Prabuddha Bharata

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।
Katha Upa. I. iii. 4.

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

VOL. XXXI. FEBRUARY, 1926. No. 2.

TALKS WITH SWAMI TURIYANANDA AT BENARES.

14th January, 1921.

Apropos of the Bhâgavata class held yesterday, the Swami said: "What a fine advice Prahlâda gave to his boy companions! He says 'Worship the Lord even from childhood. This body is extremely despicable; the only saving grace is that it helps realisation of the Lord.' And how boldly he declared to his father that none had taught him to love God, neither his teachers nor even he himself! This love of God, he says, is attainable only through the grace of the devotees. The father exclaimed, 'Who is this? He will be my death, I fear! Even Brahmâ and Vishnu quake before me, but he argues fearlessly with me! Kill him!'

"Perhaps you are thinking that it is fictitious. But no, it is all true. Prahlâda is not dead, he still lives.—He lives in every devotee's heart, in yours and in mine. When such stupendous efforts failed to destroy him, how

can he ever die? Did he not realise himself as pervading everything? Read the Vishnu Purana; there you will find that his monistic consciousness made even blocks of stones float on water!

"An excellent book again is the Chandi! The philosophy of the Chandi has established the unity of Brahman and Shakti. 'She the Divine Mother is the Absolute and yet the Relative in the form of the Universe. She pervades everything.'" Thus the Swami recited verse after verse from the Chandi and remarked at last: "Mahamaya has veiled everycne with delusion that Her play may continue undisturbed. She vouchsafes both worldly enjoyment and spiritual emancipation Such is the theme of the book. Suratha and Samadhi worshipped the Mother for three years before they realised their desires.

"How is it that we *know*, and yet cannot *act*? This is due to Her Maya. She must be propitiated. 'She being propitiated grants the boon of Freedom.' Aye, without Her grace, no man can get out of the net of Illusion. Only through worship can the common man realise the supreme beatitude, the state of Universal Consciousness. There is no other way.

"Speak to others even as you speak to yourself. That is to say, know every one as your own self. Do you ever get angry with yourself? Even so behave with others. But that would be possible only when you see your own self existing in others. This is the spirit which underlies Swamiji's doctrine of the worship of the Poor Narayana. And it is in this spirit that Gandhi talks to others, and he is obeyed. Indeed, there is a plane of consciousness where everything appears as one's own self. And when one reaches that plane, there is no more any confusion for him."

The conversation then turned on Ishan Ch. Mukherji's wonderful charities. Ishan Babu was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna; and Sri Ramakrishna had asked him to renounce those beneficent works and direct his whole mind towards God. The Swami said: "Even in such

charities, there is a subtle selfishness. He doubtless had an eye on fame. That is why he could act as an umpire or leader. Very difficult indeed is unselfish work!"

N— asked: "The work that we do, is it also not unselfish in that way? Some say that we work impelled by our own inclinations."

The Swami: "True, you are guided by your own inclinations; but done in the right spirit, your work will bear an exactly opposite fruit to what will accrue from selfishness."

"Some are doubtful whether our works are really Sri Ramakrishna's works."

"Then why do they work? The distinction that the works are Swamiji's and not Sri Ramakrishna's, is irrational. Swamiji did not preach even an iota of his own. Bold indeed must be he who would differentiate between Swamiji and Sri Ramakrishna!"

The Swami said that the identical confusion was prevalent formerly even amongst some of his brother-disciples, and he had to argue hard with them to dispel that error.

"Some look upon these works," continued the Swami, "as inferior to meditation. They do not know and talk nonsensically. What is meditation? Why is it so highly looked upon? Because it is the way to the soul's union with God. Now let us see what he who initiated the works meant. Did he ask you to merely clean the patients' soiled cloths, or to worship Narayana in and through them? How then is this worship of Narayana different from meditation? It may be, one cannot serve in this spirit, but one has no right therefore to call it inferior. Swamiji proclaimed this new path after realising the Self as immanent in all things. But they do not understand it, and would fain move in the old grooves of spiritual practice. Three days of such service done in the right way, will eventually bring about spiritual realisation. Such indeed has been the experience of whosoever has tried it. K— has told me

that in those days when he was working in the hospital, he would always feel highly lifted up in spirits. Is not every man God Himself? 'The Lord abides in every heart.' If one fails to realise this, it is one's own fault, none else's."

(To be continued.)

RELIGION IN INDIAN POLITICS.

There is a subtle law which operates in all planes of life. Stated in general terms, it comes to this: Lower interests fulfil themselves by serving the higher ones; the latter in their turn attain fruition by declining to be exploited for lower profits; always the small for the great, never the great for the small.

This law is found so true in the spiritual life that it is the accepted tradition among spiritual aspirants to avoid using any powers that may come to them in course of their Sadhana. It is said that whoever exploit them for any lower purpose, not only lose them, but bring about their own fall. Nor is this less true in other spheres of life. No power, be it material, intellectual, moral or spiritual, can be utilised for lower gains with impunity. Such abuse makes the power rebound on the wielder himself. The small fulfil themselves by being parts of the great, like the tributaries of a river. The highest is its own end. And to him alone is the Highest, the Pearl of Great Price, vouchsafed, who will not barter it for tinsels.

This is true equally of individuals and nations. No nation can with impunity exploit its higher powers for lesser gains. To do so is to commit a Himalayan blunder; and though it may at first yield success, the end is always disastrous.

We are afraid, the Indian National Congress has been guilty of the identical error in its policy and activities

during the past few years. It sought to exploit religion for political ends. And not a little of the consequent failure and confusion is due to this unnatural and reverse policy.

Up till 1919, i.e. the Amritsar session, the Congress has been a purely political organisation. The special Calcutta session inaugurated the policy of Non-violent Non-co-operation. This gave the Congress, in effect and practice, a religious colouring. It assumed a philosophical tone and preached a certain gospel of life. Non-violence had to be lived. Fasts and *hartals* were instituted for the purpose of self-purification and self-discipline. Soul-force was the sword to be wielded in that battle. Swaraj, though it remained undefined as the political end, was variously interpreted. Some declared that individual and personal Swaraj had been attained by them, though collective Swaraj was not yet. Non-co-operation assumed a religious aspect. The sacred books were consulted to see if co-operation with the Government was not against their holy injunctions. Altogether the movement looked more religious than political. Thus was religion made a hand-maiden of politics.

Let us see the consequences. First, the Khilafat movement: It is seriously to be doubted whether it should have been made a part of the Congress programme on religious grounds. More than one thinker have attributed the growing fanaticism of the Muhammedan community to this unwise step of the Congress. Muhammedan bigotry was dying its natural death. The Khilafat movement ensured it a fresh lease of life. Their co-religionists in other countries have found through bitter experience the folly of mixing religion with politics. But Indian Musalmans do not seem to have learnt that wise lesson. The justification of the Khilafat movement was found not only in the broken pledge of Mr. Lloyd George, but also in certain religious traditions. Human nature is not logical. Once the ardour of our religious nature is evoked, it does not confine itself within the

limits of the original cause, but begins to operate in all possible directions. The Khilafat movement has not been an exception ; and the bitter communal struggles have been the consequence. The splendid show of unity between the Hindus and the Muhammedans with which it began has been converted in the end to bitter mutual hatred and suspicion. This is the danger of invoking the power of religion for secular purposes.

Again, it will be seen that the Hindu society has not been of late immune from internecine quarrels. Much of this social unhappiness is traceable to the Congress policy. We still remember the warning a Hindu monk gave to a non-co-operationist professor against implicating the masses in the political propaganda. His argument was that the so-called apathy of the masses was at once the strength and the weakness of our nation. We the English-educated are cultural hybrids. We have lost the continuity of our national traditions and institutions. We can regain the lost clues only in and through the masses. Very carefully we must approach them that the almost disjointed forms may not break, leaving us in the dark, and we must resuscitate them by the infusion of true and unmixed religion. These traditions and institutions are the result of thousands of years of national experience and effort, and are our most precious inheritance. What did the N. C. O. movement do? It sent its workers to the villages in the name of religion with its cult of soul-force, the one signal which is still able to energise even the dying Indian with zeal and enthusiasm. And the monk said (it was in the triumphant days of the N. C. O. movement) that when the movement would fail as it was bound to fail, it would leave behind a sinister force in the villages, working against the ancient traditions, evoking communal self-consciousness and a sense of having been deprived of rights by the upper classes, and a struggle for their acquisition. Politics seeks to acquire rights, religion to sacrifice them for the good of others. The basic principle of our society is this spiritual law of self-sacrifice.

N. C. O. politics introduced a new and contrary force into society, and as it came in the guise of religion, it was bound to be accepted with greater avidity than when offered in its original form. The words of the monk were prophetic as the present conditions testify.

The N. C. O. movement provides a unique study in political psychology. The tremendous enthusiasm it evoked was unparalleled in recent times. The whole nation, enthused by a noble idealism, swayed as under a mighty storm. But it all ended in despair. The prospects now are decidedly gloomy and the problem inconceivably keen and complex. How to explain this great success and the equally great failure? Similar phenomena were witnessed in Bengal during the Swadeshi movement. The same tremendous enthusiasm fired the whole people, and their spirit seemed to burn with an ethereal glow. Nationalism became a religion. But finally the country sank again into a pathetic torpor. The net political gain was relatively insignificant, and a huge waste of energy was the outstanding debit. We succeeded in wresting small crumbs from the unwilling hands of the powers that be ; but on the other hand we made our internal problems keener and complexer. It will be noticed that the growing complexity of the Hindu-Moslem problem synchronises with the progress of our political movements ; and now it seems well-nigh unsolvable. What is the reason of this ineffectuality and confusion?

The reason, as we have said, is the unnatural combination of religion and politics. We sought to spiritualise politics, partly because it was congenial to the national temperament, and partly because religion in India is the primal source of strength. But the fact is, we are not yet in a position to spiritualise politics. Spiritualisation presupposes that every individual should become conscious of his spiritual nature and make it active in every detail of his life. Only when such individuals engage in politics, does politics become spiritualised. Spiritualisation of politics therefore requires a spiritual reform of

stupendous magnitude as a preliminary condition. But what has actually been done? We have begun in the wrong end. Instead of devoting our best energies to the individual and collective spiritual upliftment, we gave ourselves up to politics and sought the inspiration of religion for its furtherance. We have made religion a means to attain political ends. Therefore though we succeed for a time, in the name of religion, to evoke a great enthusiasm, we end by creating religious and consequently communal dissensions and fail to evoke real and enduring strength, as only true and not pseudo-religion can do. The majority of people cannot yet distinguish true religion from mere conventions, its essentials from non-essentials, or spirituality from credal religion. What actually happens therefore is that our 'spiritual' politics becomes in their hands a source of religious fanaticism and communalism. Therefore politics must be separated from religion.

'What about the spiritualisation of life, you so often advocate?'—it will be asked. 'Is not politics a part of our life?' Of course, we do not mean to exclude politics. But such universal spiritualisation cannot come by making a jumble of everything. The way to it lies through a correct conception and perfect realisation of religion in its pure and unmixed nature. Let us be spiritual first. Everything else will become automatically spiritual. If we have not this much patience and forethought the consequence will be that we shall not only complicate our political life, but also cause the decline and death of religion itself. For example look at the history of Papacy. In an alliance between politics and religion, it is always the latter that takes the subordinate place. The animal and its hunger is stronger in the common man. Religion necessarily succumbs to politics and its materialism. The West is an eloquent testimony. Can we risk that? If spirituality is our national ideal, surely we can ill afford to sacrifice religion even for any considerable political profit!

We are aware that there are some who can, by virtue

of their spiritual eminence, even now take a spiritual view of politics. They are Karma Yogins, they have spiritualised their whole life. The Divine Truth alone is their objective, politics they conceive only as a means to it. But one swallow does not make a summer. The whole nation or the majority at least must become such Karma Yogins before 'spiritual' politics can be actualised and made a mass movement. We cannot manufacture Karma Yogins by the simple passing of a resolution! Therefore we must make spiritual regeneration the foremost item of our national programme. We need not make too much of our political subjection. If the Spirit is mightier than matter, surely then external conditions shall not long hamper the progress of the soul.

But we are afraid the politicians have not bestowed much thought on these questions. They have simply followed the Western pattern. In spite of our glib talk about nationalism, we are not yet sufficiently national. Our national Congress has been mechanically following the Western policy of nationalisation, the policy of making the State the sole and paramount power in the country. The soundness of this policy of centralisation is seriously questioned even in its original home. It is considered that though the control of such material interests as political administration or industry by the State is welcome, fundamentals like education or religion must be outside its power and jurisdiction. The inauguration of the policy of nationalisation in India will be extremely disastrous, being as it is absolutely foreign to the national genius or traditions. The Congress has so far tried to play the roles of the politician, the social reformer, the educationist and the economist, though perhaps not the spiritual teacher. Yet it is difficult to account for its appointment of a committee to go into the Buddha Gaya Temple question. One may reasonably ask for its credentials. Mere numerical strength does not qualify an assembly to become the judge of one and all questions. True, the I. N. Congress is our most representative assembly, and the voice of India finds its clearest utterance

through it. But though the majority may be a reliable guide in material affairs, it is ill qualified to express any opinion on things that require expert knowledge. It may be rightly said, for example, that the educational policy of the Congress was extremely farcical. Decentralisation is therefore the best possible course. To the plea that the Congress may take recourse to the alternative policy of the division of labour, entrusting separate committees of experts with the several functions of the organised nation, our question is: Shall these be permitted absolute freedom of thought and initiative? Will not the central political organisation practically dominate them, its creatures?

There is a gradation in the values of life. Just as the mind is superior to the body and the soul to the mind, so in the scale of values, national or individual, material interests occupy the lowest place, intellectual the higher, and spiritual the highest. Each again has its own laws. Material things are guided by their own principles. Intellect works and flourishes in its own way. So also the life of the spirit. You cannot impose the laws of the one on the other without detriment to each other. Thus you cannot impose the laws of the spirit on matter without stunting the latter's growth. Politics has its own laws. They do not necessarily agree with the laws of religion. Society has its own laws. Any interference by religion or politics with them is sure to impede them in their beneficent operations. Swami Vivekananda said: "The Hindu must not give up his religion, but must keep religion, within its proper limits and give freedom of society to grow."

Separation therefore is the wisest course, so that each may control or be controlled according to its legitimate scope and intrinsic merits, and the purely political body, being relieved of its superfluous impositions, may carry on its proper work which is the evolution of an administrative machinery congenial to the national temperament and the transfer of responsibility from the hands of the bureaucracy to it. Of course, thereby politics will be

relegated to an unimportant position and will cease to occupy the place of honour in the national programme. That is what it should be, unless we are to ape the blundering West and commit national suicide.

We need not be afraid that the country will deteriorate in consequence, or lack cohesiveness for want of co-ordination and co-operation among different spheres of the national life, or that the struggle with the bureaucracy will become more difficult. We must indeed acquire greater insight. If we are suffering to-day from thousand and one disabilities, they are not due essentially to political subjugation. In fact, the both are symptoms of some other deep-seated malady. We are a self-oblivious people, lost to the consciousness of the Ideal which is the knowledge and realisation of the Divine. This Ideal has to be made conscious and dynamic in every detail of our life. This is the first and foremost duty of every Indian. In spite of our boasted spiritual idealism, we are yet far, far off from its true conception and realisation. We still labour under the baleful and hypnotic influence of Western ideas, or our political bias would not have been so strong as it is to-day. The knowledge of and faithfulness to the Ideal therefore shall be the basis of national unity and our perennial fountain of strength in whatever sphere we may work. We invite the nation to divert its attention from mere political agitations to silent and steady works of national reconstruction. Let each devote his whole soul to constructive work, not forgetting his spiritual ideal of course. There may not be much of popular applause and enthusiasm in that, but no great things were ever done before the footlights. Let us remember that in India at least politics will not be allowed to become all-absorbent. There are things which the nation has cherished with greater love and care than political freedom. To their augmentation let our best energies be devoted. In spite of our cult of non-violence and soul-force, we are yet far from regaining the true spiritual outlook. Let us strive hard to attain the true vision, and if we are sincere, the truth *shall* reveal *itself* !

MYSTICISM—TRUE AND FALSE.

By Principal Kamakhya Nath Mitra, m.a.

(*Continued from p. 17.*)

When a man of mystic temper enters politics he becomes a formidable force, a terror to his antagonists, the materialistic and Machiavellian politicians of his age. He spiritualises and moralises politics, and his attraction is irresistible. Such a man was Cromwell in England and Mazzini in Italy. Such men were Guru Govinda Singh and Sivaji in India.

India, the home and prolific mother of mysticism, has produced mystics in bewildering profusion, and the fountain of her mysticism it not yet dry. The Vedic Rishis were all mystics. The word Rishi means a seer, and a mystic is nothing if not a seer. But these Rishis were not only mystics, they were some-thing more. They were phophets. In a later age a prophet of exceptional power was called an Avatara, and theories of Avatar-hood were propounded. Buddha was more than a mystic. He is regarded by the Hindus not only as a great Yogi and a great Jnani but as an Avatara. Many Western writers are reluctant to call Buddha a mystic, because much of Buddhistic philosophy says nothing about Atman (anatmanistic), but that is wrong. Buddha himself never spoke of Atman or Brahman as there was much unnecessary talk about Brahman or Atman in his time and very little striving for self-realisation. His aim was eminently practical. An agnostic like Herbert Spencer or a humanitarian idealist like Auguste Comte he never was. Amar Sinha, the famous Buddhist lexicographer, calls Buddha Adwayavadi in his dictionary. According to Professor Rhys Davids, Buddha taught nothing new. The essence of all his teachings is to be found in the Upanishads. Even his order of monks was not wholly an innovation. The

Mahayana Buddhism of the northern school as outlined by Professor Suzuki of the Tokiyo University differs very little from the Vedanta, and that perhaps is true Buddhism. As Buddha was a mystic, so were the Buddhist Arhats. The Bhagavata, Saiva and Sakta mystics of later times were simply innumerable, and I need not mention their names. In Kabir, Nanak and Dadu of Mahommedan times the Moslem influence is traceable. But it is the Moslem influence of the Sufis ; and according to Mr. Khuda Bux of the Calcutta University Sufism itself is largely a product of Vedantic thought. Certain modern theists of India who are the products of Christian influence of the Unitarian-cum-Protestant type try to make it appear that they were mono-theists like themselves, but they are not right, for Guru-vada and Avatara-vada have a place in their religious thought and experience. In the Brahmo Samaj of Bengal, Raja Rammchan was more a rationalist than a mystic. Devendranath Tagore had deeper religious experience. He was a truer mystic. But the emotional or Bhakti form of mysticism in the Brahmo Samaj found its best expression in Keshab Chandra Sen. The richest spiritual life in the Brahmo Samaj, I believe, was Keshab's. Both in Devendranath's life and in Keshab's life there was a strong ascetic tendency. But as actual asceticism or the ideal of absolute chastity and absolute poverty was realised by neither of them, they fall below the level of the highest mystic achievement. The prince of mystics of the present age, however, is Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Ransack the world, East and West, you will not find another like him, and all that is true of Ramakrishna, the Master, is true of Vivekananda, the disciple. As for the fire and force of Vivekananda, it is matchless. Are Ramakrishna and Vivekananda mystics only or something more? I would rather not answer the question. Time will show. The following comparative estimate of modern Hindu mysticism in Hastings' Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics will be found very amusing in this connection. Says the writer : "That mysticism has not died out of India is evident wher

we hear the old cry for the One echoing through the writings of Swami Vivekananda. . . . . A truer mysticism expresses itself in the Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore. . . . And we find the same passion for oneness with God expressing itself again and again in the finest and most truly Indian hymns of the young Christian Church, e.g., of N. V. Tilak, the Marathi poet." We read these lines and smile at the Christian bias of the writer, for we know what is what. Vivekananda's mysticism, according to the writer, is TRUE because he was a Hindu in the full sense of the term. Devendranath's mysticism is TRUER because in spite of his Christo-phobia (*Khrista-Vibhishika*) his mono-theistic theology was a nearer approach at least to Unitarian Christianity ; and the Marathi poet Tilak's mysticism is the TRUEST, because he is a Christian in the full sense of the term ! Further comment is unnecessary except only this that the writer's opinion is based on Evelyn Underhill's preface to the English translation of the autobiography of Devendranath, presumably furnished at the instance of somebody desperately anxious for the prestige of the Brahmo Samaj which is now in a moribund condition. I have reason to believe that Mr. Kennedy, a learned Christian missionary, who has just written a book full of information on the Chaitanya movement of Bengal, has been influenced by the opinion of the above-mentioned contributor to Hastings' Encyclopædia when he opines towards the close of the book that Devendranath's mysticism was of a higher order than that of Chaitanya Deva who is regarded in Bengal as the very Avatara of Prema and Bhakti (love and devotion). The worthlessness of such an opinion is so palpable that it is unnecessary to refute it. It cannot but be treated with the contempt it deserves.

From all that has been said above about the influence of Indian thought and experience on the mysticism of the world, I must not be supposed to suggest that there is no originality anywhere in this, the highest fact with regard to man. Originality there undoubtedly is. A mystic is

nothing if not original. But if anybody thinks that originality means something absolutely new, then he must be very much mistaken. "There is nothing new under the sun," says the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes. "All great thoughts have been thought already ; we shall have to think those thoughts over again," says Goethe. Eternal Verities are ever old and ever new. A truth is called new when one perceives it for the first time though it may have been perceived by others before. The freshness of a first-hand perception none can deny. "The merit of originality is not novelty but sincerity,—the believing man is the original man," says Carlyle. All that we claim is that the highest and greatest spiritual truths were first discovered in India, and if that is a fact of which we are proud, our pride is pardonable. We are not so foolish, however, as to think that we are the "chosen people of God." On the contrary, we are painfully conscious of our present degradation, and so we call upon our people to rise to the level of our great ancestors and follow the examples of a few great men who are still born in the country. *Every truly great man has, I believe, a touch of mysticism in his nature.* Of the living Indians known to fame the greatest mystic, who is also a man of action, is Mahatma Gandhi. Arabinda Ghosh is another mystic who was also a man of action, but he has practically retired from the world. Among persons unknown to fame but who are true mysics, there are many Sadhus, Bhaktas and Yogis in all parts of India. In the highest mysticism there must be a deliberate renunciation of the life of sense. The highest mysticism is not possible without 'Dharma-megha-vairagya' or the spirit of intense detachment. Highest mysticism and asceticism always go together. Mysticism, however, has many steps like a ladder. Wherever there is genuine religion there is mysticism. It is not necessarily inimical to institutionalism, ecclesiasticism or the established forms of religion, but the mystic's method is inward. When a man prays fervently he is a mystic. When tears start to his eyes or he feels a thrill at the thought or name of God he is a

mystic. When he feels deep repentance he is a mystic. When he feels deep spiritual despondency or what is called the 'dark night of the soul' he is a mystic. When he feels a strong moral impulse he is a mystic. When he feels pure love and pure joy he is a mystic. The higher mystic sees visions and hears voices, and the highest mystic is he from whom the world with its manifold has vanished and who realises his oneness with Brahman.

Is married life consistent with mysticism? If married life can be spiritualised and the sex-life eliminated, it does not preclude the possibility of the highest mystic experience or the final realisation of oneness with Brahman. Positive mystic experience is always proportionate to the measure of sexual abstinence. A married man may attain a certain degree of mystical experience during the period of self-restraint. If the period be brief, the experience is brief also. There are some people who cite the examples of married Rishis and specially select with a purpose married mystics like Nanak, Kabir and St. Catherine of Genoa to make the mystic path easy and to show that asceticism is unnecessary and perverse. But they forget that these married mystics attained eminence not by reason of, but in spite of, marriage. They forget that these married mystics struggled hard to subdue sex-life and ultimately transcended it. That sex-life and spiritual life are mutually antagonistic is a law as immutable as any law of Nature.

A great difficulty arises over the claim that certain poets are mystics. There were many saints and devotees who were poets and whose poetry is the expression of their mystic experience. They only are entitled to be called mystic poets in the strict sense of the term. But when we come to those who were primarily poets, a great psychological problem arises. There may be a mystic element in their poetry as there is a mystic element in prose literature. But if their lives are irregular and unbalanced, then with all their æsthetic refinement and fine feelings and sentiments they have no right to be called mystics, for mysticism and pure life with the self-

restraint it implies always go together. Poets of the first rank are epic and dramatic poets. Epic and dramatic genius is massive and impersonal. Homer, Shakespeare and Milton are not called mystic poets by the literary critics, so that we may say that the very greatest poets need not necessarily have anything to do with what passes for mystic poetry which is nowadays so much in vogue. If Dante had not written anything but his Vita Nuova, he would have been called a mystic. But he is one of the greatest poets the world has ever produced, and the Divine Comedy though epic in form being the story of his soul's experience may very well be called a mystic poem. But we must remember that in spite of his occasional aberrations there was a strong ascetic tendency in his nature, and that is why Dante, the representative poet of the Catholic world, may very well be called a mystic. Another poet of the first rank was Goethe, but he should be called a philosophic poet rather than a mystic poet. As epic and dramatic genius is massive and impersonal, so lyric genius is intense and personal. As lyric is not sustained but short, so lyric poets must be assigned a lower rank in the scale. A claim to mysticism is generally made on behalf of the Caroline poets of the 17th century, most of whom were love-poets and religious poets at the same time. The chief names are Herrick and Crashaw. Herbert was purely religious. But when we come to the Romantic Movement of the late 18th century and the early 19th century and the poetry of the Victorian Age, the claim to mysticism on behalf of Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and Browning is loudest. Wordsworth is called a Nature mystic. Shelley, Keats, Browning and Rossetti are called Love-and-Beauty mystics. Wordsworth's Nature mysticism is pantheism and finds its best expression in his Tintern Abbey. Here is not only the poet's imagination but a true religious experience. It is not, however, the highest mystic experience, for to the highest mystic Nature is an illusion. Wordsworth's pantheism leads him to the false philosophy of 'Nature's holy plan', and if he had not a strong

moral sense which is not reconcilable with pantheism, he would have gone astray. The pantheism of his Tintern Abbey is tempered by the stern morality of his Ode to Duty. Those to whom his Tintern Abbey appeals but who have no appreciation of the severe grandeur of his Ode to Duty miss half their Wordsworth. If Wordsworth had not a strong moral sense, I would not have called him a mystic at all but a poet with a certain mystic element in his poetry, which is the product of exalted imagination. One remarkable thing about Wordsworth is that he never wrote a love poem unless his Lucy Poems, and She was a Phantom of Delight, are called love poems at all. As for his pantheistic experience, it should be noted that a mystic poet like Blake and a philosophic poet like Tennyson speak quite differently. To Blake "Nature is a hindrance," and Tennyson says:

> "I found Him not in world or sun
> Or eagle's wing or insect's eye."

Still I should call Wordsworth a religious mystic and not merely a poet with a mystic element in his poetry because of the deep moral experience he feels—an experience inseparable from a true mystic. Here is higher intuition.

The most perplexing problem is that presented by those poets who are called Love-and-Beauty mystics. One truth here should be borne in mind. True Love-and-Beauty mysticism always accompanies high moral elevation such as we find in Plato, in the lives of many Catholic saints of Mediæval Europe and the Vaishnava saints of India. Some of the Vaishnava saints like Tulsidas, Tukaram, Surdas and Mirabai were poets, and I call them true Love-and-Beauty mystics. But when a poet's sensibility to Love and Beauty is without a sound moral basis, then I may call him a poet with a mystic element in his poetry, but I cannot call him a mystic, for mysticism without 'purgation' is no mysticism at all. By sheer force of imagination he may reach an exalted mood and utter fine and beautiful sentiments, but he is not what we Hindus call 'a man of realisation.' Much

is made of Shelley nowadays, and Shelley is a case in point. There is a regular Shelley-cult in certain quarters, and I hear of a certain educational institution in which the Shelley-day is celebrated. Shelley may be steeped in the ideas of Plato's Symposium. His Hymn to Intellectual Beauty may be the clearest expression of his devotion to the spirit of ideal Beauty. His Prometheus or human imagination may have union with Asia the Divine Idea or the Spirit of Beauty and Love. His "poet's eye may in a fine frenzy roll", and he may see the poetic vision of a new universe. But we cannot forget that he did not shrink from the picture of incestuous love between brother and sister in the first edition of the poem Laon and Cythna now known as the Revolt of Islam, and in his Epipsychidion he has made a mess of the whole thing by identifying Intellectual Beauty with a Daughter of Earth. If we look at Shelley's life, we see that his moral sense where love for women is concerned is very weak indeed. He deserted his first wife and child to elope with Godwin's daughter whom he subsequently married. Harriet the poor girl ended her miseries by suicide. After his second marriage he fell in love with several ladies, and in each case he called his love Platonic or spiritual. It is a mere accident that prevented his Platonic love from lapsing into carnal attachment. The less we talk of Platonic love of the Shelleyan type the better for mankind. Shelley's Love-and-Beauty mysticism is obviously the working of sex-complex. It is a clear case for the psycho-analyst.

Keats is a charming poet. He is also called a Love-and-Beauty mystic, but his moral fibre is pulpy. He is an amiable weakling who excites our pity. But a true mystic he is not, because there is no severe self-discipline in his life. As a man, however, he is decidedly better than Shelley.

Browning's intellectual quality is much higher than that of Shelley and Keats, but he is also a Love-and-Beauty poet. Love to him is all in all. The 'Law' of Tennyson is nothing to him. He makes light of the dis-

tinction between good and evil. If he had cultivated a little self-restraint, he would not have eloped with the invalid lady who afterwards became Mrs. Browning and developed into a 'mystic poet' herself. Browning does not come up to the Hindu ideal of a true mystic. His optimism is provoking.

D. G. Rossetti is also a Love-and-Beauty poet. His sensuousness is aggressive. It is the beauty of the face of woman that specially appeals to him. A very strong sex-complex is evidently at work here. It is a very clear case for the psycho-analyst. We cannot call him a true mystic at all.

Rabindranath in our country is a Love-and-Beauty poet like Shelley and Keats and a Nature poet like Wordsworth. But Rabindranath is also a Bhakta Kavi (devotional and religious poet). There is deep devotion in his heart, so I may call him a mystic poet. He is a pious man as the term is generally understood. But as the ascetic ideal is repugnant to his nature, he does not come up to our standard of a true mystic. He is a mystic of the lower sort. Wordsworth is a truer mystic than Rabindranath, for there is a strong ethical urge or ascetic tendency in his nature. Rabindranath does not truly represent the culture of our race. No Brahmo Samajist can.

There are some pseudo-mystics who think that obscurity is the essence of mysticism, and so they assiduously cultivate obscurity. These people are not mystics but fools pure and simple. They need not be taken seriously at all.

Under the influence of Rabindranath mysticism has become a pose with a certain class of our young men. They have heard the word mysticism but do not know what it means. They think that to be a mystic is to look languid and sheepish and spout æsthetic nonsense. Romancing and sentimental mooning they mistake for mysticism, and they also deal in the second-hand rubbish

of literary criticism. Unless they study misticism closely and cultivate self-discipline they will soon prove a nuisance hateful to gods and men.

THE BRAHMA-SUTRAS—ITS AGE AND PLACE IN INDIAN CULTURE.

By Haripada Ghosal, Vidyabenode, M.A., M.R.A.S.

The antiquity of the Indian civilisation has been proved and shown by good many scholars, both Indian and European, who take a sympathetic interest in Indian history, philosophy and religion. Many express their disappointment for the lack of chronology in India. True it is that nothing is more difficult to handle than the dates of Indian history. It is indeed like a pathless wilderness in which a critical mind finds obstruction at every step. But we should bear in mind that the true history of a country is the history of its *people*—their culture, religion, literature, arts, sciences and philosophy. If history means mere chronological records of kings, their wars, conquests and whims, if it is a "biography of great men" as Carlyle so dogmatically asserts, then the Indians have no history. But if it means the evolution of the community as a whole and of the individual in particular—the satisfactory solution of the riddle of existence—the realisation of a higher ideal of manhood in the physical and spiritual aspects of that mysterious and unconscious conglomeration of men called society, then the ancient Aryans have preserved in their monumental works on socio-religious and ethico-philosophical matters excellent materials of authentic history.

India is a land of multitudinous creeds and sects. From the hoary ages of the past she has harboured in her bosom downright atheists, agnostics, materialists as also devout God-fearing men. From the grossest idolater

and animist to the pious henotheist, from the crude polytheist and anthropomorphist to the unbending monotheist, every one, in short, has found a secure home in the spacious and well-watered plains of the sea-guarded and snow-capped Ind. As the Vedanta is the native philosophy of India, and as the Vedantic thought has formed the substratum of Indian culture all through her history from the Rik-Veda down to the present day, it should be our worth while to know the date when the Vedanta materialised into a definite shape so as to govern Indian life as a powerful force in the land of its birth. It will also be interesting to know to what a height of metaphysical speculation the Indian mind rose even in ages long before other nations were in their embryonic form.

The Vedanta is the most valuable contribution of India to humanity—to world-culture. It is the soul of India—the quintessence of her thought. To know India, one must know the Vedanta. To kill India, one must first kill the Vedanta. Indian religion is based on the Vedanta. The Vedanta is its life, its breath, its soul, its very being. To ascertain its date is indeed a momentous, though a knotty problem.

The Neo-Vedantism of Sankara, the greatest exponent of that philosophy, is based on the Brahma-Sutras, the Gita and the Upanishads. Yet the Vedanta truly means the Brahma-Sutras, a body of short, pithy and pregnant sayings, each of which is compact with a world of sense. Here we are concerned with the Brahma-Sutras of Badarayana, round whose magic personality has gathered a thick cloud of misconceptions.

That Veda Vyasa was present at the time of the Mahabharata is proved by the Mahabharata itself. The words वेदान्तकृत् and ब्रह्मसूत्र occurring in the Gita which is a part and parcel of the Mahabharata, though some scholars consider it to be a later interpolation, clearly prove the existence of the Vedanta or the Brahma-Sutras in the time of the Mahabharata. Professor Garbe's contention that the superstructure of Vedantic thought in the

Gita was lately imposed on the thread-bare skeleton of some Slokas or verses originally intended for the interpretation of the Sankhya system. He means to say that the Vedantic thought underlying the Gita was a forgery of crafty priests or an interpolation of the selfish sacerdotal sect. Thus he is another instance of the peculiar type of men who pride themselves on being styled with the sonorous epithet of Orientalists who have no sympathy for the East, which is so absolutely necessary for the right understanding and interpretation of the Oriental mind.

Now, if we succeed in finding out the date of the Mahabharata, we shall be able to fix the date of the original Brahma-Sutras also. Tradition which cannot altogether be relegated to the cold shade of neglect in recounting the history of a nation, ascribes the authorship of the Mahabharata, the Brahma-Sutras and the compilation of the Vedas to one person, namely, Vyasa whoever he might be.

Badarayana, the reputed author of the Brahma-Sutras, is only "a name and an intellectual power" as Max Müller so aptly says. We do not possess particular data or actual accounts about the life of this great intellectual giant. But India is a land of wonders. Greece may well be proud of her Homer, Socrates, Plato and Pericles; Germany of her Goethe, Kant and Frederick the Great; England of her Shakespeare and Newton; Italy of her Mazzini and Dante; and France of her Napolean and Charlemagne; but India may as well be proud of her Krishna, Buddha, Badarayana, Sankara, Kalidasa and Chandra Gupta II to name only a few of her mighty intellectual forces who have played brilliant parts in the long roll of her history.

The Vedanta had its mighty exponents before Badarayana. The famous hymn of the Rik-Veda—

एकं सत् विप्राः वहुधा वदन्ति। अग्निं यमं मातरिश्वनं आहुः॥—

is an incontestable proof of the existence of Vedantic speculation even so far back as the time of the Rik-Veda. In the Brahma-Sutras there is mention of the names of

Jaimini, Asmarathya, Badari, Kashakritsna, Karstnajini, Udolomi, Atreya and even Badarayana. These exponents of Vedantic thought preceded or were contemporaneous with Badarayana who finally reduced the floating thought and gave it "a local habitation and a name." He is the band-master of that seraphic song which fills the spacious field of Indian thought and culture from the 15th to the 5th century B.C., and which is going to harmonise the jarring notes of multitudinous chords in the throbbing heart of humanity.

There is some reason to doubt the identity of Vyasa which is eponymous with Badarayana, and Sankara does not seem to think of Vyasa as Badarayana. It would, of course, be unreasonable to disbelieve the Indian tradition that Vyasa collected and compiled the Vedas, composed the Mahabharata, the Brahma-Sutras and the Puranas. Western scholars who cannot brook the idea of the priority of Indian civilisation and before whose eyes Greece looms large as a world-power, are of opinion that the war related in the Mahabharata stands on no positive historical basis. Thus far they admit that the Mahabharata war was the war of the Kuru-Panchalas and that the Pandavas were only creatures of poetic imagination. Lassen, Weber, Monier Williams and R. C. Dutt hold this view. Max Müller fixes 1200 B. C. to be the date of the compilation of the Rik-Veda. He has divided the whole field of ancient Sanskrit literature into the Chhandah, Mantra, Brahmana and Sutra periods, and fixing 200 years for each period, has brought down the Sutra period to about 400 B.C. This fanciful division of Sanskrit literature into stated periods is historical anarchism in the name of scientific history. In short, most of the Western scholars believe that the Mahabharata was composed about the 4th or 5th century B.C., that originally it contained no reference to the Pandavas, that they were mere children of poetic imagination of later times and that they were afterwards interpolated.

Indian scholars place the date of the Mahabharata war about 5000 years back i.e., about 3102 B.C., the

beginning of the Kali and the end of the Dwapara Yuga, and so they believe that as Vyasa was present during the Mahabharata war, the epic was composed at that time. But Colebrooke, Wilson, Wilford, Pratt and others place the Mahabharata war in the 13th and 14th centuries B.C. According to the Mahabharata itself and the Vishnu-Purana, the oldest and the most reliable of all the Puranas, the time of the Mahabharata war is respectively 1520 and 1430 B.C. The Mahabharata as it stands at present is indeed a work of many hands—a poetic mosaic of variegated colours, but it cannot, on that account, be placed in the 3rd or 4th century B.C., though it is an undoubted fact that it passed through several recensions before it took its present form in pre-Christian centuries. The fact is that the Mahabharata and the Puranas were composed in their original forms by Vyasa who also reduced the floating mass of philosophical and religious opinions of the preceding ages in some Sutras called the Parasarya Bhakti-Sutras which passed current under the general name of Vyasa-Sutras or Brahma-Sutras before the appelation was used by Badarayana, the systematiser of the Brahma-Sutras in its present form about the 6th century B.C. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a profound Vedic scholar, has fixed "the period from 1400 to 500 B.C. to be the period of the Sutras and philosophical systems."

Truly it may be asserted that the millenium beginning from 1500 B.C. and ending in 500 B.C. was pre-eminently an epoch of *Sturm und Drang* in the whole of the Orient —in Persia, India and China, in the Near East, the Middle East and the Far East. The long period of the Chou Dynasty (1122—249 B.C.) witnessed the compilation of the Chou-li, the text-book of politics by Kuantzi, "the oldest statistician of all nations" in the 12th century, the birth of Laotze, the prophet of Taoism, and of Confucius, the teacher of propriety in the 6th century B.C. In Persia Zarathustra (660—583 B.C.) founded a new cult, and in India was inaugurated the Augustan era from the 8th to the 6th century B.C., which was never surpassed in other periods of world's history for its range of intellectual

activities, for the systematisation of spiritual and religious culture of ages, for the conservation of the culture of centuries.

In India the seventh and sixth centuries before Christ were an epoch of intellectual ferment, of encyclopædists, of researchers and investigators, of ascetics and Rosicrucians, of positivists and mystics who in their permanent forest-universities probed all abstract ethical theories, tackled all ontological problems, cosmological hypotheses, chemical, logical, philosophical and sociological questions from erotic science to pure philosophy, from the problem of bread and butter to "the problem of the Sphinx". It was an age of grammarians whose prototype was Panini who was preceded by scores of philologists and lexicographers—of chemists, botanists and zoologists of the Charaka school—of sociologists who compiled the Dharma-Sastras, Niti-Sastras and Srauta-Sastras—of the systems of psychology, logic and metaphysics collectively called the Darsanas—of the promulgation of a code of morality and practical ethics in a new and more practical garb by Sakyamuni—of the foundation of Jainism by Mahavira.

Thus the thought-forces that were energising the Indian mind were regulated into well-defined forms by those authors or so many Vyasas after whom they have been named. Thus Veda-Vyasa might have originally composed some Vedanta-Sutras about the 15th century B. C., but it was Badarayana who systematised the Brahma-Sutras in its present form about the 6th century B.C. The best intellectuals of the time did nothing but compile, collect, codify, systematise and conserve the race-culture that had been handed down to them from remote antiquity. That it was an age of questions and answerings, of criticisms and counter-criticisms, of doubts and explanations, may be shown by an appeal to the internal evidence of the philosophical systems. For, we see the six systems quote and refute one another. So their relative position is difficult to be fixed, except that they were simultaneously systematised.

There is another strong reason for placing the Brahma-Sutras in its present form in the sixth century B.C. Of the Upanishads, at least the principal ones, "there is not a single one perhaps of which the reduction is of a date anterior to Buddhism" (Birth). According to Dr. Bhandarkar the Brihadaranyakopanishad was written before 600 B.C. As the Brahma-Sutras seeks to reconcile the apparent incongruities in the Upanishads and tries to build a homogeneous system on their chaotic rhapsodies and apocalyptic visions, it cannot be placed earlier than the oldest Upanishads which "are not the work of a single genius but the total philosophical product of an entire epoch" extending "from 1000 to 500 B.C." (Deussen). Again, the mention and refutation of Buddhism, Jainism, Bhagavatism and such other more recent cults, and an exposure of their fallacies and defects with an exposition of the clear-cut dogmas of the Vedanta, place the Brahma-Sutras towards the close of the sixth century B.C. when Buddha lived and preached his doctrines.

The Sariraka-Mimamsa or Brahma-Sutras is divided into four books, each book containing sixteen Pâdas or sections and 192 Adhikaranas or sub-sections with 555 Sutras in all.

The fundamental doctrine of the Vedanta embodied in the famous saying, "Thou art That," means the identity of the individual soul with Brahman. "This great formula," says Professor Paul Deussen, "gives in these words metaphysics and morals together. You shall love your neighbour as yourselves. You are your neighbour, and mere illusion makes you believe that your neighbour is something different from yourselves."

The Vedanta is called Advaitavada or a doctrine of non-duality as it teaches that the individual soul cannot be an emanation but is the whole indivisible Brahman. Multiplicity of phenomena is due to false impressions, the result of Avidya or innate ignorance which prevents the soul from recognising that the empirical world is mere Mâyâ or illusion. To the Vedantist the universe is like a mirage. Moksha or salvation is the effacement of the

semblance of distinction between Jivatman and Paramatman, effected by the dawn of true knowledge.

The idealistic monism or the sublime theory of the Vedanta is like the "full flood of heavenly glory of the noon-day sun," compared with which, "the idealism of reason as it is set forth by Greek philosophers," to quote the words of Frederick Schlegal, "appears like a feeble Promethean spark, faltering and feeble, and ever ready to be extinguished." "It is true," says Prof. Deussen, "that Paul hints at an identification of God with man, it is true that Kant endeavours to explain the marvellous phenomenon of the categorical imperative within us on the theory that man as real ('thing in itself') lays down the law to the man as phenomenal ; but how slight the significance of these timid and groping essays as compared with the profound and fundamental conception of the Vedanta, that the God, the sole Author of all good in us, is not as in the Old Testament a Being contrasted with and distinct from us, but rather our own metaphysical I, our Divine Self, persisting in untarnished purity through all the aberrations of human nature, eternally blessed—in a word, our Atman." "If philosophy," says Prof. Max Müller, "is meant to be a preparation for a happy death or Euthanasia, I know of no better preparation for it than the Vedanta philosophy."

JESUS THE CHRIST.

By Swami Atulananda.

II.

As he grew up Jesus began to realise that the requirements of society and the requirements of God were in constant collision. Men were departing from the word of God and exalting theories of their own invention. They were observing traditional rites devoid of virtue. Their so-called religious practices were a mere round of

ceremonies that had lost their meaning. He saw that men found neither happiness nor peace.

As Jesus pondered over these things he became negligent in the performance of such religious duties as the Rabbis prescribed. He sought light from within. He prayed and meditated and communed with God.

For this neglect of external observances he was often rebuked not only by his parents and relatives but also by the Rabbis. They tried to reason with him. But Jesus had no faith in their words. He met their arguments by quoting scripture, and quietly followed his own way. But this constant wrangling and censure on the part of his superiors made his life a bitter one. Even in his youth Jesus had to learn the hard lesson of silence and patient endurance. In his search for Truth Jesus stood alone. No man sympathised with him. But this aloneness drew him closer to the source of all wisdom and truth. In God he found his Father and his Friend.

And here the records for the time being close, and we do not know anything about Jesus till they open again when he is thirty years old, and he begins his public ministry.

All speculation to fill up this gap of eighteen years of Jesus' life is vain. Some believe that he came to India to learn the secret of Yoga. Others will have it that he joined the Essenes and practised religion according to their methods. The general conception among Christians is that as the eldest son and head of the household, on him devolved the burden of supporting the family, for his father Joseph not being mentioned in the Gospels again is inferred to have died during the early youth of Jesus.

We may take it for granted that amidst the humble surroundings of an artisan's home with a large family of brothers and sisters and a widowed mother, Jesus worked at his trade to maintain the home, and with the leisure of Eastern life this left him time abundant to devote to religious thought and practice. While his hands were busy his mind was occupied with thought far removed from the little cares of home life. His thoughts soared

far beyond the limits of his surroundings, to regions where spirit communes with spirit, and during the hours of rest when darkness and stillness descended on the peaceful landscape, Jesus withdrew to solitary spots to pour out his heart in prayer, to lift his soul to the very presence of God.

Thus was awakened in him a firm conviction of the vanity, the instability, the unreality of this world. And when during higher moods he had glimpses of a real, enduring, ever-blissful Existence, the spirit of renunciation was awakened in him.

When he was thirty years old he finally decided to leave the care of his home to his brothers. And empty-handed he set out on his mission to proclaim to his fellowmen the great revelations that had flooded his mind. He had realised God as his Father, and that realisation he wanted to preach to the Jews.

Now it happened about this time in Jesus' life that a young ascetic, John the Baptist, who had spent most of his life in the desert away from people, practising austerities, burst upon the towns of Judea with a startling and terrifying message. With a voice like thunder he denounced the people for their wickedness. "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," he exclaimed. "But unless you reform you will have no place in that Kingdom." He told the Jews that God's curse was upon them because they were proud, selfish and cruel. "You rave against the oppression of the Romans," he said, "but you oppress your own countrymen. You hate each other, you cannot stand together, still you think you are superior to other races. You cut yourself off from the rest of the world, therefore you are in bondage. Reform, give up your evil ways, make ready for the king."

John, coming from the wilderness, his hair long and matted, his eyes blazing like fire, dressed in a shirt of camel's hair, lashing and threatening the people with his fearless tongue, made a tremendous stir wherever he appeared.

He himself believed, as many of the Jews did, that

from among them one would appear, who would free the nation from her national foes. He believed in the coming of a righteous king, and the establishment of Israel as a holy nation. He believed himself to be the forerunner of that king, the one chosen by God to prepare the people for the reception of that king. He realised that such a king could not succeed unless the Jews changed their evil ways. Brutal force could never conquer the powerful Romans ; it was soul-force alone that could liberate the nation. That soul-force he preached in his forcible language. He wanted to rouse the people, to startle them, to awaken them. He wanted to cause them to tremble because of their wickedness, to make them shake off their spiritual lethargy, to turn them to a holy life.

And the people asked him, "What shall we do then?" John answered, "Do not think that you are holy because you are Jews. Show holiness in your life, in your deeds. Don't despise people of lower rank. Help them with your riches. Don't be cruel to them. Live in peace among yourselves, and do violence to no man."

The nation at that time, we must remember, was in a state of great national excitement. The tyranny and extortions of the Roman governors, and their determined efforts to force upon the Jews their own beliefs and customs had led to repeated revolts. In these revolts thousands of the bravest Jews had lost their lives. The hatred against the foreign rulers was intense. So when John proclaimed that a king from amongst themselves would soon deliver them, the whole nation was expectant. Multitudes flocked to hear John. They followed him wherever he went.

As a symbol of cleansing from sin, John baptised in the waters of the river Jordan those who wished to live a holy life and become partakers of the new kingdom. People of all ranks submitted to the baptism.

Many thought that this spirited, forceful ascetic would offer to become himself their ruler. But John declared that he had no such intentions. "I indeed baptise you with water," he cried out, "but he that comes

after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptise you with fire from above. The righteous he will gather unto himself, but sinners he will reject even as the wheat is gathered into barns but the chaff is burned in the fire."

Tidings of the desert preacher and his wonderful announcement spread throughout Galilee. The message reached the peasants in the remotest hill-towns and the fisher folk by the sea. In Nazareth it was told in the market place and discussed in the shops. And when Jesus received the news he at once left his trade, bade farewell to his mother, and followed those who were flocking to the river.

Jesus and John were cousins, but they had no direct acquaintance with each other. Jesus' life had been spent in Nazareth in Galilee, that of John in the wilderness of Judea. They had had no communication with each other. They were of about the same age, and Jesus no doubt had heard that John's birth like his own had been announced by an angel who predicted a great future for the child. He probably also knew that from his youth John had lived alone in solitude observing great austerity. Himself bound to support the family he perhaps had often envied John his greater freedom to devote all his time to communion with God.

And now, when he heard that John preached the coming of Christ, Jesus felt an irresistible desire to meet his cousin. It was as if John were calling him, were crying over the land in the hope that his voice might reach the future king, that such a king might step forward and announce himself as the deliverer of the Jews. Jesus felt that his time had come, that he must proclaim himself as the king of righteousness, the son of God.

John, also, had heard about Jesus' wonderful birth, his revelation at Jerusalem, and his saintly life. Sometimes he thought that his cousin was the Messiah he was expecting. But of this he had no positive proof. The fact that Jesus for so many years remained in obscurity, giving no evidence of his mission, made him doubt. It

had been revealed to him that the Messiah would come to him to be baptised, and that a sign of his greatness would then be given. He therefore waited believing that in God's own time all would be made plain.

At last, from the pressure of the multitude Jesus stepped forward facing John. John was startled. At a glance he recognised Jesus' purity and lofty spirit. Here was the man he had been waiting for so ardently; here was the king he had announced. Never had he met a human being so noble in bearing and appearance, so self-contained, with a face so calm and peaceful, with eyes beaming with an inward light.

There was a glance of mutual recognition.

Then, in a sweet, quiet voice, Jesus asked to be baptised.

John drew back. Was he, an ordinary man, to baptise the Christ? Was he to cleanse from sin him who was sinless? With his arms lifted to heaven he exclaimed, "I need be baptised of thee, and cometh thou to me?"

With firm yet gentle authority, Jesus replied, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness."

John, yielding, led Jesus down into the river, and lowered him beneath the water.

Upon coming up out of the water, Jesus knelt down in prayer on the bank of the river. A new and important era was opening before him. He was to enter upon a wider stage. The conflict of his life would begin. The kingdom he had come to earth to establish was the opposite of what the Jews expected. Upon him depended the salvation of the fallen race. It was not his mission to conquer the Romans, but to help the Jews to conquer their sinful tendencies, to help the nation to cleanse their own hearts, to do away with their evil practices.

As Jesus pours out his soul in prayer pleading for strength to carry out his mission, the heavenly Father Himself answers the petition of His son. A beam of light shines down from the heavens, and taking the form

of a dove of purest light, emblem of love, descends upon the head of Jesus. And from the heavens a voice was heard saying, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

John deeply moved seeing Jesus pray so earnestly, and then witnessing the strange phenomena in response to Jesus' supplication, stretching out his hand, and pointing to Jesus, in exaltation calls out, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

Jesus, now strengthened in his own conviction, and assured of God's loving guidance, quietly withdraws from the scene. Slowly he makes his way to the wilderness to be alone, to contemplate his mission, to surrender himself to God. By fasting and prayer he is to brace himself for the painful path he must travel.

(To be continued.)

A NEW VEDANTA CENTRE IN AMERICA.

By Nina MacDonald.

When, in the latter part of September, 1925, Swami Prabhavananda left San Francisco for a trip to the States of Oregon and Washington, it was with no definite hope of being able to establish a new Vedanta Centre before he returned. His object is best expressed in his own words: "My only desire is to sow the seed. The harvest is in the hands of God."

Happily, however, the Swami's lectures and lessons in Portland, Oregon, met with instant and joyous response. Earnest souls were hungering and thirsting for the truth he so lovingly, clearly and convincingly presented to them, and when the week's lectures were ended, he was asked to stay with them and establish a Centre in their city. To that end he returned to Portland as soon as he had completed his itineracy farther north.

As I had been a constant attendant at the Swami's lectures in Tacoma, Washington, 145 miles north of Portland, I had learned something of the Vedanta Philosophy and was eager to learn more of what seemed to me the purest and sweetest teaching ever presented to the world. Therefore, when I received an invitation to attend the opening of the Portland Centre, I gladly accepted it, for my heart told me that, in Swami Prabhavananda, I had, after long, weary years of seeking, found a true teacher of a true teaching.

Mrs. Clara M. Pettee, of San Francisco, who for more than 20 years have given her life in utter devotion to Vedanta and its teachers, had come north with the Swami to act as his secretary on the trip. She wrote me that Swami Prakashananda was coming from San Francisco to dedicate the new Centre, and that she hoped I could come down for the opening.

To a novice like me all this sounded vastly interesting. We of the Occident are always curious about the Orient. To us the East savors of mystery, symbolism and elaborate ceremonial. Certainly the Swami's Tacoma lectures had been clear and simple enough. But I said to myself: "*They* were 'different'. At the opening of the Centre, I shall surely see something of that 'East' of which we hear so much."

Now that it is all over, I hardly know what I did expect. Mrs. Pettee had written me: "A blessing is in store for you." Assuredly I expected that, but I was looking for that blessing to be borne to me—in part, at least—on the wings of mystic symbolism and picturesque Oriental ceremonial.

And what did I find? I found, on the top floor of an office building, a little hall with a seating capacity of perhaps a hundred. The windows, hung with soft grey draperies, had black valances, on which was embroidered in both Sanskrit and English the sacred name—Om.

Two pictures hung on the freshly tinted walls—one of the boy Christ, the other a large and very beautiful

likeness of Swami Vivekananda, the beloved disciple of the Holy One.

The platform, banked with the colourful flowers of autumn, held the reading desk, one large and one small chair and a rug. Soft black curtains hung at the back, before the door leading into the little room that will serve as the Swami's office.

The severe purity of the entire effect was rendered doubly impressive by its absolute simplicity. Already an atmosphere of holy calm seemed to hover over the little chapel, "swept and garnished" and awaiting its dedication to the Master's use.

Though arriving almost half an hour before the time set for the opening of the services, I found a goodly number were ahead of me, and when, at 8 o'clock, a young girl unobtrusively took her place at the piano to play the opening number, the room was filled almost to capacity.

As the strains of music died away, Swami Prabhavananda and Swami Prakashananda came on the platform from the little inner room.

After a simple word of love and greeting to us all, Swami Prabhavananda introduced to us Swami Prakashananda in a few heartful words.

The elder Swami rose, and I felt all about me a hush of expectancy vibrant with deep feeling.

It may be that those long accustomed to Vedanta services become used to the chanting of the Swami and do not thrill to it as I do, but for me the solemnly chanted words are strangely, hauntingly beautiful.

As the sonorous tones ceased—not to die, but rather to blend with the faint fragrance of incense that filled the air—the Swami, in a simple, heart-reaching prayer, invoked God's blessing on the new Centre and dedicated the little chapel to His use. Only a few words—artless indeed in their phrasing when compared with the ornate prayers heard in our Western churches—but at their close

my eyes were brimming with tears, and I am sure that in this I was not alone among the hearers.

I had intended to take notes of the lecture—to tell you something, at least, of what the Swami told us, but I could only listen breathlessly as, with those other thirsty souls, I drank deeply of the limpid waters of soul-life pouring forth crystal-clear from their Infinite Source—the Fountain of Truth Itself.

Reverently we listened to words so simple that a little child could understand, yet so great that our minds, our hearts—yes, our very souls—were driven to their utmost intensity of concentration in an effort to compass even a moiety of their far-flung significance.

I know that he spoke on the Universality of the Vedanta Philosophy and its Message to the Western World—but . . . . Oh! he spoke of so much more!—tenderly, humbly, yet with a power that carried to our listening souls the conviction that here was one who, from the Courts of the Inner Temple, spoke of that which he *knew* through *realisation*.

As truly of him as of the Man of Galilee may it be said: "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."

All too soon came the closing words, and, as we bowed our heads to receive his blessing, I felt sure that in the hearts of each and every one of us had been awakened and quickened the longing for God which, in the fulness of time, will increase in intensity until we, too, striving ever upward, will attain to true and full realisation.

Thus, on Friday, the sixth day of November, 1925, was opened the Vedanta Centre of Portland, Oregon, on the eastern shore of the Western Sea and the western rim of the Western world.

Not with elaborate ceremonial and stately music, as I had expected, but amid the matchless beauty of lovely flowers and the calming fragrance of drifting incense, with a simple prayer to the All-Father-Mother God for help and guidance, by the beloved Swami in whose face shone

the radiance of Love Divine, was the little chapel consecrated to the spreading of the Truth, the attainment of God-consciousness, which, if realised, will bring to many in this new field in the Western World Light, Joy, Peace Supernal.

SRI KRISHNA AND UDDHAVA.

CHAPTER XVIII.

बादरायणिरुवाच ॥

स एवमाशंसित उद्धवेन भागवतमुख्येन दाशार्हमुख्यः ॥
सभाजयन्भृत्यवचो मुकुन्दस्तमाबभाषे श्रवणीयवीर्यः ॥ १ ॥

Suka said :

1. Being thus asked by the great devotee Uddhava, Sri Krishna, the Chief of the Dasarhas—whose mighty deeds are worth hearing—praised his servant's question and spoke to him.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ॥

बार्हस्पत्य स वै नात्र साधुर्वै दुर्जनेरितैः ॥
दुरुक्तै र्भिन्नमात्मानं यः समाधातुमीश्वरः ॥ २ ॥

The Lord said :

2. O disciple of Brihaspati, there is not in the world a sage who can control his mind when it has been pierced by harsh words hurled by the wicked.

न तथा तप्यते विद्धः पुमान्बाणैः सुमर्मगैः ॥
यथा तुदन्ति मर्मस्था ह्यसतां परुषेषवः ॥ ३ ॥

3. Arrows penetrating the most vital parts of a man do not so wound him as do the harsh words of the wicked which rankle in the bosom for ever.

कथयन्ति महत्पुण्यमितिहासमिहोद्धव ॥
तमहं वर्णयिष्यामि निबोध सुसमाहितः ॥ ४ ॥
केनचिद्भिक्षुणा गीतं परिभूतेन दुर्जनैः ॥
स्मरता धृतियुक्तेन विपाकं निजकर्मणाम् ॥ ५ ॥

4—5. O Uddhava, there is a fine story on this subject which is full of spiritual significance. I am narrating it to you. Listen to it with all attention. It was recited by a mendicant who had been maltreated by the wicked, but who bore it with patience, considering it as but the effect of his own past deeds.

अवन्तिषु द्विजः कश्चिदासीदाढ्यतमः श्रिया ॥
वार्तावृत्तिः कदर्यस्तु कामी लुब्धोऽतिकोपनः ॥ ६ ॥

6. There lived in Avanti a Brahmana who was immensely rich, but who led a miserable life, doing business, and was greedy, avaricious and exceedingly irritable.

ज्ञातयोऽतिथयस्तस्य वाङ्मात्रेणापि नार्चिताः ॥
शून्यावसथ आत्मापि काले कामैरनर्चितः ॥ ७ ॥

7. He never greeted his relatives or guests with kind words even, and living in that God-forsaken house he never gave his own body even occasional comforts.

दुःशीलस्य कदर्यस्य द्रुह्यन्ते पुत्रबान्धवाः ॥
दारा दुहितरो भृत्या विषण्णा नाचरन्प्रियम् ॥ ८ ॥

8. As he led such an impious and despicable life, his sons and relatives did not like him, and his wife, daughters and servants were sad and did not act up to his wishes.

तस्यैवं यक्षवित्तस्य च्युतस्योभयलोकतः ॥
धर्मकामविहीनस्य चुक्रुधुः पञ्चभागिनः ॥ ९ ॥

9. As he took pleasure only in hoarding money, and never cared for the acquisition of virtue or the legitimate

satisfaction of desires, he lost both this life and the next, and the five sharers[1] of his wealth were wroth.

[1 *Five sharers &c.*—Viz. the gods, the seers, the manes, men and animals, who are entitled to daily offerings from a householder.]

तदवध्यानविस्रस्तपुण्यस्कन्धस्य भूरिद ॥
अर्थोऽप्यगच्छन्निधनं बह्वायासपरिश्रमः ॥ १० ॥

10. O generous one, through his disregard of them his stock of merits[1] was exhausted, and that wealth, too, which he was at such pains to accumulate, vanished.

[1 *Merits*—that portion which had contributed to wealth.]

ज्ञातयो जगृहुः किंचित्किंचिद्दस्यव उद्धव ॥
दैवतः कालतः किंचिद्ब्रह्मबन्धोर्नृपार्थिवात् ॥ ११ ॥

11. O Uddhava, some of that wretched Brahmana's wealth was taken by his relatives and some by robbers; some part was destroyed by accident or worn out through the lapse of time, and some of it was taken by men or kings.

स एवं द्रविणे नष्टे धर्मकामविवर्जितः ॥
उपेक्षितश्च स्वजनैश्चिन्तामाप दुरत्ययाम् ॥ १२ ॥

12. When his wealth was thus gone and he was ignored by his own people, he was exceedingly anxious about his future, for he had neglected the acquisition of virtue or the legitimate satisfaction of desires.

तस्यैवं ध्यायतो दीर्घं नष्टरायस्तपस्विनः ॥
खिद्यतो बाष्पकण्ठस्य निर्वेदः सुमहानभूत् ॥ १३ ॥

13. He was a penniless man now, in dire extremities, and as he was thus reflecting long on his condition—his voice choked with repentance,—he was seized with a tremendous disgust for the world.

स चाहेदमहो कष्टं वृथात्मा मेऽनुतापितः ॥
न धर्माय न कामाय यस्यार्थायास ईदृशः ॥ १४ ॥

14. And he said to himself: Woe, alas, unto me! I have for nothing tormented the body in this mad quest

for riches, neglecting the acquisition of virtue and the legitimate satisfaction of desires.

प्रायेणार्थाः कदर्याणां न सुखाय कदाचन ॥
इह चात्मोपतापाय मृतस्य नरकाय च ॥ १५ ॥

15. Riches seldom bring happiness to the despicable man. They only cause the mortification of the body while one is alive, and pave the way to hell[1] after one is dead.

[1 *Hell*—because of the misuse of wealth.]

यशो यशस्विनां शुद्धं श्लाघ्या ये गुणिनां गुणाः ॥
लोभः स्वल्पोऽपि तान्हन्ति श्वित्रो रूपमिवेप्सितम् ॥ १६ ॥

16. Even a modicum of greed is enough to destroy the untarnished reputation of a renowned man, and the most praiseworthy attributes of a virtuous man, as leucoderma spoils the most graceful features.

(*To be continued.*)

REVIEWS AND NOTICES.

PARADISE.—By George Chainey. Published by the Christopher Publishing House, Boston. Pp 121. Price $2.00 (net).

Mr. Chainey who first belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church of America, then to the Unity Church and afterwards to the Liberal and Ethical Society in Boston, has brought out this volume wih a view to show the way to 'Paradise.' Of course, "one who has found this glorious land can simply tell to others." The Paradise he speaks of is not what, according to the Bible, had been in the Garden of Eden and was lost after the fall of Adam, but is "the undetermined and undefinable state of conscious and intelligent comr derie with the loving living God." One who has attained to this state sees "Earth in Heaven, Heaven in Earth ; Each in All, All in Each ; Man in God, and God in Man" and casting out

"Gods and Religions of creeds and traditions" reaches out "to the Living God and to the Religion that is greater than all the religions." The author in these pages has given a figurative meaning of the names and incidents of the Bible and takes a position which will save one from all bigotry and fanaticism. Nice print and get-up is an attractive feature of the book.

"SHIKSHY PRAKRITIR PANTHA.—By Kunja Behari Har, M.A., B.L., B.T., Superintendent of the Normal School, Chittagong. Pp. 203. Price, Re. 1-8.

This is a Bengali translation of the first three parts of Rousseau's famous book 'Emile.' Though the theories, propounded by the great French thinker regarding the education of boys, first met with a great opposition from all quarters, they have afterwards, to a great extent, influenced the educational policy in many countries. We congratulate the author for bringing out the present volume, which will be undoubtedly a great benefit to Bengali-knowing teachers. A better print of the book would have been welcome.

THE BOOK OF THE BELOVED, a Modern Epic Poem.—By J. C. Johnston. Published by Lund, Humphries & Co., Ltd., 3 Amen Corner, London. Pp. XVIII+474. Price not mentioned.

The Book of the Beloved is written mostly in free verse and is divided into three parts, *The Book of the Garden, The Book of Images*, and *The Book of God*. "*The Book of the Garden* has described the human soul in its relations with the world of sense ; *The Book of Images*, the soul in its relation with itself ; *The Book of God* describes the soul in its relations with the Divine World." The theme is beautiful and worthy to be sung in an epic, but the present poem, we are sorry to admit, has failed to do proper justice to it. The author has unnecessarily introduced occult elements into his poem. For, the mysticism which makes art sublime is not occultism, but subtle and sublime *feeling*. The printing and get-up are excellent.

NEWS AND NOTES.

THE POET OR THE SAINT?

The recent controversy between Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi (see *Modern Review*, September and December, 1925) ought to have attracted more thoughtful attention than it has done. The inwardness of it, we are afraid, has been missed. The poet does not really assail the poor wooden implement. It is not worth the poet's steel, though it be ennobled by a saint's solicitude and enthroned in the heart of India's national flag, It is the mentality that prescribes the Charka as the supreme remedy of all national ills, that is the target of the poet's rhetorical missiles. The poet's keen sense of the ludicrous bursts into flaming indignation at such a preposterous proposal. The fact is, the poet does not believe in tinkering with our problems. He wants us to work at the foundations. To him the Swaraj that is India's goal, is not a mere political metamorphosis. Unless there is a full and perfect efflorescence of all the innate worth of our manhood, the real Swaraj will remain unattained. His vision of the future India is an all-round manifestation of life, denying nothing, and embracing all its glories and triumphs,—a song which shall contain the whole gamut of harmonies in the limits of a single piece. That consummation is the poet's dream and ideal, and towards that end he wants all national efforts to be directed. Obviously he has no faith in the efficacy of an Aladin's lamp in matters of national reconstruction: it is ridiculous to expect the establishment of Swaraj within one year or any such specified time, though such specifications have a magic charm about them. Real work will be slow, very slow indeed. Much work has to be done below the surface, silently, unobtrusively. Consequently no mass movements can much help the attainment of our goal. The poet looks ahead and would gladly welcome present sufferings so long as the future was

ensured. He concerns himself primarily with the eternal laws that work behind the individual and national mind. He does not, in an impatient hurry to reach the coveted goal, forget that no achievement is permanent unless it is made through the operation of those laws. His hope lies in the surety of his vision, his fear in the apprehension that blind solicitude for the present might block the way to its realisation.

If such is the outlook of the poet, the saint is no less idealistic in his own vision. He also points to a light which is not of the earth, to the native gradeur of the soul, before which all transient achievements of man appear as nothing. And he himself is arrayed in that immortal grandeur. Why does he preach the Charka? Why is he 'Charka-mad'? Why does he preach non-violence? These are all expressions of a central fact, his philosophy of life. He is an ascetic and a man of renunciation above all. This ascetic ideal is behind all his mentations and actions. He preaches non-violence, because he finds no other ideal possible for man, and especially, Indians. Better they die than forego non-violence. Why does he preach Charka? Because it is the emblem of self-reliance and simplicity which are the very essence of asceticism. But it will be wrong to think of Mahatmaji enforcing his personal ideal on the nation. Hence it is that we often find him speaking in two voices, of philosophy and expediency,—a position not only difficult to reconcile, but also perhaps a little embarrassing to the author himself. For if expediency be the original motive, why, there may be alternative or supplementary programmes to his own. But whatever the thought behind it, the poet is justified in thinking that Mahatmaji's programme suffers lamentably from a lack of psychological insight. The ascetic outlook, at once the strength and weakness of Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, is the real cause of the failure of his political programme. His is a partial vision of life, and offers a sad contrast to the poet's. He represents a section of life, albeit an important one, but he fails to respond to the manifold appeals

of the national soul. Life with all its colour and music waits in vain at his heart's door for a cordial welcome. His ascetic look chastises it to shame. He appears as a champion of a narrow cult of life. Life's accredited representative and spokesman he is not. The poet has a truer and fuller vision, though how far that vision has been made real in him is a matter of serious doubt. But so far as Mahatmaji has gone, and he has gone very far indeed in the pursuit of truth, he has made it his own. The poet's unrealised vision, however glorious and comprehensive, seems to pale before the actuality of the saint's life. How one wishes the two could be welded into a single personality! How glorious, how perfect it would have been!

The conflict between the poet and the saint is a conflict of the visions of life. Other things are merely details. And one cannot deny that so far as interpretation of national life goes, the poet is more comprehensive than the saint. It is no wonder that Mahatmaji is to-day finding himself in the minority. He is a worker at the foundations, and such work as his cannot become a mass movement without imperilling itself. Time is an important factor, and one must be patient. A reform carried out too soon destroys itself in the long run. His influence on the national life, indirectly vast, is bound to be, because of his philosophy of life, directly only partial. But one need not regret if a single man fails to stamp himself on the fate of three hundred millions of people.

WORSE THAN THE WORST TYRANNY.

It is said that many persons are moved more by the picture of distressed humanity in a cinematograph or a stage than when they are actually faced with facts of misery. There are some persons who will be all enthusiasm to send relief to a distant part of the globe, where people have been perhaps visited by the scourge of nature, though they can easily wink at the fact that their next door neighbour is struggling against starvation.

In the same way, we hear the cry that the masses are groaning under the tyranny of the upper classes, that the labourers are at the constant mercy of the capitalists, that the interests of the ruled are exploited by the powers that be ; but very naively we ignore the fact that we are eternally undergoing the worst suffering from ourselves. It is doubtful, whether anybody can oppress us more than what we do ourselves. But such is the witchery of imagination that we always look more to the outside than towards our inner life.

Even the most powerful man knows how tiny a weakling he is to his little self. He knows full well that he goes about in life, not according to his own way, but led by the whim and caprice of his ever-changing mind. He cannot do what he deliberately thinks to be right ; but he is always compelled to do what the freaks of his mind dictate. There is thus an eternal conflict going on between our dual nature—between our higher and lower tendencies, and we all painfully know how often the Satan in us drives away the God that dwells within our heart. A jail bird feels miserable, when he comes out of the prison house ; in the same way there are persons, who are quite happy in the life of abject slavery that they usually live. But there are others to whom this defeat to themselves is the highest torture. The tyranny of mind to them is worse than the worst tyranny in the world. What matters if our physical body suffers, if our internal life is not affected thereby?

The struggle of a man's life means the struggle to overcome the world. Something within us says to ourselves, we are much greater than the world, and so we are to control the world and not the world is to control us. But in actual facts, we find we are ourselves miserable victims to the play of the world, and so the fight ensues between the world and ourselves, which goes on until we overcome the world by getting a glimpse of some higher life.

In the world we find, oppression cannot continue for a long time. The most powerful tyrant ultimately digs

his own grave by the acts of his tyranny,—there is always the moral victory in the long run. Would that we could successfully rise in rebellion against ourselves and tear to pieces the meshes that bind us to thraldom. Had there been a handful of persons who have thus conquered themselves, the destiny of this earth would have changed, and humanity would have entered into a new career of life. The prophet said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome." This simply indicates that others can follow him and equally do the same.

THE INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL CONGRESS.

The institution of the Philosophical Congress as an annual conference, of which the first session was held in Calcutta in the last December, is a movement in the right direction. It was long overdue. Philosophy is a constitutional necessity of man, however neglected it apparently may be in the work-a-day world, and it exerts a silent, yet extremely potent influence on the national mind, and unconsciously moulds individual and collective behaviour. This observation applies peculiarly to India. Just as theories of state have a direct and practical bearing on the Western life, even so has philosophy a direct relation to Indian life. We are pre-eminently a philosophical nation. We have a tendency to view life in its relations to the Central Truth. Even such small details as eating, sleeping, washing or dressing do not escape the careful scrutiny of the philosopher. Too much philosophising is perhaps bad, but the national temperament is unalterable, and we can only make the best of it. Therefore, whenever our nation has found itself confronted by changing or novel circumstances, or any new racial, credal or cultural units have been added to it, the first call has been for a new philosophy of life. And none has been accepted as the director or arbiter of the nation's destiny, who has not furnished his own commentary on the three great books that enunciate the fundamentals of life,—the Upanishads, the Brahma-Sutras and the Gita,

commonly called the Prasthana-traya. He was expected to interpret the eternal verities in their application to the altered circumstances. This has been the primal function of the philosopher.

The present age again calls for the exertions of the philosopher. Three hundred years ago, Bengal requisitioned his services in Vaishnavism. Things have undergone tremendous changes since then. So many varied and new elements have been imported into our culture, the border-lines demarcating races and nations have been so completely obliterated, that unless the philosopher comes out with his synthetic view of life, our nation will find itself lost in the wilderness. The supreme need of the hour, therefore, is the co-ordination and synthesis of the different philosophies, ancient and modern, with the added element of the new vision. The world is eagerly waiting for this new synthesis which will be at once a systematisation and a fulfilment of all the variegated experiences of mankind, from gross sense-perception to the highest mystic realisation. India is best fitted to propound that philosophy, for she alone, of all nations, has probed life to its deepest. Will the Philosophical Congress address itself to this glorious task?

THE BIRTHDAY OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA.

The *tithi* of Sri Ramakrishna's nativity falls this year on Sunday, the 14th February. We request all Maths, Ashramas and Societies observing the birthday to send us the reports of their celebrations at an early date.