would take me even into her kitchen. That is how I came to know the intricacies of an American household.

• "When she learnt of Dr. Janes' invitation, she said, 'It is an opportunity the Lord has given you to be introduced to the public and you must avail yourself of it.' The words struck me. I read a paper on Sankaracharya before the Association. I used to be nervous at first. But she would encourage me greatly.

"Twenty years before she met S — Maharaj, she had a vision of our Master, in which the Master had said to her, 'My children will come to you. Take good care of them.' She saw a picture of the Master folded within a copy of the Gita that S — Maharaj had with him. She understood at once and revealed the story of her vision to him."

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## CASTE AND EDUCATION

Some doubts have been expressed as to the feasibility of our proposition that education in India should be modelled tentatively on the caste basis. Though it is admitted that an educational system, to be stable and sound, cannot ignore its essential relationship with the social economy of the country, yet it is feared that the proposal to limit the intellectual education of the majority of a people would be unjust and retrograde in this age of democratic equality and freedom. It is further argued that the idea of guiding the education of an individual by the considerations of his present and probable socio-economic position, in addition to being a dangerous encroachment on the principle of democracy, is also not possible in view of the advanced disruption of the caste system and the general disregard of the hereditary principle in the choice of profession. These are real doubts and must be dispelled before our suggestions can be taken at their true worth.

But let us repeat at the outset that our contention is not so much for following the provisions of the caste system as that our educational system should conform primarily and essentially to our social economy. What stable form the social economy of the country will take, when the present crisis has been over, cannot of course be dogmatically stated. But we hope and believe that it will be something closely allied to the caste system. It is on this belief as well as on the fact that no nation in the history of man has ever shown cataclysmic changes in its fundamental constitution, do we base our proposal that education may well be systematised, to begin with, after the caste pattern and adjusted afterwards according to the changes of the progressive times.

The objection raised against our proposal to limit intellectual education, is based, we are afraid, on a wrong conception of the place of the intellect in the scheme of



life as well as education. And perhaps our statement last month regarding this limitation requires to be further defined. The idea of limitation is really relative. It is possible that the average education of the future will be somewhat higher than even the university education of the present. The standard of mass education cannot be fixed for ever, it will and must vary with the general growth and accumulation of knowledge. The idea of limitation arises from the consideration that there are always some tendencies in the intellectual world the truth and worth of which are doubtful and which are against accepted conceptions, and that if they are allowed to affect the mass mind, they are sure to create doubt and mental conflict. These must be held back from the majority.

For, what is the purpose served by the intellect in life? The main function of the intellect is to represent life and experience as a system. The mind daily acquires new knowledge of men and things. These the intellect codifies as workings of laws, and reduces to a system. We have internal experiences. These also are rationalised by the intellect. And these inner and outer systems again are harmonised into a cosmos. For we are of the very essence of Reason, we cannot live and flourish in chaos. Therefore, whatever the quality and truth of our knowledge of ourselves and things, it is necessary for our healthy growth that we should feel ourselves at every moment as integral parts of a cosmic system. The point is not whether we possess *correct* knowledge or not, but that we are not *conscious* of any intellectual conflict and are not living chaotically and blindly, and that we have an inner consciousness of our essential relationship with the universal whole determining our goal and duty in life. From this view-point, even the greatest savant, if he has not an inner feeling of his cosmic relations, is less fortunate than a rustic whose mythological beliefs provide him with a knowledge, however crude, of his relationship with the universal system. For the savant is adrift without a destiny, but the rustic is conscious of a purpose. This



purposiveness has a tremendous subjective significance. The ancients in all lands were conscious of this fact. Those great books which have guided millions and made history, have all of them presented life and the world as a cosmic system and defined the position of man in it, from which follow his duties. The Bible, for instance, begins with the creation of the world and man, describes his fall and ends with his salvation. The Bible, however questionable and unscientific some of its statements and explanations may be, presents to the believers a system of cosmic knowledge wherefrom they know their place in the system of God and their duties pertaining to it. They have not to sigh and pine away in vain scepticism. Similarly in the Puranas. Even the little Bengali primer which was so much in vogue before the enlightened system of education was inaugurated—the *Shishu-bodhaka*—followed in a crude form that encyclopædic ideal.

This systematisation of life and experience, which is the essential function of the intellect, cannot be achieved by every man independently. The majority have to accept it through traditions and the knowledge of the preceding generations. Herein, as we said before, lies the reason of our proposal for intellectual limitation. We draw the line after the *assured and proved* knowledge—the knowledge which has become a part of the collective outlook on life. All new knowledge that clashes with the established view-point we leave to the select few to test and try before it is given to the masses. For there will always be some who will discover new secrets and laws and learn to view life and the world from new angles of vision. And when after passing through the storm and stress of the new knowledge, they will arrive at the peace of certitude, they will bequeath their discovery to the masses. Instead of all men rushing about for new discoveries, our proposal seeks to minimise waste and chaos, leaves the few to carry on the work of research and the rest to enjoy the fruits of their labour. Research and free-thinking have been over-emphasised in the present age. It is true there have been splendid results in many



directions. But in one respect, and that the most important, they have made little advance on the preceding age. They have thrown little new light on the inner problems of life. And no wonder. For it is never through the intellect that the saving light shines. The modern age relies too much on the intellect. But the intellect always fluctuates in its conclusions and drives its dependant from doubt to doubt and ends by making him a sceptic. There is in every man, above and beyond his intellect, a core which is the inner and real man. The path of development of this inner man lies mainly through the training of feelings and motives of action. He is permanent. The nature and needs of this inner soul ever remain the same. The Indian system of education therefore held fast to this inner man and his truths as the abiding and determining factor of human life and devoted its utmost attention to his development. The intellect with its systematising function was as it were the background of this growing inner man.

Our objection is to knowledge being imparted in a way that causes conflict—such as modern intellectualism inevitably does. The fact is that modern knowledge is not reduced to a *system*, it does not yet present a cosmic view of the world and life, but only disjointed, peace-meal information. If every boy swallows this unassimilable food, the consequence cannot but be disastrous. Whereas modern knowledge represents life and reality in one light, religion and tradition present perchance a contrary view. This conflict cannot be overcome until *all* knowledge is reduced to a unitary system. There are two ways in which this can be done: either we may suppress all intellectual enquiry as goes or will probably go against the established system (as the Inquisition sought to do in the West), or we may allow only a few—those who are stout-hearted enough to pass through the ordeal of doubt and uncertainty to reach the truth at last—to proceed on with research, breaking and building, the majority being left undisturbed until the new discoveries have been assimilated into the existing system of knowledge. We

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prefer the latter alternative. It is unthinkable that enquiry and discovery should be suppressed. It is equally unthinkable that the whole nation should become free-thinkers or thoughtless and denationalised wealth-hunters, devoid of nobler ideals. From day to day, new light will be thrown on the meaning of life and reality. Our ideas of things will change continually. But these changes must not be introduced into the life of the community in such a way as to destroy its pre-existing unitary outlook. What we suggest here is nothing new. In fact it has been the accepted rule that the learned should neither speak nor behave in a way as will disturb the established usages or concepts. The homage to *Lokâchâras* has been paid even by the highest. They have been enjoined not to create *Buddhi-bheda* of the masses, not to unsettle their understanding. Of course our proposal refers only to the majority. In every caste and community there will always be some who will be found specially fit to go in for the higher intellectual pursuits. But their number can be ten per cent at the best. Only they must submit to the condition that their words and behaviour shall not act disruptively on the community.

When we suggest that the educational system should be built on the caste basis, we of course do not mean that the social stigma which unfortunately has come to be associated with caste gradations, is to be perpetuated. If the modern age insists on anything, it is on the abolition of privileges. It will be foolish to think of social superiority on merely caste basis. But abolition of privilege does not mean want of system. Privileges must go, but the principles of system and discipline that underlie the concept of caste can and must remain. The odium that attaches only to the worst manifestations of the caste system has often clouded the serene understanding of its inherent merits and has led to undeserved vilification of this wonderful socio-economic institution.

What is the central idea of the caste system? Caste



divisions were originally meant as protective barriers of culture. Hindus comprise multifarious races primarily possessing cultures of varying excellence and widely different outlooks on life and religion. They have been gathered into the fold of Hinduism from time to time in course of her long history. To have allowed them to get freely mixed up with the central body would have been disastrous to both. The safest course was to exert on them the moulding influence of *Arya-dharma*, and yet keep them probationally segregated. This was the origin of many of the present caste divisions. The *modus operandi* of segregation was mainly the restriction of interdining and intermarriage among different castes. In this way has the Hindu culture been maintained intact through millenniums. When however the segregated castes were found thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the *Sanatana Dharma*, the Eternal Religion, they were gradually assimilated into their kindred castes. In the discussion of the educational problem, this aspect of the caste system does not concern us intimately. It is another, the economic, aspect which is important for our purpose and retains still a supreme usefulness.

The one parent evil of the present age is unlimited production of goods, resulting in keen economic competition and exploitation. Surplus products must find opening into foreign markets, causing international competition, exploitation of weaker peoples, war and other untold evils. It not only causes international, but also internal, misery and fight, witness the capital-labour quarrel. But the most evil effect perhaps is that material aggrandisement becomes the central motive of the collective life and absorbs all powers, moral, spiritual, intellectual or physical, for this one sordid purpose. Every right-minded person feels that such a state of things cannot be indefinitely prolonged. It must be changed. The ancient fathers of the Hindu society knew that unless competition was eliminated from the socio-economic life of the people, pursuit of noble and spiritual ideals, either individually or collectively, would be vain and impossible.



The present unhappy conditions of the world fully uphold the justice and wisdom of their view. The method they employed for the elimination of competition was the caste system. They argued that if *all everyday necessities* were produced and sold locally, the community being economically self-contained, would leave no scope for foreign exploitation. Therefore an ideal and complete *Samâj* according to them was one which contained not only the high castes but also others representing different essential professions. Even to-day, an estate inhabited by all the various castes and constituting thus a complete and self-contained *Samaj*, is extremely covetable to a Hindu land-holder. A *Samaj* was an aggregate of several villages moving together socially and economically. Along with all-castes representation in a *Samaj* was the other idea of having a local market for the exchange of the products of the villages. The market had an important place in the scheme of the *Samaj*, it was not merely a place for trade transactions. It was as it were the economic symbol and centre of the *Samaj*, representing a self-contained economic unit. Every *Samaj* or economic unit was sought to be made self-contained ; over-production was prevented and under-production provided against.

It may have been noted in the country-side how the establishment of a new market is generally resented and keenly fought against. It is not always partisanship that actuates the opposition. The deeper reason, often acting subconsciously, is that the innovation will upset and disrupt the economic balance of the adjacent *Samajas*. There are subtle calculations behind the location of a market, and mere superficial and financial advantages cannot justify the creation of a new market. The position of a market depends largely on the convenience of the *Samaj* which it is meant to serve, and it must not encroach upon the jurisdictions of the neighbouring markets. For, as we have seen, every market is indissolubly linked with an economically self-contained *Samaj* and cannot work independently of this economic implica-



tion. It is true that the present conditions are anomalous and far removed from this ideal state. But can we not revive the system?

Of course there are difficulties in the way of such a revival. Now it is not merely a question of the Hindus so far as the economic aspect is concerned—Muhammadans also must be given their legitimate place in the *Samaj*. But we need not unduly emphasise this difficulty. The Hindu outlook is sufficiently synthetic and comprehensive to overcome it. The first requisite is the division of the land into aforesaid self-contained *Samajas* each with an allotted market. We have next to provide for the local production of all the daily necessities of the villages in each unit separately, and to that effect create new castes and revive old ones, always guarding against over-production. The *Samaj* may organise itself on a co-operative basis and employ the most up-to-date methods and machineries for the rehabilitation and conduct of the various trades. If this scheme is feasible, it will not only prevent foreign exploitation, but also ensure decent living to every member of the *Samaj*. When we plead for the reconstitution of the village life on the caste basis, we urge that it should be carried out on these lines, and hope that this scheme, being in agreement with the national genius, is sure to succeed more easily than any other scheme.

Now, if the scheme as barely outlined here is considered correct, should not then the education needed for the majority of the people be based on the caste system? Ours is only a suggestion. But none of the ideals and schemes as yet placed before the country seem to remember that India has a past and a deeply ingrained social consciousness which, however clouded it may be in the turmoil of the present transition, is yet too strong to yield easily to any new-fangled conception. It is often forgotten that the Hindu race traversing millenniums in one way and direction is not going suddenly to whisk right about and choose new paths. The future must be a continuation of the past. And the social con-

stitution handed down from the immemorial past is not going to be thrown into the scrap-heap. One point is clear: that *the problem of education cannot be solved without solving at the same time the problem of village reconstruction*. They are two aspects of the same question. And if villages cannot be reconstructed on any other basis than that of the castes, the educational system also cannot have any other foundation. The wisdom and justification of our suggestions can be proved only by actual experience. But we may assure our readers from our little experience that there is immense scope for success both in village reconstruction and education in the wake of the caste system.

It is not true to hold that the caste system is rapidly disrupting. All the uplift movements among the lower castes are struggling to secure higher positions for them *within* the caste system itself, and are decidedly not in revolt against it. This is as it should be. This only proves that these castes, too long labelled "low," are already sufficiently imbued with the spirit of Hinduism and do not require further segregation. We see in these social movements the sleeping powers of the caste system revived and active again, which is quite the opposite of disruption. Nor can we say that the principle of hereditary profession is against the spirit of the times. We hold that the promiscuous choice of professions, characteristic of the present days, is due largely to social and economical chaos and despair, foreign exploitation and unemployment in the villages. The village markets are overrun with foreign articles and factory goods. If however the economic autonomy of the *Samajas* can be re-established, people will gladly settle down to their allotted occupations, and having a decent living ensured, will not unnecessarily busy themselves in the service of mammon, in utter forgetfulness of the noble ideals of their forefathers.

One of the acutest problems before humanity is how to eliminate the death-struggle between nations and nations, races and races, and classes and classes for the



profit of earthly things. Until this struggle ceases, humanity cannot devote itself to the higher pursuits of life. And we have yet to know of a better method for its elimination than the much-misunderstood caste system.

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## RECONSTRUCTION : OBSTACLES ON THE WAY

BY SWAMI VIREŚWARANANDA

Since the recent war and the international anarchy that has resulted from it, human affairs in most of the civilized countries have been upset to an extent unconceived of before. A great discontent has been agitating the minds of the nations for some time past. They have been struggling for a better order of things but their best men have failed as yet to grasp the situation, which has given rise to problems quite perplexing in their nature. Nothing better could be expected from a world bankrupt in high thought and ideals. In the absence of such high ideals all hopes of nations living in amity, each recognising the rights of others, under a policy of bear and forbear cannot but prove to be idle dreams. The intrinsic worth of the present day institutions and ideals is questioned in all quarters and the demand for new ones is incessant. All attempts to meet the demands by putting new wine in old bottles have proved fruitless, for soon the inadequacy of old ideas is realized. The situation is grave and unless it is properly handled and that at an early date, a great set-back to civilization seems inevitable.

The two great obstructions to any world settlement are man's conservatism and his selfishness which in these days has gone beyond all limits. There is a strong conservative tendency in human nature and man never likes to move forward unless he is forced to do so by circumstances. He gets used to his environments and finds it hard to get out of them and to overcome all the super-

stitutions to which he has been accustomed ; he likes to move along old ruts finding it easier and comfortable. New thoughts are received by him with suspicion. They suggest to him evil intentions on the part of their promoters who, he thinks, want to overthrow the existing order and all the achievements of society to suit their own convenience. Very few are indeed concerned with truth, for truth often is not quite comfortable. At present all our institutions are simply perpetuating our existing policies and they seem to be determined to do so. The thought that our present day ideas or institutions are defective is quite repulsive to him.

Apart from this conservatism there is also selfishness which hinders us from holding on to truth. Freedom to preach truth often affects the vested interests of a class amongst us who wield great influence and power. They like to hold the world to its present condition and grow fat on it. They do not like that people should be roused to the injustices and failures of the day. They are keenly sensitive about such delicate questions and the least suspicion in this direction brings out the sleeping savage in them with all his blood-thirstiness. They so manage the whole affair as to perpetuate the existing ignorance. If they fail in their tactics, they bring pressure to bear upon those who put obstacles in their way. Social ostracism, contempt and social hatred are the methods first employed, and if these fail, still harder measures are taken against them.

Thus we see that many of us are busily engaged in continuing the present conditions, for they appear to us quite natural and inevitable ; being brought up in them we are blind to their injustices and abnormalities. We forget however that social forms and methods are derived from society as it exists, which is not after all a permanent thing. Society is ever changing and our present day society is only a stage in our progress. The watchword of society is *progress*. Society must change ; it is necessity that is working behind all progress. The life of a society like that of an individual consists in a



continuous struggle between something inside, the inherent forces and the external world which is always trying to suppress it. To show that society is changing does not require much effort. Many things like slavery, Sati, and the Inquisition have come and gone, and so it can be easily inferred that a similar fate is awaiting the present institutions. But then if we handle the problems with more intelligence and broad-mindedness than in past ages, we may escape a great amount of misery and unhappiness which the world will have to experience if the old policy of repression and conservatism be followed.

The question then really comes to this, whether we propose to keep things as they are or mean to bring about a readjustment capable of rooting out the present day evils. A willingness to change the existing conditions for the better does not however mean any hasty readjustment but to invite thought and educate the people, so that they may have an actual picture of the world without any attempt at hide and seek. The result of such an education would be progress which would be natural and not a forced reform. Society would absorb all that is worth absorbing in the new movements throwing out the rest as unnecessary.

Thought is omnipotent in the progress of humanity and that is why we want to invite thought. We are what our thoughts have made us. If we fill our mind with the highest thoughts, then our actions will also be moulded accordingly. If we had not been surrounded from our birth by negative ideas, the world would have been much better to-day. The speculative thought of the age has been affected much by dogmatism and supernaturalism ; in spite of all attempts to free itself from these bondages it has not been able to succeed in meeting fully the demands of the age. Thought has become lifeless and monotonous and people are dissuaded from new enterprises. But the time has come to inaugurate changes to suit the modern conditions, to propagate truths with the stamp of new genius, so that one may feel the throbbing of new life. The world wants to-day "a few who

by a sort of persistent and ardent detachment are able to see things close at hand more fully and truly than their fellows and endeavour to do what they could to lead their fellows to perceive and reckon with the facts which so deeply concern them."

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## DURGA-PUJA, ITS FACTS AND PHILOSOPHY

BY SWAMI NIKHILANANDA

The festival of *Navaratri*—the auspicious nine days beginning with the first day of the bright half of the month of Aswin—is observed all over India from Kashmir to Travancore and the Punjab to Assam. These nine days are sacred to every Hindu irrespective of caste or creed. The Vaishnavas, the Sauras, the Gânapatyas, even the followers of Ramanuja, Vallabha and Nimbarka look upon these days with a feeling of peculiar sanctity. The festival has been observed from times immemorial. We read in the Chandi of— शरत्काले महापूजा क्रियते या च वार्षिकी—"the great annual worship performed in the autumn." It is not possible to find out with certitude the origin and genesis of this festival. But there can be no doubt about one thing,—that the time is extremely propitious. The transition from the rains to the autumn is itself an occasion of rejoicing. The morning rays of the autumn sun reflecting on the crystal dew-drops on the rose and lotus petals, the sapphire night-sky bedecked with myriads of star-jewels, the gentle breeze infusing new life and energy into the dull features of the passing rainy season, the undulating fields green with rice-plants extending from horizon to horizon, the various amenities of life which are profuse at this period of the year,—all these conspire to make the autumn the fittest time for a national jubilation.

The different provinces of India celebrate these days



in different ways. The Saktas of different denominations worship their respective chosen ideals with their respective rites. The Goddess is worshipped in Kashmir, Rajputana, Kanouj, Mithila and Assam as Amba, Bhawani, Kalyani, Uma and Kamakhya. The Bengalees worship the Divine Mother as Durga. The Durga-puja is the national festival of the Bengalees and surpasses all other sacred observances in pomp and grandeur. All feel a new thrill and a new enthusiasm. Joy maddens everyone from the richest to the poorest, when music heralds the days of worship. Now, what is the significance of the Durga-puja? In order to understand it, we have to look into the philosophy and idealism of image-worship.

The origin of image-worship has been variously explained. Some say that it is the legacy of Buddhism and others that the images have been imported into India with the influx of the foreign hordes, such as the Scythians, the Huns etc. But leaving aside these historical speculations, we shall deal with the subject from the stand-point of psychology. Three kinds of worship are described in the scriptures, *viz.*, the *Swarupa* upasana, the *Sampad* upasana, and the *Pratika* upasana. A class of ancient seers realised in their own self the attributeless Highest Truth. Withdrawing their senses from the phenomenal world, they realised the Absolute in Samadhi. Discrimination and renunciation are the twain help-mates in this path of realisation, and this is known as the *Swarupa* upasana. But those who are not endowed with sufficient serenity of mind and an indomitable will-force, choose necessarily the easier path of the *Sampad* upasana. According to this method the devotee meditates on a created thing as a symbol of the Deity, in so far as it resembles and reflects the Divine qualities. The Rishis found that there exist certain resemblances between Brahman—the Highest Truth—and the sun, the wind, the vital breath, etc., in respect of luminosity, motion, sustaining power, etc. Therefore by meditating on these perceptible objects, the aspirants

can, at the end, realise the Imperceptible. The apotheosis of the Incarnation and the Guru can be understood from this stand-point. The scriptures prescribe the *Pratīka* upasana for the lowest class of aspirants. According to it the aspirant is asked to superimpose upon a certain thing, such as a pot or stone, the qualities of God, though there may not be any resemblance between them. It is, as Ramanuja says, "joining the mind with devotion to that which is not Brahman, taking it to be Brahman." The aspirant who follows this method begins with a superficial knowledge of God. But it eventually clarifies his vision and takes him nearer to the higher truths. The *Pratima* or image is a kind of *Pratīka*. Image-worship presupposes that God has forms which the images represent. Though it is generally true that image-worship is not the highest form of worship and that its objective is not the highest Impersonal Brahman, yet there is another aspect in which it is as good as the highest worship of the highest God.

How did images originate? साधकानां हितार्थाय ब्रह्मणो रूपकल्पना—"Brahman has imposed forms upon Himself for the benefit of the devotees." The conception of the image came originally from the Siddhas—the perfected ones—those who had realised Brahman and His divine forms in meditation, the secrets of which they afterwards gave out for the benefit of the Sadhakas. These were embodied in external images to make them visible to the eye.

The Jnani considers the world as consisting of the relative and the Absolute, the finite and the Infinite, indissolubly linked together like light and shade. His attempt, as we have alluded to before, is to realise the Absolute through discrimination, he denies the relative. But there is another view-point from which this Transcendental Truth appears as covering and permeating the relative world. Therefore it has been said that ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत् किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्—"by God" is to be covered all that is transient in this transitory world." One need not shut one's eyes to perceive the Truth.



The apparently relative objects are nothing but modes of Brahman Himself. From this point of view the apparent multiplicity is as true an aspect of Brahman as the unity realisable in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Therefore the images are not mere *clay or stone representations* of Brahman, but Brahman Himself. They are not dead matter, but the substance of God Himself. And the devotee worshipping the image of his *Ishtam*, enjoys Him not only in his inmost heart in the depths of meditation, but also externally with his senses in His blessed image. Not always is image-worship a *step* towards the realisation of the Highest. It is from this stand-point that the devotees regard the Durga-puja.

The Durga-puja is performed consecutively on the seventh, eighth and ninth days of the bright fortnight of *Aswin*. It is generally preceded by preliminary daily worship from the first day of the fortnight, with a special ceremony called *Bodhana* or awakening on the evening of the sixth day (of which more later on), and is succeeded on the tenth day by a short worship and subsequent immersion of the image in water. Even the first sight of the image of Durga fills the mind with an overwhelming consciousness of the protecting mother-heart of God. It is instinct with the sense of motherhood, daughterhood and power. This is how She is described :

जटाजूटसमायुक्तामद्धेन्दुकृतशेखराम् ।  
लोचनत्रयसंयुक्तां पूर्णेन्दुसदृशाननाम् ॥  
अतसीपुष्पवर्णाभां सुप्रतिष्ठां सुलोचनाम् ।  
नवयौवनसम्पन्नां सर्वाभरणभूषिताम् ॥  
सुचारुदशनां तद्वत् पीनोन्नतपयोधराम् ।...  
मृणालायतसंस्पर्शदशबाहुसमन्विताम् ॥...

“Adorned with matted locks and crowned with the crescent, Her face shines like the full moon. She has three eyes. Her complexion resembles that of the *atasi* flower. She is well-seated and Her eyes are beautiful;

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Her person is endowed with the freshness of youth and bedecked with every kind of ornament. She has beautiful teeth and ten hands of which the touch is as soft and cool as of a lotus stalk," etc.

The worship as it is performed on the three main days is intricate and long. But it is full of significance and beauty. The one special feature of all the three days' worship is the *Mahâ-snâna*, the great bath, of the Mother, in which the following things among others are required: dew, juice of the sugar-cane, earth dug up with the tusks by an elephant and a boar, clay from the Ganges, dust from a cross-road and from the front of a royal palace, earth from an ant-hill and that dug up by a bull with its horns, earth from the two banks of a river and from a mountain, water in which five precious stones have been washed, sea-water, milk, honey, rain-water, water of the river Saraswati, water of a fall and of the seven seas, etc. It may puzzle the average reader how one can be bathed in sand and dust. But the meaning lies deeper. It will be noted that the materials are derived from things and places which are associated with some significant expressions of Power. In bathing the Mother, we gather all these associations of power together in their concrete forms and thus enhance the growing consciousness of the Universal Power in our own mind. This bathing ceremony is one of the first items of the worship. Next follows the worship of the associate gods and goddesses, not those whom we see in the images but the eight principal handmaidens of the Mother and the sixty-four *yoginis*. Then of the gods and goddesses as are represented in the images. The speciality of the first day's worship is the installation of the *Navapatrika* before the actual worship begins; of the second day the *Sandhi-puja*, i.e., the puja in the junction of the eighth and ninth lunar days, and of the third, the sacrifice of animals to the Mother, and the worship of a little maiden as the Divine Mother Herself. The worship of a maiden or *Kumari-puja*, as it is called, is the very acme of spiritual realisation, when to the purified and transfigured vision,



the world appears transfused with the Celestial Light and the human appears as the Divine. Nothing can equal the grandeur of the idea of the *Kumari-puja* in which the great puja of the Great Goddess is made to culminate. Verily the Mother abides in all feminine forms!—स्त्रियः समस्ताः कस्य ला जगत्सु। With the passing of the third day's worship, shadows of sadness begin to thicken. The *Vijaya* morning dawns, a short worship is performed and then the Mother's puja is over and She departs. It is impossible to describe the gloom of that day. When the image is taken away for immersion to the neighbouring river, the house is plunged in a great grief, tears flow freely from every eye and even the brightest illumination fails to dispel the darkness that seems to envelop the whole household. Slowly the party returns after the immersion of the image, and all the neighbourhood assemble, and the 'water of peace' शान्तिजल—is scattered on all. And all forget their year-old quarrels and embrace each other in the peace of love and forgiveness. The *Vijaya* embrace is a great healer of wounds, and where other means have failed, this succeeds wonderfully in recreating love and amity. These *Vijaya* greetings are transmitted all over the land even to the distantest friend so that none may remain outside that flow of love. And the expectant heart waits in patience for the revolving year to bring the autumn sky and sun and the thrill of the Mother's coming.

The great worship as it prevails at the present day, has three distinct aspects,—the Tantric, the Pauranic or the mythological and the social. A very important part of the puja is the preliminary ceremony of *Bodhana* or awakening. Externally it is a simple ceremony, performed under a *Vilwa* tree, in which the worshipper 'awakens' the Goddess and prays Her to abide for the night in that tree. Next morning he cuts a branch in which the Goddess is considered to abide, and instals it on the altar of worship. The significance of this ceremony is profound. The Goddess is none else than the 'sleeping' Divinity within the worshipper. She is, according



to the Tantras, the *Kundalini*, the Serpent Power, lying coiled in the *Muladhara* at the bottom of the spine. She has to be awakened, and this awakening is the essence of all worship. For, as She, the Divine Kundalini, wakes up and courses through the spine upwards, She illumines the devotee step by step and as She reaches the centre of the brain, the *Sahasrara*, where Shiva dwells, the devotee is completely liberated and attains full Illumination. Therefore the Goddess has to be awakened externally by the common worshipper, as symbolical of the inner awakening. Again the *Vilwa* tree where She is prayed to dwell, is nothing but a symbol of the spine in which lies the *Sushumna* canal—the path of the *Kundalini*, and which contains the six *Chakras* or psychic centres. Thus the very commencement of the worship is deeply significant. Every item of the worship has this double significance, an internal and an external reference, and a great potency to absorb through this double appeal the attention of the worshipper. Even if the metaphysical meaning escapes attention, there is the concrete ceremonial with its picturesqueness and mythologic association to bewitch the mind.

According to the mythology, Durga who is the daughter of Menaka, is the consort of Shiva. She stays throughout the year in the sacred Kailash with her husband. Menaka begs of her husband to invite the daughter from Kailash for at least three days' stay in her parental home. The loving attitude of the parents towards their child (वात्सल्य रस) is one of the ways to God-realisation. The mythology of Durga aptly typifies this affectionate attitude. The *Agamani* or home-coming of Durga is the emotional representation of the *Bodhana* and is a rhapsody of sweet maternal affection. In this is concentrated a most tender aspect of the Bengali life. The *Agamani* appeals to the emotional imagination of the average Bengalee more than anything else. The yearning of the married daughter for her parental home and the indescribable love of the mother for the daughter are the prominent features of the Bengali domestic life. These



being sublimated through the mythology of Durga have produced Bengali lyrics of wonderful beauty and pathos, and have suffused the abstruse sadhana of the Tantras with the roseate charms of emotion. The mother Menaka dreamt of her daughter and requested her husband to invite her home. The sadhaka also at times gets a lightning glimpse of the *Kundalini Sakṭi* and becomes eager for Her full and steady vision. As the *Bodhana* is a chief feature of the ritualistic side of the worship, so is *Agamani* a principal feature of the social aspect. A more beautiful and sublime expression of the affection of the Bengali mother can hardly be conceived. The *Agamani* songs—which if collected will make a great literature—send a thrill of joy into the heart of the hearers. Every mother feels for the time being as if her own daughter is coming home after a long absence. When again the worship is over and the *Vijaya* comes the pang of separation felt is only equalled by the agony of parting from a beloved daughter returning to her husband's home. She is the Great Goddess and yet the beloved daughter of the household, and the love that thus unites heaven and earth is exquisitely spiritual. The love that a mother feels for her daughter, however beautiful and strong, is after all ephemeral. But to the Bengali mother, her daughter is not an earthly being, she is the very person of the Mother Divine, and the love for her is really the adoration of the Divine Herself, and all the details of everyday life become transfigured into a celestial vision. The Great Mother Herself who holds the entire universe in Her womb, is not so inaccessible and transcendent as She would seem. For does She not come every year to Her mother's home as the beloved little daughter to be feasted and loved and return tearfully after this short sojourn?

The festival in its modern form is not very old. The present conception of the images of Durga and the accompanying deities can be traced only to the thirteenth century. Some of the ritualistic portions of the worship cannot be traced earlier than the eighth century. The earliest available record of the Durga-puja is ascribed to

Mahamahopadhyaya Sulapani who flourished not before 1350 A.D. He has quoted in his books the opinions of Jikan and Dhananjaya, who lived about three centuries earlier. But one thing is certain. Whatever may be the age of the Durga-puja, there is no doubt that a great autumnal festival has been celebrated in the country from very ancient times. Perhaps it existed primarily in the form of the worship of the *Yantra* or the symbolical representation of the Deity on a piece of metal or touchstone. This method is still followed in the celebration of the *Navaratri* days almost all over the country.

As we have said, the *Navapatrika* forms an essential part of the Durga-puja. Perhaps that was the actual form of worship in ancient times. The images were added later on. Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Haraprasad Sastri says that this autumnal festival originated with the worship of the nine prominent plants of the season. Subsequently these plants were deified and were identified with the Divine Mother and her eight companion goddesses mentioned in the *Chandi*. The original worship was of the plants. Later on were conceived the presiding deities whose existence was dependent on the plants. Still later on, the conception of independent deities came into existence and in the Upanishadic period with the evolution of the Advaita philosophy, the different godheads were made to merge into one Supreme Deity—the great Sakti. She is Durga, Uma Haimavati, the Mother of the Universe.

This Mother is the repository of all strength, power, glory and greatness. She is the Sakti, the Prakriti and the dynamic power of the Purusha. It is She who supplied the Purusha or quiescent Brahman with the motif of creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. She is the great enchantress and has cast the spell of fascination upon all created beings. This fascination is Maya. She holds in Her hand the key to liberation. None can enter into the realisation of the Absolute without propitiating Her. Like light and fire She and the Supreme Purusha are ever inseparable. It is to Her alone



that the Sadhakas of all ages and climates offer their prayer and worship. She is alone and there is none beside Her. The demon Shumbha, finding Her getting uppermost in the battle, said, "Oh thou proud one! Thou fightest taking shelter in the strength of others!" Quick came Her reply—

एकैवाहं जगत्यत्र द्वितीया का ममापरा ।

पश्यैता दुष्ट मय्येव विशन्त्यो मद्विभूतयः ॥

"I am alone in this world. Who is there second to Me? Oh wicked one! see, how these My own attributes are being absorbed into Me!" With these words She absorbed Her companions in the battle into Her own self and remained all alone in the field.

Thrice was She invoked in ancient times, as described in the *Chandi*, to save the gods and the world from the oppressions of the Asuras. Thrice did She vanquish them and save religion. She is ever ready to grant boons to Her devotees. Verily She is the *Kalpataaru* which satisfies everyone who seeks boons from it. Two Sadhakas, the king Suratha and the merchant Samadhi, worshipped Her with two different desires. The humiliated and dethroned king sought back his kingdom and a happy life in this birth and the next. But the merchant, disgusted with the evanescent objects of the world, prayed for Supreme Knowledge to attain Liberation. Both worshipped the Divine Mother and their respective desires were fulfilled.

Thus did She promise to the gods, to which She is ever faithful :

इत्थं यदा यदा बाधा दानवोत्था भविष्यति ।

तदा तदाऽवतीर्याहं करिष्याम्यरिसंक्षयम् ॥

"Whenever such critical predicaments owing to the oppression of the demons will arise, then will I incarnate Myself and annihilate the enemies."

## TOWARDS PEACE

[TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO GHOSE]

BY SWAMI CHIDATMANANDA

Discrimination and renunciation being absolutely necessary as preliminary steps towards spiritual progress, the aspirant, convinced of walking the path of good and leaving the evil and pleasant one, naturally begins to advance, as his intense attachment to sense enjoyments gradually decreases and his mind released from its lower occupation of sensuous thoughts is lightened. He then desires to go a little deeper into the mystery of the universe to find out the Ultimate Reality behind the ever-changing phenomena. Doubts and uncertainties begin to seize the mind, and to solve the riddle of the universe he occupies himself with the study of religions and philosophies. The more he studies the different schools of thought, the more his mind gets puzzled. He finds no solution and begins to think in despair, that nobody, not even the ancient Rishis, could find out the Truth. Everyone has his own conception of God and universe and no common ground to stand upon. Had they realised the Truth, all of them would have spoken of it identically, because if there is any Truth at all, it should be one. The Naiyayikas hold that God, soul and matter are separate entities. The Sankhya on the other hand believes in two entities, Soul and Matter, or Purusha and Prakriti. Prakriti in their Philosophy is one, but Purushas are innumerable, and all of them are infinite and eternal. Vedanta has its own theory of Advaita or oneness of existence. It does not believe in the duality of Soul and Matter as separate entities. All is one without a second,—is the bold assertion of this school of thought, while the materialists or atheists cannot find anything else in existence but matter. In their philosophy God or Cosmic Intelligence has no place, and they emphatically deny His



existence. All of these philosophers arrived at their conclusions in their different ways, and therefore the mind gets lost in all these intellectual puzzles. Tired and hopeless of getting at the final decision, the aspirant almost gives up his quest after the Truth and comes to think that it is impossible to find out the Reality, and no one has really found it out. All are groping in the dark, since intellect refuses to go beyond a certain limit. Many other doubts also get hold of the mind. Hindus believe in the theory of reincarnation, while Muhammadans and Christians do not, they believe in the Day of Judgment. The greatest difficulty for the intellect is how to find out the reason of the world, as to what necessity had God, if any, to create this miserable universe, with its hideous struggle for existence, its wars and jealousies, its births and deaths. But though he despairs of finding the Reality, still his mind gets no peace, and the intellect finds no rest until it has solved this problem. This is a most critical state of the mind.

This was the mental state of mine some years ago when I was a householder, and I had the experience of that miserable mental condition where one finds no peace on account of such doubts and uncertainties. The Lord has well said in the Gita that the ignorant man without *Shraddhâ* or faith and full of doubts goes to destruction. To a man assailed with such doubts, nothing can give peace and happiness. He can have no faith or belief in God, the Universal Spirit, and there is every likelihood of his falling into the deep abyss of sensuality, if he does not guard himself, and consequently the destruction of his soul is often inevitable. In such disturbed conditions of the mind, I had the good fortune to meet one of the greatest men of India, Sri Aurobindo Ghose, at Pondicherry. I had often heard of his great spiritual knowledge and therefore approached him with the firm belief that I would get a solution of my doubts from him. The conversations I had with him were of great help to me in regaining my mental poise and calmness. One month's daily intercourse with him was a source of great illumina-



tion to me ; and from that time on, my spiritual progress has been on even ground. To share this bliss and illumination with the readers of *Prabuddha Bharata*, I reproduce the conversations here in the form of a dialogue with the hope that they would find it helpful in their spiritual progress. Let it however be understood that the language of the report is sometimes mine.

Sri Aurobindo is a man of austere habits, lives day and night within the precincts of his house, and never goes out even for a walk. He remains deep in meditation most of his time, except for an hour or two in the afternoon which he spends in seeing people who are eager to profit by his sublime thoughts and knowledge. He is a man of extreme simplicity. His house and mode of life are quite free from the paraphernalia of Western civilisation. He seems to be in perfect control of his mind and can never be provoked to anger. Many persons go to him, some of them talk foolishly and even abusively, but he always remains in his calm and unruffled mood, always smiling and full of happiness. To be with him even for a short time is a benediction. A person of great spirituality saturates the atmosphere about him with peace and blessedness, and one going into it cannot but be influenced and benefited. Association with men of lofty spirituality had been the turning-point for many misguided and degraded souls, and thenceforth their lives were of great benefit to themselves and to others. I was ushered into the presence of Sri Aurobindo by his secretary, on a previous appointment. He was ready to receive me at the appointed time. I bowed to him and touched his feet and took a seat on a chair close to him. When I sat there, he asked me as to what I wanted him to do for me.

*Question.* My mind is very much disturbed and finds no peace on account of doubts regarding God and the universe and their mutual relations, and also owing to the senses not being under control. The desire of obtaining peace is my object.

*Answer.* The reason of the world cannot be con-



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ceived or explained by the intellect. It is a thing to be realised, intellect is unable to solve the riddle.

Q. What is then the necessity of all the philosophies, if they cannot reach the Ultimate Reality?

A. Philosophies only lead one to the gate, to enter (the Supreme) is the work of the Soul.

Q. If the philosophers have reached the common goal, then why such divergence of opinion? If all of them have reached the destination, then they should describe the Reality in one way only.

A. Philosophers can look only at a section of the Infinite, not at the whole ; hence the difference in experience.

Q. To find out the reason of the world is a great problem, and unless it is solved, the mind cannot find rest. Please help me to find the solution.

A. This problem is impossible to solve, unless the mind is made still and you realise yourself, viz., gain your Godhead. Then you can find out the reason of the world. The Purusha feels *ananda* in activity. It is only a portion of the Infinite that transforms itself into the world. Let this problem be placed in the hands of the Atman or Purusha. He has entangled himself in Prakriti and he can come out of it himself. The mind cannot solve this and you are trying to do this with that frail instrument. Leave it to him to solve. It is his pleasure to get mixed up with Prakriti and then come out of it at his sweet will. If you have the full conviction and faith that you are the Purusha, above and beyond Nature, then you should not mix yourself up with the mind and think of yourself as the mind. Be firm in this conviction. But if the mind does not obey you, let it be free. I would not put any pressure on the mind if it is wilful, but would leave it free, neither obstruct its way nor help it in any way. I would of course admonish it about the spiritual goal and let it choose between the spiritual bliss and worldly pleasures.

Q. Please tell me the best and easiest way to control the senses and then to know the Atman.

A. The surest and safest way to that end is to try to detach one's Atman from the entanglement of the Prakriti, to feel oneself as the witness. If Prakriti tries to envelop the Soul, the wide awake Atman should refuse to be influenced by her and consider himself quite above and free of her. Of course this is very difficult in the beginning, but when a habit is formed, then the bonds are broken, and the Soul gains full mastery over the forces of Nature. At first the beginner should try to keep this witness-idea before the mind's eye as much as he can, and gradually develop it in such a way that it may never leave the mind. A strong will is required, and the aspirant must not despair if any conspicuous result is not soon obtained. He is sure to be free, if he persists. Sometimes a strong reaction sets in and the Prakriti attacks the Soul vehemently, but the Yogi need not lose heart but fight her out to ultimate victory.

Q. To obtain early control of mind is it not necessary to live in spiritual environments as much as possible?

A. Yes, it is very necessary ; environments do influence the mind very much.

Q. When you say that the Purusha should watch the movements of the Prakriti and consider himself as a witness, does *he* actually do this or is it the *mind* that does it?

A. The mind can have two functions, the one going out and the other going in ; but it is only an instrument in the hands of the Purusha.

Q. Is Purusha active or inactive?

A. He is both active and inactive.\*

Q. But why has he any necessity of action?

A. He feels *ananda* in action but is unattached.

Q. Is it possible to still the mind completely?

A. Yes, it is. I had this experience with a Yogi in Northern India with whom I stayed for two months during

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\* Of course this is not the accepted view.—EDITOR, P. B.



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my political life, and he taught me to still the mind completely.

Q. During meditation I find my mind absolutely restless. What should be done in such a state?

A. Yes, it is not easy to still a wandering mind. The only way is to gather it again and again and gradually it will calm down. It will be a fair success if you could still it even for a minute. You will feel calmness.

Q. I do not know myself ; it seems therefore that my inability to watch the mind for a short time even is due to ignorance. Can I know myself?

A. Many persons are doing this watching of the mind without actually knowing themselves. It requires no self-knowledge.

Q. How can I improve?

A. Patient practice is the only way to improve.

[According to his instructions I began to meditate and watch the mind, but I found that when I was watching it the mind did not go anywhere, but as soon as I forgot myself as a witness, it began to run. I told him of it and asked him what I should do.]

A. You have no power to divide the mind into two, the watcher and the watched. Your mind is mechanical and has become like a prison. This has to be broken. You should therefore practise to think of the Supreme Power and Light just above your head and should aspire with devotion to bring Him down into your mind to make it passive and consequently illumined. Leave everything in His hands and think of yourself only as an instrument for Him to use at His own will. As soon as you get up in the morning, lay yourself at His service unreservedly and dedicate yourself to Him and think that whatever happens is from Him. Persistence in this practice will in course of time bring passivity of mind and make the mind fit for higher knowledge. You should find out environments which may help you in your uplift. You have an emotional temperament and should live in surroundings where Bhakti predominates.

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# RAMA KRISHNA MONASTERY AT BELUR

BY DHAN GOPAL MUKHERJEE

[*First Impression*]

That a holy man, whom many of his followers called an Incarnation of God, lived in recent years near Calcutta, is one of the surprises of our time. Not only that. The most surprising thing about the matter is that I should go straight back from America, of the twentieth century, and find his followers leading their medieval life right in the center of modern progress. These monks and nuns living so close to the city of Calcutta, touching it at every vital point, yet maintained their aloofness from it with perfect ease. . .

Through the kindness of a friend I had been invited to come and live in the Monastery where Rama Krishna's followers had their home. It looked quite imposing from the Calcutta side of the Ganges whence we approached it on a boat. The tower of a new temple stood out like a white nimbus above clumps of palm trees against the purple of the sunset sky. Below at its foot was a high stone palisade of graying yellow against which the river dragged its weary low tide. Soon our boat crossed the middle of the river. Now the rest of the monastery buildings raised their yellow heads one by one till the last little white shrine dedicated to the Divine Mother\* like a veil of silver came into view for a moment.

Suddenly they all vanished as we drew close to the embankment which rose like an immense precipice shutting everything from our view.

After we had moored our boat at the foot of the Ghaut we climbed its stairs in great haste. For we were afraid to be too late for Arati (even-song). On reaching the highest step we found ourselves on a large terrace of

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\* Perhaps he means the "Holy Mother," the blessed consort of Sri Ramakrishna.—Editor, P. B.



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gray cement whence ran a small path toward the sacred shrine. Beyond the shrine gleamed the fierce green of the tropical gardens already taking on a softening tone of dull gold as the purple dusk stole down from the sky on wings of silence.

Just at that moment someone smote a gong in the shrine. That made us hasten within—for the Arati had begun. The shrine was divided into two rooms: inner and outer. We sat near a group of shaven-headed monks who occupied the scarlet floor of the outer shrine. They beat their several cymbals, and loudly chanted a benediction. While in the room beyond—the inner shrine—a monk in yellow waved a Pancha Pradip (a candelabrum of five lit candles) before a picture of Rama Krishna which occupied the flower-decked altar. And around the altar innumerable lamps—their wicks soaked in Ghrita (clarified butter)—lifted their fragrant flames to the image of the teacher. Seen in that circle of light, Rama Krishna's picture afforded one the strangest impression: though he looked full of life yet he appeared inert as inertness itself.

"How came he to achieve that state?" I pondered within myself, hoping to enquire into his career fully and critically later on. Just then the clashing of cymbals ceased along with singing. The monk inside stopped waving the Pancha Pradip. After setting it down he took up a conch-shell and blew into it three times. After the last echo of that noise had died down he quietly seated himself before the altar and began to meditate. Following his example the Sanyasins (monks) in the outer shrine put away their cymbals; then chanted the thought on which they were to meditate. Now one by one they became still. Their bodies became rigid. Save their regular slow breathing which rose and fell in unison there was nothing to distinguish them from statues. Just\* then a sound like bees around a hive far away; the monk in

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\* From here on the description of the Arati does not agree with the reality.—Editor, P. B.

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the inner shrine chanted in a very low tone enunciating every word most clearly :

“Whence our words come back broken, and thoughts return like dogs beaten in a chase, that silence over which gathers the dust of all sound. O river of Miracles. . .”

That meditation like a sharp shearing current cut through my thoughts and flooded the entire room. Every face before me, each one of the monks, was austere like flint and as purged of desire as burnt gold. With eyes shut, mouths tightly closed, they went on fathoming that silence whose deeps “cannot be reached even by the plummet of stars !”

That was my first experience of the followers of Shree Rama Krishna. It fascinated me. And as I went on living with them I grew more and more curious to learn everything about their daily deeds. Why did they act as they did? What rules were they following in their conduct? Who formulated the scheme of their life? But the men whom I questioned said very little. They urged me “*to live amongst them awhile longer.*”

The smoothness and simplicity that formed the routine of their life had a vivid reality under it. I could not avoid being conscious of the consecration that gave meaning even to their coming and going. Their faces shone with pure light. They were not troubled by false hopes, nor deluded by fancies. There was a grim but beautiful reality in all that they said and did. Every morning they rose before five in order to meditate for two hours. Then they went on to their day’s deeds such as taking care of the sick, succoring the poor, and teaching the young.

At noon they held a short communion with the Lord, then had their dinner. A siesta followed. At about half past two they held classes in which erudite scholars discussed and taught Vedanta. The most illuminating interpretations of the Upanishads that I have ever known I heard in the class rooms of this monastery.

Then about four tea was served. At half past four



all the monks went forth to take their favorite physical exercises. When evening came, as I have described, one met them at the shrine where the Arati was held.

These ocher-robed men, walking across green lawns discoursing gently on God and Rama Krishna, were men of action as well. If there was sickness they looked after the sick of the neighbouring locality. If there was famine in any part of India, or inundation, or plague, they were there like an "eagle to its prey" to help the distressed. Once that was over they returned to the monastery to live and to be their own selves. Action never smirched them. Nor did inaction taint them with idleness. In one word they were free men.

And when I questioned them as to what had freed them from both pleasure and pain, they invariably pointed at the life and sayings of Shree Rama Krishna. "When all the sign-posts point to the same road," the proverb enjoins, "one is forced to take it." So when all the monks on each occasion pointed at the life of Rama Krishna I had to go and study it. "It is better to examine the source of the fountain," I was told.

But I did not go to a printed page. Early in my youth my mother had taught me: "Do not put a printed page between yourself and Life." So in order to study the life of Rama Krishna I began to look for its chroniclers and not the chronicle.

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### [*Last Impression*]

As we rowed across the river, the gray temple-towers and the decaying trees of Dakshineswar sank out of sight. And like a banner on the other shore rose the white turret of the Monastery temple. The palms spread their fans in the air on which the afternoon sun shone fiercely. Now we saw ocher-robed figures moving about through green gardens. Turret by turret, roof by roof, the yellow-walled monastery came into full view, and slowly vanished again as we made our boat fast under the stone embankment. Leaping over, I ran up the steps of the Ghaut

like a happy squirrel. The life and vigor of the place possessed me at once.

I ran along the wall of the first building, and suddenly beheld the Pundit\* sitting on the red-tiled terrace waiting for me. After I had seated myself near him, I looked at his bearded face, then said: "My Lord, I leave on the morrow."

He put his fingers through his white beard a few times, then remarked: "Are the Rama Krishna legends that you have gathered tall enough? The legends ought to measure up to His sky-humbling stature."

I said "No, they are not tall. They seem to me quite natural and normal. They are mostly based on reality."

"I do not mean that," he rejoined, bringing his lion-head of a face close to mine. "I mean whatever legend grows up about him will become true."†

"I do not understand you." I was puzzled.

"It is simple enough," the Pundit ejaculated with a backward movement of his head. "Look at Christ: even His birth without any earthly father became a reality. Why? Because His Being was so living and so tall that in order to explain Him they had to invent Immaculate Conception. The same was the case with Buddha. He was so divine that they had to invent the same origin for Him, an Immaculate Conception, in order to grasp His essence. All legends become history when their central character is spiritual enough to sustain and give life to them.

"The story of the Immaculate Conception came after Buddha and Christ had become God," I repeated to myself.

The Pundit said, "Yes. The same thing is happening to Rama Krishna. He was so spiritual that in order to explain him, people have to resort to many super-

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\* The Pundit is "a chronicler of Rama Krishna's conversations" as the author says elsewhere and a disciple of the Master, and is evidently no other than "M," the author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.—Editor, P. B.

† This must be a strange theory indeed, if it is as it is represented.—Editor, P. B.



natural explanations. It has been my lot to chronicle only his discourses."

"I wish it were my lot to chronicle the legends," I remarked. "Unfortunately, what people tell me is more or less embedded in facts. Some day I will find those who will tell me of the supernatural higher legends. But, not to change the subject, I should like to ask you, sir, is there any reason why all of you allow the property at Dakshineswar to fall into ruin while you take good care of this place which was built years after Rama Krishna's death?"

"There is no reason," he answered without the slightest delay. "You see how strong the trees look here, how fine the turf, and how healthy the cows, not to speak of the holy men. But this is where Rama Krishna lives. Wherever a few of the servants of Truth dwell, Being precipitates itself. And where there is Being, life grows. All that you see here is a reflection of Being."

"Then that is true of all the disciples and followers of Rama Krishna," I commented.

"Who can deny it?" He expatiated: "When the Master died, we had no place to go to. Now Benares, Kankhal, Bombay, Bangalore, Madras, and dozens of other cities in India, and those that are abroad, have their Rama Krishna Ashrama where men and women gather irrespective of religion and race to live\* so that a deathless Being is precipitated. It has come faster than I dreamt. But such is the power of the Inner Life that the Holy One lives! We who lived with him know that his Light is steeper than all darkness and will be shed upon the world as long as we can create it through living. It can grow wherever men choose to dwell in purity, holiness and infinite tolerance." . . .

By now the afternoon was far spent. The opposite shore—Dakshineswar—sank into deepening purple dusk. The boats lapsed their sails that had been gleaming like sunset clouds of amber, amethyst, and rose. They slowly drifted shorewards, and in a few minutes about a dozen

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\* Men and women live in separate Ashramas.—*Editor, P. B.*

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of them were moored at the Monastery Ghaut. Then their half-naked boatmen, like brown Tritons, trooped up the steps with baskets of fruits, flowers, and rice to offer to the monks as Dakshina, presents. They left their offering at the door of a hut, then walked towards the inner shrine in order to attend Arati.

Swiftly the day was passing into the night. Silence like a black panther began to prowl about us. We felt beset with sanctities. The Pundit said to me : "Do you meditate, or, do you go hence now?"

"I go, my Lord," I answered, "to begin my story. This evening I do not meditate." He blessed me. Then added: "I must go and pray. May your soul pour compassion upon all. Farewell!"

In a minute he was gone. As I slowly went down the steps of the Ghaut, the sound of a gong smote the air. I listened as I sat still on my boat. Soon came the chant of many voices. I knew what they were saying. So I chanted!

"O thou River of miracles that is within me, pour the healing waters of compassion on the wounded body of Man and make him whole."

Now that I had hymned Silence we rowed our boats towards Calcutta. As we drifted down the tide my imagination wandered back to the inner shrine of the Monastery. I imagined myself sitting within, still attending Arati. With my mind's eyes I saw those innumerable lamps lifting their fragrant flames towards the image of Rama Krishna on the altar. The yellow-robed monks waved lit candles before it, while I sat outside and sang again and again "O River of Miracles. . ."

By the time we had reached the Calcutta side of the Ganges it was starry night. The blue-black sky vaulted above, haughty with aloofness, and the stars hung so low that they seemed intimate. Far off in the west the lamps of the various monastery buildings and of the boats below were being lighted one by one.

What did it all mean? Shall I ever be able to tell even a fraction of the joy and peace that was vouchsafed



me by those ocher-robed monks? Is it possible that men can live such a vivid life that it becomes a galloping torch of Truth which the material darkness of our time cannot obscure? What had I witnessed? Did I dream these days over there in the monastery? Or, did I truly live as I had never lived before?

Cogitating in the above manner I reached home. Can words translate for the reader Tat, That, which burns in the eyes of those monks across the river? Can anything in any language render the militant peace of the soul that men have won for themselves and for the world they live in? And is there anywhere in any age one single metaphor or a symbol which adequately conveys the meaning of That? Holiness alone can explain Holiness. And only in so far as we ourselves become Sons of Immortality shall we be able to understand those Sons of God who have sought to help mankind.\*

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

(ENGLISH)

**SUPERCONSCIOUS VISION.**—By Swami Prabhavananda.  
Published by the Vedanta Society of Portland,  
U. S. A.

A small pamphlet of 15 pages, dealing succinctly but very clearly with the three states, the subconscious, the conscious and the superconscious, with examples and authoritative quotations. The distinctions and relations among them are often unknown; this little booklet will be of wonderful help in their understanding.

**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, THE PATRIOT MONK OF MODERN INDIA.**—By N. Kasturi, M.A., B.L. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore. Pp. 37. Price 3 as.

This little book, beautifully got up and written in

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\* From *The Face of Silence* by Dhan Gopal Mukerji, published last month by E. P. Dutton and Company, New York. The author is well-known in America as a speaker and writer, and he has been living there for the last many years. Some of his writings have already gained great reputation.—Editor, P. B.

chaste English, is a fine primer of Swamiji's life and message. All the important events of his life have been nicely delineated and the principal clauses of his message illuminatingly expounded. It will amply repay perusal and is worth much more than its monetary value. The cover contains a nice portrait of Swamiji.

IN THE TEMPLE OF TRUTH.—By M. Sri Ramamurti, M.A.  
To be had of Goldquin & Co., College Street Market,  
Calcutta. Pp. VIII+51.

Mr. Ramamurti wields a facile pen and is rich in imagination and thought. He presents us in this small book beautiful prose-poems delineating nature's beauty, psychological charm and deep thoughts. The book is divided into two parts, Poems and Reflections, and each has its own worth. As Prof. Seshadri remarks in his foreword, the author is indeed quite happy in his epigrams of which a few examples: "Knowledge in one direction is ignorance in many others." "The discarded crumbs of Wisdom are the valued prizes of Ambition." "Satan—The shadow of God."

THE MESSAGE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE PRAVARTAK SANGHA.—  
Published by the Pravartak Publishing House, 29,  
Cornwallis Street, Calcutta. Price 8 as.

The book is, as its name implies, a statement and description of the ideals and activities of the Sangha and is profusely illustrated, and shows what a batch of sincere patriots are doing for the elevation of the country and the people.

(BENGALI)

KASHIDHAME SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AT BENARES).—By Mahendra Nath Datta and Swami Sadasivananda. Published by the Burman Publishing House, 193, Cornwallis Street, Calcutta. Pp. 88. Price 12 as.

When Swami Vivekananda visited Benares for the last time some time before his passing away, Swami



Sadasivananda was one of the batch of young men who came to love him and became his disciples. He was in touch with Swamiji throughout his stay at Benares and was thus able to give out many details of those days heretofore unknown. Babu M. N. Datta persuaded Swami Sadasivananda to narrate them and became instrumental in putting his words into the present narrative form. We have in it many interesting events and conversations recorded, all raked up from a distant memory. The narrative is undoubtedly fascinating.

YUGACHARYA VIVEKANANDA O RAMAKRISHNA SANGHA  
(VIVEKANANDA THE MODERN PROPHET AND THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION).—By Motilal Roy. Published by the Pravartak Publishing House, Calcutta. Price Re. 1 as. 8.

Sj. Motilal Roy is a past master in book-writing. A fascinating style, an interpretative genius and, above all, a feeling heart combine to make his writings irresistible. The same traits are also markedly evident in the book under review. He studies herein the life-events of Swamiji from the collective view-point and it is at once a narration and an interpretation.

Interpretation has its advantages as well as disadvantages and both are quite in evidence in the present work. We must confess that we find ourselves in several respects disagreeing with the author. The author has been preaching for many years a new kind of Sadhana and religious ideal which is designated as the "Yoga of Self-surrender." He does not believe that Mukti is the highest ideal. He is a believer in *Lila*. He further believes in what he terms "Collective Mukti." Without discussing the spiritual and philosophical value of these doctrines, we may say that to read them into the life of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji is, to say the least, a conscious error. That Swamiji did not believe in them in the way the author indicates, will be clear if only we mention that the basic ideals of his Mission, as stated by himself, are "the emancipation of one's own self as well as the

good of the world." Individual Mukti is as much his ideal as of the previous teachers. Only he emphasises the service of men to be as good a path for the realisation of it as Jnāna or Bhakti. There is also a wrong statement on page 127. Swamiji did not advocate *asavarna*, inter-caste marriage, but only marriage among sub-castes. The book is otherwise extremely well written and is profusely illustrated with both colored and ink pictures.

## NEWS AND NOTES

### EDUCATION IN INDIA AND JAPAN

We are indebted to the *Indian Social Reformer*, Bombay, for the following comparative study of Indian and Japanese education.

The population of British India at the last Census was 247,000,000 and that of Japan Proper in 1923 was 60,250,000. Roughly the population of British India is four times that of Japan. Taking the children of school-age to be 15 per cent of the population, there are 37,000,000 such children in British India and some 9,000,000 in Japan. The number of educational institutions in British India, from elementary schools to University colleges, is 228,229, and in Japan, 44,355. We have thus more than five times the number of institutions of Japan, but the number of students in them is less than that in the Japanese institutions. The total number of students in the public institutions in British India is 9,800,000 as against in Japan, nearly 11 millions. With a population four times as large and with five times as many institutions we have over one million students less than that country. The proportion of persons of school-age attending all classes of educational institutions in British India is not even 4 per cent of the total population while in Japan it is nearly 19 per cent, that is to say, 11 per cent of our population of school-age is growing up without education, while in Japan all children of



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school-age are under instruction and 4 per cent over that age.

The greater scope and variety of educational institutions in Japan is in contrast to the limited character of Indian institutions. The largest number of Japanese students next to that in elementary schools, is to be found in what are called Technical Continuation Schools which are also the most numerous. There are nearly 15,000 of these institutions with over a million students. The object of these schools is said to be "to give to boys and girls engaged in vocations, after completing the ordinary elementary school, useful knowledge and art relating to them, and, at the same time, to furnish education necessary in daily life." They are what we should call vocational schools. The demand for these schools has rapidly increased, as shown by the fact that their number and that of their scholars has nearly doubled in ten years. In India above the elementary schools, we have only middle schools to which hardly 10 per cent of those who finish their primary course go up. In Japan, the Technical and Technical Continuation Schools attract more than 10 per cent of the output of the primary schools, and, in this connection, it should be noted that the ordinary primary school course in Japan extends to six years, as compared with four years in India. The establishment of technical schools for children after completion of elementary education will attract a large number who do not at present proceed beyond it.

"The total expenditure by Government on education in India is Rs. 9,98,01,594, a sum which represents only four annas per head of the population." This is less than 5 per cent of the total revenue of the Central and Provincial Governments which now exceeds 220 crores. In Japan, at the present time, the annual expenditure on education of the Central Government and local public bodies amounts to 15 per cent of the total annual expenditure. As against 4 annas per head of the population in India, the Japanese expenditure on education is over 8 yen per head of which the Central Government

contributes nearly two-fifths or 3 yen per head, which is equal to nearly Rs. 4. The policy of Japan is exactly the opposite of that of India in regard to fees. In India, we have been screwing up the fees. In Japan, the policy is to keep the fees as low as possible, and to meet the larger part of the expenditure on education out of public funds.

The above study is quite illuminating and has the merit of being based on the Government of India Bureau of Education's annual review "Education in India" for 1924-25, and "A General Survey of Education in Japan," issued this year by the Japanese Educational Department.

### THE VEDIC AUTUMN FESTIVALS

The autumn festival is evidently of very ancient origin. The mode in which it is observed at the present times may not go beyond the Pauranic age, though some traces of its extreme antiquity are in evidence, as for example, in the worship of the *Nava-patrika*, forming part of the Durga Puja. But even the worship of the "nine foliages" does not reach the ancient days of the Vedas. The way in which the Vedic people celebrated the advent of the Queen of seasons, is found recorded in the Samhitas and the Sutras. The autumn season however does not consist, according to the Vedic calculation, of the months of *Bhâdra* and *Aswina*, but of *Aswina* and *Kârtika*. Thus does the Taittiriya Samhita laud the excellence of the autumn season: "The twin eyes of the Autumn are shining in exceeding gladness like those of a man just cured of an eye-disease. Her eyes are clear and bright. . . . Behold! her robes are fresh and golden! . . ."

The very first ceremony the Vedic Aryans observed in the autumn season was the *Aswayuji Karma*. It was performed on the full moon day of the month of *Aswina*. The houses were repaired, plastered and decorated. Every member of the household bathed and put on



white clothes and assembled at the place of the ceremony. The master of the house then prepared an oblation of clarified butter and milk and offered it into the sacrificial fire. And as he did so, he prayed: "May all that is deficient in me, be made whole, and all that is whole in me, remain unimpaired!"

Another observance was *Sitâ-yajna*—the sacrifice of the furrow. This ceremony was also performed in the spring season. It was celebrated in a portion of a ploughed field, cleaned and washed. *Kusha* grass and rice plants were spread on a selected spot and a fire was lighted on them. Into this fire oblations were made to *Sitâ* who was invoked as the wife of Indra and was prayed for to remove the sufferings of the sacrificer.

A third observance of which mention is found in the Vedas is the ceremony of *Agrayana*, that is to say, the first partaking of the new crop. This is the exact equivalent of the current ceremony of *Navanna*, "new-rice." This was performed thrice in the year being timed to the reaping of the year's three principal crops. The idea was to offer the first portions of the harvests to the gods before they were used by the householders themselves, and also thereby to obviate any evil that might lurk within the new crops. The character of these observances is very simple and pastoral. Out of such naturalism evidently rose the worship of the new plants of the season and then of their presiding deities. How this again culminated in monotheistic and pantheistic worship, is witnessed by the present custom of the worship of the *Shakti* in the autumn season.

#### PASSING AWAY OF MISS S. E. WALDO.

It is with great sorrow that we record the passing away of Miss S. E. Waldo after five days' illness at Brooklyn, New York, on the 15th July last. She was one of the foremost American disciples of Swami Vivekananda who gave her the name of Sister Haridasi, and served him with

utmost zeal and faithfulness doing sometimes even menial works for him. It was she to whom Swamiji dictated the translation and commentary of Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutras* included in Swamiji's *Raja Yoga*. The most beautiful *Inspired Talks* of Swamiji were also recorded by her in long hand, while she was staying at the Thousand Island Park with him. Swamiji had great faith in her spiritual and literary powers, and often entrusted her with the preparation of his lectures for the press and the conduct of the difficult Raja Yoga classes. May she rest in Eternal Peace !

#### A NEW ASHRAMA AT OOTACAMUND.

A new Ashrama of the Ramakrishna Order was opened at Ootacamund, Madras, on Friday, the 24th September last, by Swami Shivanandaji himself, the President of the Order. In the early morning of that day, priests went into the new building and performed the traditional worship of the *Nava-grahas* and the accessory *homas*. A procession was then led to the new Ashrama, consisting of Swami Shivanandaji, Swami Yatiswarananda and other Sannyasins and the local devotees, with the accompaniment of music and the recitation of Vedic *mantras*. Swami Shivanandaji installed the picture of Sri Ramakrishna on the altar in the shrine, and after he had made flower-offerings at the sacred feet of the Master, Swami Yatiswarananda performed his *puja* and *homa* with due ceremonies and offerings of fruits and sweets. In the evening, Swami Yatiswarananda spoke in English on the purpose of the Ashrama and the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and Brahmachari Sura Chaitanya spoke in Tamil. Next Sunday, Swami Shivanandaji entertained the local devotees, and the contractors and labourers who had worked in the construction of the Ashrama with a sumptuous feast. The Ashrama is bound to be of great benefit to the local public.

Swami Yatiswarananda delivered three more speeches in the town of Ootacamund, which were well attended



and much appreciated. His subjects were: "Ideal of Worship," "Essentials of Hinduism," and "Aggressive Hinduism."

### THE DEOGHAR VIDYAPITH

The last year's report of the *Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith* at Deoghar, Behar, is one of sound progress and all-round development. The most important feature of the year under review is the erection of three separate blocks of building on the Institution's own permanent site, the gift of Kumar Arun Chandra Singha of Paikpara, Bengal. These are now in occupation after a formal opening by the President of the Mission in January last. But the equipment of the Vidyapith is scarcely complete. For it still wants badly an Office room, a Library hall, a Prayer hall, a Guest-house and one more Dormitory. The existing Library should be more properly replenished. A small laboratory should be organised, and carpentry instruments, a magic lantern etc. are also urgently required. There must also be a permanent fund. We do hope the public will generously come forward with unstinted help.

The Vidyapith aims at imparting a man-making education which may be broadly divided under the following heads:—Physical, Intellectual, Practical, Æsthetic, Moral and Religious. The Intellectual training is at present so constituted as to enable a student to appear, if he so desires, at the Matriculation Examination of the Calcutta University. The following subjects are taught: Bengali, Sanskrit, English, Mathematics, Geography, History, Domestic Hygiene, Elementary Science, Drawing, Music and Nature-study. Besides these, the boys are taught, through conversation, Religion, Morals, Mythology, History and Biography of great men. The course provides for a more extensive knowledge of Bengali Literature, History, Geography and Elementary Science than is required by the present Matric. standard of the Calcutta University. The teaching staff consists of 10 workers many of whom are monastic members of the Mission. They live with

the students who were 46 in number last year, and guide them with the utmost care through all the phases of their mental and physical development, instilling noble ideals into their heart and stimulating their practicality and moral, æsthetic and spiritual impulses. The idea is more of help than imposition from outside, and the training is characterised by amusement, absence of coercive measures and loving co-operation between the teacher and the taught.

Every boy seeking admission here must pay an admission fee of Rs. 5 and a monthly fee of Rs. 18 for boarding, tuition etc. The non-recurring expenses have to be borne in addition by the boy's guardian.

The financial position of the Vidyapith is as follows :

(A) The total receipts for the General Fund during the year including the previous year's balance were Rs. 11235 6 as. 9 pies, and the balance in hand at the end was Rs. 1978 2 as. 10½ pies. (B) Total receipts including previous year's balance for the Building Fund were Rs. 16,616 14 as. 4 pies and the balance in hand Rs. 512 12 as. 7 pies. Contributions may be sent to (1) President, R. K. Mission, Belur Math, Howrah, Bengal, or to (2) Secy., R. K. Mission, 1, Mukherji Lane, Bagh-bazar, Calcutta, or to (3) Secy., R. K. Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar, E. I. Ry.

#### IN MEMORIAM

We are deeply grieved to announce the passing away, on 27th October last, of Swami Vedananda, the head of the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Brindaban. Within the last twelvemonth he had a number of serious attacks of fever and pneumonia, which practically shattered his health. No one, however, was prepared for the sudden catastrophe, which was due, it is surmised, to an attack of diphtheria. The Swami, who was below 40, was a patriotic soul who had joined the Ramakrishna Order some 15 years ago, and the Mission keenly feels the loss of an able worker. It may interest our readers to learn that he had served as manager of this paper for a considerable period. He was the brother of Sj. Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, the renowned Bengali novelist, and it was at his country house that the Swami passed into eternal repose at the feet of the Lord.