

Prabuddha Bharata

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

Katha Upa. I. iii. 4.

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

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

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THE RAMAKRISHNA ORDER : WHAT IT STANDS FOR.*

CHILDREN OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA,

Please allow me to express my sincere felicitations at your congregating together in this Convention of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission held for the first time in the annals of the Ramakrishna Order. This Convention, I am confident, will afford you a unique opportunity of comparing notes with one another regarding the various works carried on by the different centres which you have met here to represent and also of hearing from the few surviving disciples of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna about the ideas and ideals of religion as expressed in and through the life of our Master, which will undoubtedly go a great way towards increasing the necessary solidarity of this organisation.

Had Swamiji been alive to-day, how warmly would

* Presidential Address of Srimat Swami Shivananda, delivered at the First Convention of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission on 1st April, 1926, at the Ramakrishna Math, Belur. A short report of the proceedings will appear in our next issue.—Ed. P.B.

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he have greeted you all and showered his blessings on this gathering for bringing its deliberations to a successful end! The vision of another great soul who was regarded by the Master as next to Swami Vivekananda in his capacity for realising religious ideals comes irresistibly before our mind to-day. Indeed, if Swamiji was loved and cherished by the Master as the instrument by which to proclaim to the world his great mission in the realm of religion—Swami Brahmananda was no less regarded by him as the person to fill an important and very responsible place in the scheme of his religious organisation. In fact, under the paternal care of the Raja Maharaj, the first President of the Ramakrishna Mission, the organisation that had but existed as a seed in the monastery of Baranagore assumed its present form of a mighty plant. Although we sadly miss them and some other brother disciples of ours, as Swami Premananda, Swami Ramakrishnananda and others, who had no mean share in contributing to the growth of this organisation, I invoke the benedictions of them all as well as that of our Master on this auspicious occasion.

I do not wish to give you here any detailed scheme for the furtherance of the objects of this Convention. I shall be satisfied with telling you a few words in general out of my personal experience and I shall feel happy if I be of any service to you in bringing the deliberations to a successful issue.

Three decades ago when the present activities of the Ramakrishna Order with its various ramifications all over the country and abroad were in the womb of futurity, when people knew Swami Vivekananda as but a preacher of Hinduism who upheld the cause of our Sanatana Dharma in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, the great Swami with the keen vision of a Prophet clearly foresaw the part that the teachings of his Master would play in shaping the destiny of humanity at large which had been lying then in the melting-pot of a great transition. The admonition of his Master to forego the selfish enjoyment of Samadhi and dedicate his life to the wel-



fare of the many, seeing Him alone immanent in the Universe, haunted him day and night ever since that memorable day when Sri Ramakrishna in a mood of inward absorption handed over to his illustrious disciple the precious fruits of his own realisations reaped in the course of the crowded period of his Sadhana and made him the happy conduit for the flow of the elixir of spirituality that the world needed at a great psychological period of its history.

After the passing away of the Master, Swamiji formulated a unique scheme of thought to shape the future of his countrymen for the revivification of the world culture—a scheme which was the outcome of some of his strange personal experiences. The chief formative influences that went to determine his vision may be classified under the following heads : his Master's great prophecies regarding him; his own training and realisations; his knowledge of Western philosophy, history and Sanskrit scriptures ; the constant study of the divine life of his Guru before him in which he found the key to life and the verification of the Shastras ; his travels all over his motherland in the course of which he availed himself of the opportunities of comparing her as she then was with what she had been, of studying the life and thought of the people, their needs and possibilities and the diversities of their customs and faiths. Mixing with princes and peasants, with saints and scholars, he grasped in its comprehensiveness that vast whole of which his Master's life and personality was but an intense epitome. These then—the Shastras, the Guru and the Motherland—are the three notes that mingle themselves to form the symphony of Swamiji's life and works. These were the treasures which he wanted to offer to the world at large.

The above-mentioned experiences furnished him with the clue to the prevalent disruptive world-forces which necessitated the advent of a Prophet. The first thing that arrested his thought was the prevailing bigotry among the different religions of the world and a very parochial



conception regarding the ideal of religion itself. The different creeds which were thought of by the ancient seers as but different paths for the realisation of one and the same Truth, maintained a bellicose attitude towards one another. Like frogs in the well, the followers of a particular sect refused to see anything beyond the tip of their nose. And secondly, religion working on a narrow basis subjected itself to self-condemnation by ostracising the various schemes of life from its scope. Religion was conceived as having nothing to do with the actualities of our everyday life and therefore was left aside as an exclusive ideal to be pursued by the recluse in the forest or by men outside the pale of society. The highest maxim of Vedanta was considered as utterly incompatible with work. A permanent cleavage was made between work and worship, renunciation and service—an unfortunate factor which contributed most to our national degeneration. At this juncture the world sorely needed a man who would formulate a religion that would be scientific and a science that would be religious.

Swami Vivekananda found in his Master such a man. Sri Ramakrishna stood at that point of equilibrium in which the great conflicts of life neutralise one another. In him was found a wonderful *rapprochement* of the various apparently jarring creeds. First of all, by actual realisation he demonstrated the practical utility of the three main systems of Indian philosophic thought—monism, qualified monism and dualism—to reach the ideal which is beyond any particular philosophical doctrine. Again, reaching the same goal by following some of the accepted paths, *viz.*, Sanatana Dharma, Islam and Christianity, he demonstrated the efficacy of these different religions conceived to suit different temperaments. In him was revived once more the long forgotten ideal of the Vedas, एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति, “The Truth is one, but sages call it by different names.” And lastly, in his life was wonderfully noticed a harmonious reconciliation between such apparently incompatible ingredients as Jnana, Bhakti, Karma and

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 Yoga. A man who held the highest Samadhi in the palm of his hand, also melted into tears at the mere mention of the name of God. He who had realised Truth by following the intricacies of the Yoga system was also found undergoing the pain of slow crucifixion in the midst of tremendous activities for distributing the fruits of his own realisations among fit recipients. This all-sided man appealed irresistibly to the mind of his disciple, who clearly saw that the future world, reborn and rejuvenated, must bear the stamp of his Guru's genius.

The Buddhistic organisation of ancient India as well as the discipline and organised effort of the modern progressive West, where also he had travelled a great deal, might have suggested to the mind of Swamiji the idea of an institution that would, under proper discipline, make a practical application of the teachings of his Master. Swami Vivekananda, a practical idealist that he was, soon after his return from the West, formulated the idea—at once original and bold—of a Math which would be the fittest mirror wherein future generations would find a true reflex of the life and thought of Sri Ramakrishna.

As the very basis of the Math we find the following words of the Swamiji. "This Math is established," said he, "for the attainment of one's own liberation as well as to get equipped for the amelioration of the world in all possible ways by following the path laid down by Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Deva. Another Math working on this line will be established for women as well." These pregnant words of the Swami Vivekananda form the corner-stone, as it were, of the Math established by him. A proper understanding of these words, which mean much more than what appears on the surface, will supply the pivot of the entire organisation controlled and managed by the members of the Ramakrishna Order.

At the very outset we find that he has linked up into a single purpose two apparently diverse ideals, *viz.*, one's own liberation and service for the welfare of the world.

Through this Math he has sought to weld together the ideals of renunciation and service, work and worship, which, as generally people believe, cannot possibly combine without proving detrimental to each other. According to his ideal, the attainment of personal liberation need not necessarily contradict the dedication of life to the service of humanity, nor should the latter in its highest aspect be thought of as apart from the activities of the man who is eager to pierce through the mist that has covered the effulgent Truth lying within his own self. If the highest illumination aims at nothing short of effacing all distinctions between the individual soul and the universal Soul, and if its ideal be to establish a total identity of one's own self with Brahman existing everywhere, then it naturally follows that the highest spiritual experience of the aspirant cannot but lead him to a state of exalted self-dedication to the welfare of all. He makes the last divine sacrifice by embracing the universe after transcending its limitations which are the outcome of ignorance. Swamiji wanted to make the members of his Math the most willing instruments in the hand of God for the fruition of his work, the fulfilment of which task must confer upon them the felicity of the highest spiritual illumination. Sri Ramakrishna told us again and again that to enjoy a sweet mango all by oneself was a much lower ideal than to share it with others.

Again, looking from an ordinary standpoint we find Swamiji, the great Acharya that he was, giving us the ideal of an organisation wherefrom its members will get the greatest facilities of an integral realisation, rich and full in its conception and attainment. The aspirant will have to combine in his Sadhana elements of the four accepted paths—Jnana, Karma, Bhakti and Yoga, laying greater stress on a particular process according to his predominant temperament. Not a single one of these items must be left out, otherwise the result will be a little less than complete. Thus we shall presently see among the ways prescribed for the members of the Math a wonderful synthesis of meditation, worship, study and work.

That the Math must not limit itself within a narrow precinct but consecrate itself to a wider scope of activities, is clearly evidenced from the following words of Swamiji. "Such Maths we must establish," says he, "all over the world. Some countries stand in need of spirituality only, whereas others are in need of a few wordly amenities. We must lead nations and individuals to the realm of spirituality through paths suited to them by fulfilling the respective wants that such nations and individuals may be most suffering from." "The first and foremost necessity in India," Swamiji goes on, "is the propagation of education and religious ideas among the lower classes. It is impossible for hungry men to become spiritual unless food is provided for them. Therefore above all our paramount duty is to show them new ways of food supply."

These clear words unmistakably show what Swamiji conceived to be one of the principal items in the spiritual exercises of the inmates of his Math. So far as the Indian work was concerned, the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna acknowledging Swamiji as the expounder of his life and teachings must accept a programme of activities which have hitherto been considered as belonging to the secular domain and therefore left outside the scheme of life of those who wanted to attain the highest goal of existence here and now. It is not work, the Gita and other Shastras say, that demeans or elevates a man, but it is his attitude towards work that is the real determining factor. It stands to reason also that if with love and devotion a Sadhaka can discover Divinity in mere images, he can certainly with much more ease realise God through the worship of Man—surely a higher creation than the inanimate objects—if the worship be performed there with the same amount of sincerity, devotion and love. Without doubt man is the highest symbol of God and his worship is the highest form of worship on earth.

This ideal of Sadhana conceived by Swamiji further developed into a practical suggestion which he made re-

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garding the plan of work of the Math. "This, then, is our aim," he said, "that this Math will have to be slowly developed into a finished university, where the culture of philosophy and religion must proceed along with a fully equipped Technical Institute. This is our primary duty. Other branches of study will be added later on to its curriculum." A very bold conception indeed! Nowhere in it is to be found the slightest trace of a compromise with the stereotyped ancient ideal of leaving out works from the conception of an ideal religion. This is the special significance of the message of Swamiji to his countrymen. In order to save the Math from the inevitable calamity that had befallen similar institutions in olden times, Swamiji warned its guardians to see that it must not lapse into a mere Thakurbadi or a chapel where superficial ceremonies take the place of the spirit of the thing—बाबाजीदेर ठाकुरबाड़ी, to quote his own words. "Such a chapel," said he, "may prove beneficial to a few or satisfy the passing curiosity of a handful, but this Math will prove of inestimable value to the whole world." This, then, is the basic conception of the Math founded by Swami Vivekananda.

A Math based on such a lofty ideal reflecting the life of Sri Ramakrishna, its guardian angel, cannot be anything but catholicity itself. Humanity has never before seen another life like that of Sri Ramakrishna synthesising the highest ideals of knowledge, devotion, work and Yoga. Those only who mould their lives after the perfect ideal of Sri Ramakrishna's character can be truly said to represent the ideas of the Math. Therefore Swamiji enjoined that the special aim of this Math would be the formation of character by combining the above-mentioned four paths, and that the spiritual exercises that would bring about such a synthesis would alone be accepted as the Sadhana of this Math. "Therefore," he said emphatically, "everyone must bear in mind that a man who shows the slightest deficiency in any one of the above-mentioned ways has not been properly cast in the mould of Sri Ramakrishna's life. He who consecrates himself



to the service of others does a nobler work than he who tries to work out his own liberation." This is really the special feature of this Math. Before the advent of Sri Ramakrishna it was thought perfectly natural, nay inevitable, that one system of religious thought alone could flourish in a Math. But realising the three main systems of Indian philosophical thought as but different readings of the Absolute, Sri Ramakrishna made it possible to establish a Math on the bedrock of transcendental experience wherefrom equal utility of all these systems of philosophy can be boldly proclaimed as leading to the realisation of the highest Impersonal Truth. To save his Math from the contingency of some unavoidable evil results, Swamiji laid equal emphasis on the culture of the head, heart and hands. He knew that mere work uninspired by religion and unaccompanied by meditation, discrimination and other spiritual exercises, degenerates into a kind of pure social service activity. Such mechanical work, not attuned to a higher conception of life, piles bondage upon bondage. Hands can work for the desired end when the vision is clarified and the heart finds facilities for its full expression. Again, simple discrimination or study of the scriptures ends in mere intellectual gymnastics, dry and insipid, if it does not express its conclusions in terms of the actualities of life. Similarly, devotion degenerates into meaningless and often dangerous sentimentalism if it dissociates itself from discrimination and work. To know Truth, to feel its presence in the innermost recesses of one's heart and to realise its expression all around—these are but three aspects of the same highest divine realisation. His ideal monk was one who would be now absorbed in meditation and the next moment be prepared to explain the difficult intricacies of the Shastras. The same monk again would with equal zeal cultivate the field and sell the produce of it in the market, carrying it on his own head.

The following is the clear instruction of the Swamiji regarding the programme of work of the Math :—

"Want of culture brings about the degeneration of

a religious sect. Therefore culture of knowledge should be practised in the Math without intermission. Luxury crushes the Math when its members forget the ideals of renunciation and austerity. Therefore these ideas must be always kept bright in the organisation. Dissemination of ideas adds to the vigour and vitality of an organisation. Therefore this Math must never stop its preaching activities.

“In a narrow society religion is generally seen to possess a certain depth and intensity like that of a small rivulet. Similarly, it is noticed that the depth and intensity diminish in proportion as the ideas of liberality creep into it. But the strangest thing is that transcending all such historical precedents, ideas broader than the sky itself and deeper than the ocean found a wonderful reconciliation in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. It is thus proved to the hilt that the greatest catholicity and the greatest extensity can exist side by side with the utmost intensity in an individual, and a society can also be established on such a basis, because society is but an aggregate of individuals.” Of course a man of wide and catholic outlook of Sri Ramakrishna’s stamp cannot be met with every now and then. But such a want can be compensated and the integrity and cohesion of the Math kept intact, if its different members holding Sri Ramakrishna as their ideal and following different paths of Sadhana according to their temperaments are accepted as integral parts of the institution and equal facilities afforded to all for individual growth and expression. Sri Ramakrishna may not exist any more in his physical body, but so long as this catholicity be kept untarnished the Math will certainly feel his presence. Swamiji also declared, “This Math represents the physical body of Sri Ramakrishna. He is always present in this institution. The injunction of the whole Math is the injunction of Sri Ramakrishna. One who worships it, worships him as well. And one who disregards it, disregards our Master.”

An institution of such a catholic outlook may contain, to all appearances, elements of disintegration—a



fact to which Swamiji was very keenly alive. Again, all outward dissensions are preceded and accentuated by mental disruptions. Therefore Swamiji laid down unity of purpose as the greatest force for maintaining the integrity of the institution. All members of the Math must repeatedly study and think on this conception of the Swamiji regarding the Math and try to translate it into practice in their individual life. "Mutual love, obedience to the authorities, forbearance and an unalloyed purity can alone maintain unity and an *esprit de corps* among the members of the Math"—and save them from the calamity of disintegration. Fame is the last infirmity of noble minds and it seduces even the noblest soul from his path of duty. Hankering for fame causes jealousy which in the end spells ruin to the organisation. "Sri Ramakrishna never cared for name and fame. We are his followers and servants. So we must always set aside all allurements of name and fame. Our ideal in life is to carry out his commands, leading pure lives ourselves and teaching others to do so." A great responsibility rests on our shoulders. We must know that Sri Ramakrishna sits on the crest of the wave that has already gone forth to raise humanity from its present state of depression—and it is through the members of the Math that people will judge of Sri Ramakrishna. Our work will proclaim his glory. We are his representatives wherever we may go or live. People will see in the members of this Math a reflection of Sri Ramakrishna. Consciousness of such responsibility cannot but bring about a unity of purpose among the different members of the Math.

A spirit of obedience on the part of the workers and that of willing service on the part of the leaders must pervade the entire atmosphere of the Math. The success of an organisation depends a great deal upon the capacity of its leader. The faculty of organisation is entirely absent in our nature. This has become our peculiar national trait. But the secret of success lies in the absence of jealousy. The leader must be always ready to concede to the opinion of his brother workers and try always to

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conciliate. "Don't try to be a ruler," Swamiji said addressing the leaders. "He is the best ruler who can serve well. Never attempt to guide others or rule others or, as the Americans say, boss others. Be the servant of all. Nobody will come to help you, if you assume the role of a great leader ; kill self first if you want to succeed. The great secret of success is never to figure out big plans at first, but begin slowly, feel the ground and proceed up and up." Again, "you must go and seize the crocodile first if you are told to do so and then argue." This should be the attitude of every worker. With great agony Swamiji said, "If there is any crying sin in India at this time it is our slavery. Every one wants to command and no one wants to obey. This is owing to the absence of that wonderful Brahmacharya system of yore. First learn to obey. Always first learn to be a servant and then you will be a fit master. The worker must carry out the orders of his superior, leaving aside even the consideration of his life. Fear is at the root of all misery. It is the greatest sin. Therefore we must overcome it altogether. The first and foremost cause that separates a brother from his brother is to speak ill of one another behind his back. The members of this Math must studiously avoid it. If a member must say anything against his brother, it must be confided to him alone. Not one among the followers of Sri Ramakrishna is bad. Had he been so he could not find entrance into the Order. Every member of the Math must deeply ponder over it before judging others." These are some of the very practical suggestions which Swamiji has given for bringing about the spirit of co-operation and co-ordination among the different members and different centres of the Belur Math. His warning to the recalcitrant member still rings clear in our ears. "To make a great future India," Swamiji said, "the whole secret lies in organisation, accumulation of power, co-ordination of wills. Organisation alone is the primary means for all progress and the only way for the conservation of energy. The curse of the entire organisation must fall on his head


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who would try to bring about its disruption and disintegration by word, thought and action. Nothing but ruin awaits him in this world or in that to come.”

The present division of the activities of the Ramakrishna Order into those of the Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math, which may give rise to a little confusion, is a purely technical one. It is generally believed that the Math is, as it were, a place for meditation and study alone, whereas philanthropic works have been relegated to the scope of the Mission proper. Though in practice it has become so in some cases, it is necessary to clear up any confusion that may exist in this respect. From what I have said before you will clearly understand that the Math conceived by Swamiji includes everything—work as well as worship, social service as well as meditation and study. As we have seen before, he wanted to incorporate with the Belur Math a full-fledged university, including in its curriculum the study of religion and philosophy as well as that of technology. In his time no necessity was felt for making a formal separation of the Order into the Math and the Mission. To give effect to his ideals, he established an Association on the 1st May, 1897 to unite the monastic and lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Deva in a common organised effort for the service of humanity. As the Association, which had been named the Ramakrishna Mission, thrived and its activities widened, it was given, in order to remove some purely technical difficulties, a legal status by registering it in 1909 under Act XXI of 1860 of the Governor General of India. Thenceforth on legal grounds alone a formal distinction has been made between the Math and the Mission. Really speaking, for the convenience of the public a part of the Math itself has been given, as it were, the appellation of the Ramakrishna Mission. All the members of the Ramakrishna Order, whatever may be their sphere of work for the time being, belong in essence to the Ramakrishna Math conceived by the Swamiji. Any attempt to make a cleavage between the existing Math and Mission works is distinctly against the



ideal of Swamiji and therefore stands self-condemned. Any attempt to find a distinction between the ideals of the Math and the Mission is unholy and dangerous. Be good yourself and help others to be so—was the injunction of Swamiji to every member of the Math. And he wanted to give effect to this by a combination of the four accepted paths of Sadhana, allowing, as we have said before, fuller expression to a particular path according to the temperament of the aspirant. Hence there is no room for a clash of ideals. To try to find a distinction between the ideals of the Math and the Mission is like trying to distinguish between two facets of the same coin. Therefore those who are engaged in philanthropic works should be considered as important members of the Order as those who have devoted themselves to meditation alone in a cave of the Himalayas, provided all of them acknowledge their allegiance to the ideals of Swamiji. Those who retire from the arena of activity for a time and lead exclusively a life of meditation and study with a view to equip themselves more fully for the work, are regarded as invaluable assets for the growth and vitality of the organisation. The Math is a picturesque bouquet containing the flowers of Jnana, Bhakti, Yoga and Karma whose variegated colours and sweet aroma contribute to its richness and beauty.

Well, friends, I have told you what I had got to say. From my little experience I tell you, children of Sri Ramakrishna, that our organisation lasts as long as the spirit of God pervades its atmosphere. Love, catholicity, purity and selflessness are the corner-stones of our organisation. No man-made laws can save it from ruin when selfishness eats into its vitals. If you all try to become perfect—keeping intact your allegiance to this Math which gives you every kind of facility for reaching that perfection, you will add a leaf to the life of the organisation. Swamiji shed his blood for the Math. His spirit is still hovering over us. This Math is the visible body of Sri Ramakrishna. All those that have gone before us are still with us in spirit to help us in all possible ways. We must unfurl



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all sails so that we may take advantage of the divine wind that is ever blowing to take us to the destined goal.

Religion is the great mission of India. This is the only gift that we can bestow on the world. From time immemorial religious ideas flowing from this land have been contributing their quota to shape the civilisations of the world. We are still alive in spite of the many vicissitudes that have befallen this unfortunate race during the last ten centuries, only because religion forms the backbone of our life. With us God is the central pillar round which move all other schemes of life individual or collective. True greatness is estimated here in the scales of spirituality. In pursuance of the great law enunciated in the Gita the Lord has again incarnated Himself in this age as Sri Ramakrishna to revive the lost ideals of religion. Incarnations and Prophets came before him in numbers to show us light in the midst of darkness, to elevate us from national depression. But the darkness of former ages that necessitated the advent of Prophets, compared with the darkness that has overwhelmed us at present, may be said to be light itself. The former national depressions compared with our present one look like mere mud-puddles. Therefore to extricate us and to disentangle the world from the tentacles of dark material forces, God has, through His infinite grace, incarnated Himself again in the fullest degree. "Through thousands of years' chiselling and modelling, the lives of the great prophets of yore come down to us ; and yet in my opinion, not one stands so high in brilliance as that life which I saw with my own eyes, under whose shadow I have lived, at whose feet I have learnt everything. Before this great wave of spirituality there have been whirlpools of lesser manifestations all over society. It came, at first unknown, unperceived and unthought of, assuming proportions, swallowing, as it were, and assimilating all the other little whirlpools, becoming immense, till it assumed the shape of a tidal wave falling upon society with a power that none can resist." That great personality, the greatest that the world has ever seen, is behind you. Our


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forefathers performed great deeds, you must do greater deeds still. Each one of us will have to believe that everyone else in the world has done his work, and the only work remaining to be done to make the world perfect, has to be done by himself. This is the responsibility we have to take upon ourselves.

In old Buddhistic monasteries a sincere effort was made to do good to the world through organised efforts. And they succeeded a great deal in their object. Since the record of history, Buddhistic monks, through their organisations, have perhaps put the greatest lever for humanity's good. If the unknown history of some of the principal existing religions and systems of philosophy be ever written, the world will know how much these intrepid monks contributed to their growth and development. So long as those monasteries kept intact the pristine ideals of purity and renunciation, they were irresistible wherever they went. But when that spirit waned the religion of Buddha showed signs of decadence. This is a great historical lesson we are to learn. In the subsequent history of India we find occasionally an individual rising to the highest pinnacle of perfection, but he did not care much for people around him. Undoubtedly he realised a great ideal. But the ideal itself for want of a suitable medium of expression died of inanition in the course of a generation or two. This is another great lesson. Again, we find during the last few centuries the growth and development of Maths and Ashrams in the country in a very large number. Though they might have benefited a comparatively small number of people who gave up the world, by providing them with facilities for their individual spiritual growth, they could not be of much help to society at large, because they omitted from their scheme of spiritual exercises a spirit of service for humanity. This is the third lesson of history. Swamiji took all these facts into consideration before setting forth the ideal of his Math. Dedication of our life to the attainment of our own liberation as well as to the amelioration of the world at large—आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च—is what he has



chosen for us—the ideal of all ideals. I have my fullest confidence in you all who have been earnestly endeavouring to realise this lofty ideal in life. You do not hesitate to brush aside any personal considerations, however strong, for the realisation of this ideal—and I clearly find Sri Ramakrishna, our Light and Guide, working from behind you and through you. His benign hands are at the back of all of your activities. It is his grace alone that has enabled your works to be crowned with success within such a short period of time. So long as you have faith in him, so long as you consider yourselves as humble instruments in his hands, no power on earth however great, can shake you from your position by so much as a jot or tittle. Putting your faith in our Lord everyone of you can say, “Let me stand where I am and I shall move the world.” I exhort you with all the earnestness at my command not to be disturbed or discouraged by momentary failures. Failures are but the stepping-stones to success. Viewing success and failure alike, work on with unwavering faith in him and victory will be yours at the end. I only pray that your surrender may be complete. Be like the arrow that darts from the bow. Be like the hammer that falls on the anvil. Be like the sword that pierces its object. The arrow does not murmur if it misses the target. The hammer does not fret if it falls on a wrong place. And the sword does not lament if it is broken in the hands of its wielder. Yet there is a joy in being made, used and broken ; and an equal joy in being finally set aside.

I invoke the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna on you all so that he may give you strength and courage to realise Truth in this very life.

Let the atmosphere of this Convention vibrate with a spirit of love and benediction. Let us, in conclusion, say with the great Indian sages and echo the voice of the Vedas :

मधु वाता ऋतायते ॥ मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः ॥ माध्वीनः सत्वोषधीः ॥  
मधु नक्तमुतोषसो ॥ मधुमत्पार्थिवं रजः ॥ मधु द्यौरस्तु नः पिता ॥ मधुमान्नो

वनस्पतिर्मधुमां अस्तु सूर्यः ॥ माध्वीर्गावो भवन्तु नः ॥ ॐ मधु ॥ ॐ मधु ॥  
ॐ मधु ॥

“Sweet blow the winds and the rivers scatter sweetness! May the herbs and trees be full of honeyed sweetness! May night and morning yield us joy! May the dust of the earth be sweet unto us! May father Heaven give us happiness! May the sun shower Bliss on us! May the cows yield us all-sweetness! Om Joy! Sweetness! Bliss.”

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE HINDUS.

The Hindus worship the Prophet of Nazareth as an incarnation of God. And why? For, in him they find the living expression of that saving power which manifests itself on earth from time to time and brings about a readjustment in the existing moral and spiritual order of society. In him they find the fulfilment of the promise made by the Lord in the Gita—“Whenever there is decline of virtue and ascendancy of vice I body Myself forth. I am born again and again to protect the good, to destroy the wicked and establish religion.”

The ideal presented by Christ is not new to the Hindus. Love, renunciation, purity, humility, prayer, meditation and such other ethical and spiritual virtues which he enjoins for the realisation of God are not foreign to India. They are rather the part and parcel of Indian consciousness. Whoever has studied the history of India will admit this. The Jews who belonged to the Semitic group of the human race were not prepared to receive Jesus. The Messiah whom they had been expecting and picturing in their minds was a ruler of men who would deliver them from the Roman yoke. They were, therefore, astounded at the scheme of life presented by Jesus. He belied their expectations by his transcendental spiritual message, and they crucified him taking him to



be an impostor. But the men from the East, so the story goes, came to Palestine following the course of a star and worshipped Jesus offering at his feet gold, frankincense and myrrh. This old legend is not without significance.

There are proofs which cannot altogether be set aside that the life and teachings of Christ came under the influence of India. For, who were these men from the East, and who again was John the Baptist, the precursor of Christ? There are scholars who are of opinion that the men from the East and John the Baptist were either Hindu or Buddhist monks who came to the land of the Jews on a missionary purpose. That India was in the heyday of her civilisation in those times and sent preachers, both Hindu and Buddhist, to China, Japan, Persia and countries of the Near East is accepted by many historians. How far true is the view that Christ and his religion were influenced by India, can only be decided in the light of further historical research. One thing that appears certain to us is that there are many elements in the life and gospel of the Nazarene, which show their similarity to Hindu and Buddhist ideas. We can say without any fear of contradiction that Christ and Christianity are, strictly speaking, not pure products of Judaism. Over and above the Semitic influence, they felt the touch of a civilisation which is decidedly superior and more broad-based—a civilisation that may be called akin to the Indo-Aryan civilisation. Is not the New Testament wherein are recorded the life-story of Jesus and his teachings a clear departure from the Old Testament? The New Testament places before you an outlook upon life that cannot easily match with the Hebrew traditions and the Hebrew cultural ideas and ideals. Of course, there have been attempts to reconcile these two books and construct out of them a comprehensive system by showing that one is the fulfilment of the other, independent of any foreign influence. But we for our part confess our inability to do so unless we admit and bring in the fact of Indo-Aryan influence.

When we go through the record of Christ's life and teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and in other parts of the Gospels, we feel that we are living in an Indian atmosphere. Almost every fact, scene or idea is surcharged with the fragrance of India. Let us look at the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;" "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;" "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." Are not these Indian in tone? We think that they indicate a close kinship between Christian and Indian ideas of spiritual excellence. Again do not the verses—"Resist not evil," "Love your enemies," and "Overcome evil with good,"—show a clear Buddhistic stamp? There can be no doubt that the ideal of love presented by Christ in the New Testament is only another name for the ideal of Ahimsa as set forth by Buddha.

Unlike the Jewish teachers of old Jesus was pre-eminently a prophet of love. His heart bled for the suffering humanity. It embraced every man that lived, in its all-encompassing compassion and charity. Even when he was dying, nailed to the cross, not a word of curse or reproach came out of his lips. The body was suffering excruciating agony, but the heart was calm full of divine joy and peace. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," said he and prayed for his persecutors blessing them with all his heart. The history of the Hebrew race cannot furnish a single instance of such love and self-sacrifice. The Hebrew law is—"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." What a contrast is it to the Christian ideal of Ahimsa!

From all these considerations we come to the conclusion which we have stated beforehand, *viz.*, that the Christianity of Christ is not a pure product of Judaism. Mr. C. F. Andrews, a liberal Christian (once a missionary) and a sincere lover of India and Indian ideals, and some others like him have written on the subject and shown what we ourselves want to establish.



Christ was indeed a unique figure in the history of the Hebrew race. Although he was not appreciated during his own lifetime, as prophets are not, the success of his mission was phenomenal in course of time. The lofty spiritual idealism embodied in his life and teachings gathered strength after his passing away and became a dynamo of spiritual energy revolutionising human thought. Europe of to-day with all her achievements in the different departments of life owes a great deal to Christ and his ethical religion. In the name of Christ there have been many many saints and ascetics who have lived the life of poverty, chastity, love, renunciation and service, returning blessing and benediction for persecution. In his name there have been numberless brotherhoods and organisations that have done incalculable good to man. In his name there have been countless institutions for the advancement of higher knowledge and culture. Really, as we peruse the accounts of the glorious services rendered by Christianity, our feeling is one of silent admiration. Not only the people of the West and of the land of his birth, but we who belong to the other countries of the East, India, China and Japan, are also indebted to Christianity.

The history of Christianity associated with much persecution and bloodshed is an interesting study. And its success—its extensive spread, was due to the wonderful perseverance, patience and self-sacrifice of the missionaries who carried the gospel from land to land to strange people. This reminds us of some of the Early Christian Mission Charges. They are: "Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves;" "Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes;" "Eating and drinking such things as *they* give;" "Freely ye have received, freely give." What a grand ascetic tone do we find in these commandments! It must be said to the credit of the early Christian missionaries that many of them sincerely tried to approximate to the ideal as set forth here, and they therefore succeeded in converting people by thousands.

When the essentials of the spiritual life are forgotten

men give undue predominance to the non-essentials, and thus rituals and ceremonials come into existence. Rituals and ceremonials, divested of the inner spirit, however scrupulously observed, necessarily lead to bigotry, dogmatism and fanaticism. This is a great truth that applies to every religion, and Christianity is no exception. A student of the history of religions will certainly substantiate the truth of our remark. In the process of time the religion of Christ that was once so lofty in its ethical tone became degenerated, and it is this degenerated form of Christianity that we deny.

It is our opinion that the Christian church of to-day does not truly represent the Master and his ideal. And it is also the testimony of many Christians even that Christ, the Crucified Saviour, is not to be found in the church. Fraud, political wire-pulling, theological jugglery, bigotry and superstition, they say, are some of the many undesirable vices that characterise the church. Of course, there are exceptions. We quote here the remarks of Count Ilya Tolstoy, the son of the famous Russian idealist. He says: "Neither in America, nor in Europe there is any real Christianity. Churches are everywhere full of rank insincerity, nauseating hypocrisy, grossest sham. In the continent the churches are a veritable instrument of oppression in the hands of the government." It is indeed a very pessimistic picture if it is literally true.

The decadence of the Christian church is due to many reasons, of which infatuation caused by material prosperity and race-pride of the people of the West is among the primary ones. The church is nothing but one aspect and department of a community. When the community has gone down in its outlook upon life, the church, however lofty its ideal, cannot maintain its pristine purity; it must come down. For, it is from the community that the church recruits its members. So the decadence of the Christian church is only one side of the general degeneration that has come over the West.

The Son of Man knew not where to lay his head.



Poverty and renunciation were the guiding principles of his life. He was a monk of monks, an ascetic of ascetics, and his life and teachings were vehement protests against worldliness. He was aware that one cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time. "Man shall not live by bread alone," was his injunction. "For," as he said, "what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" But how far is the Christian church living this ideal of poverty and renunciation and upholding it to others is a question of grave doubt. Supported directly or indirectly by their respective churches the foremost Christian nations of the West are exploiting the weaker nations of the world, and not only that, seized by an uncontrollable craze for material prosperity they are always on the war-path, so to say, fighting among themselves. Instead of the Christian ideals of love and self-denial it is imperialism, commercialism and militarism which are reigning supreme everywhere in the West. "Love thy neighbours as thyself," was one of the commandments of Christ. It is a grand rule of life. But instead of that we find jealousy, hatred and race-arrogance running riot in the Christian countries of the West and their colonies. The Anti-Alien Bill of the United States of America and the Anti-Asiatic Act of South Africa are some of the outstanding facts which clearly indicate the height of colour and race prejudice. It is high time that there should be a change of heart among the Christian people and a true following of Christ. And it is the church, the custodian of religion, which can best reform the people by reforming itself.

Let us look at the matter with reference to India. Simultaneously with the establishment of British rule in this country Christianity came to exert its influence upon the people, and it must be said that this influence was by no means inconsiderable. The spread of Christianity in India was at once a blessing and a curse, and we shall show by facts and observations how it is so. India is a big country, as big as Europe minus Russia, containing a curious admixture of various types and groups of people



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professing many religions. So to convert India, which Christianity aimed at, was not an easy task. Missionaries from Portugal, England, France, Germany and America equipped with immense funds and the wonderful organising capacity of the West invaded the land from different strategic points. Finding that the direct preaching of the gospel works not very successfully, they combined evangelisation with all sorts of humanitarian and educational activities that give material advantage. First of all, after their landing they picked up the vernaculars of the provinces where they wanted to work and mixed with the people quite freely. Then along with the building of churches they started hospital and educational work, and thus attracted the sympathy of the people. Besides, the new craze for English education and the culture of the West which the British occupation of India brought in its train was utilised to the best advantage. The progress of Christianity was therefore at first very phenomenal, and for a time it appeared as if India would be wholesale converted. It was indeed a critical period of the history of our country, specially of Hinduism, for this conversion meant nothing short of a cultural conquest. But this danger was averted by the preaching of some sturdy Hindu reformers, among whom Raja Ram Mohan Roy stands foremost in Bengal. India was saved. Hinduism nobly stood its ground.

It must not be understood that we are against Christianity and its principle of proselytisation. We are fully aware of the many benefits the religion of Christ has, directly or indirectly, done to India and her people. It must be said to the credit of the Christian missionaries that they have been the pioneers in many useful and beneficent lines of work, and we are undoubtedly grateful to them for all these. But in so far as Christianity meant to be a cultural subversion we call it a danger—a curse, and it has been for the good of India that its progress has been arrested. India is not in want of spiritual ideas and ideals. Of all countries it is India that evolved, several thousand years before the birth of


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Christ, a religion which is the rationale of all moral and spiritual codes—the synthesis of all faiths and creeds, and we are proud of this fact. This religion which we may call Hinduism or better Vedanta is so capacious and comprehensive that it contains all the conceivable phases of the spiritual ideal from the highest flight of the absolutism of Brahman to the lowest form of image worship. When at the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago the Hindu monk, Swami Vivekananda, proved to the hilt the unique position of Hinduism and its sublime grandeur, the President of the Scientific Section had to admit and say: “One of its chief advantages has been in the great lesson which it has taught the Christian World, especially to the people of the United States, namely, that there are other religions more venerable than Christianity, which surpass it in philosophical depth, in spiritual intensity, in independent vigour of thought, and in breadth and sincerity of human sympathy, while not yielding to it a single hair’s breadth in ethical beauty and efficiency.” Yes, Christianity as a religion has very little to contribute to Hinduism. And we may observe that Hinduism, which believes in the harmony of religions and has as such assimilated Buddhism, will before long swallow Christianity in the sense that it will cease to exist as *the* religion for the salvation of man. Let us only wait.

Before we conclude we like to make a few remarks as to the method followed by the Christian missionaries in India. It is the opinion of many, and we also subscribe to it, of course, not without sufficient reason, that this method has not been altogether honourable. At least it is not becoming of the “lambs among wolves” who are to “carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes,”—who are to “freely give,” eating and drinking such things as chance would bring. To extol the glories of Christianity and make it acceptable to the people there has been a regular vicious campaign. The religion of the Hindus has been denounced; their national heroes and womanhood have been scandalised; their cultural

traditions and social customs have been exposed. And all this has been done from the pulpit and the press with little regard for truth, justice and fair play. The volumes of condemnatory literature full of all sorts of perverted facts and half-truths expressed in the most filthy language stand as witness. Is there any justification for such a conduct? Does it not prove the peculiar mentality of the so-called messengers of truth—their extreme narrowness and jealousy? Will it be wrong if the Hindus who have been thus treated say: “Why not save your own souls rather than those of the Heathens!”? The undue and unasked for concern for the salvation of the non-Christian races betrays only the imperialistic, predatory nature of the Christian missionaries which they must have inherited from their Semitic traditions. Christ was never for such a method of conversion. He came to fulfil and not to destroy. Let the missionaries in their zeal for proselytising never forget this, and let the Hindus who have ever been *mild* be a little aggressive and learn to defend themselves.

As we have said at the outset, we worship Christ and accept his ethical religion as one of the many paths for the attainment of the *summum bonum* of life. In the personality of the man and in his teachings there are many things which we hold valuable and dear to our heart. In fact, there have been among the Hindus persons who have had the vision of the Son of God, and felt in that blessed state that Jesus is a link in the chain of those God-men, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and so on, who have been declared as the saviours of mankind. That is not all. There are still among the Hindus persons who look upon Christ with the same amount of reverence as they show towards their recognised incarnations, and observe the Christmas as a day of consecration. Even if the considerations of the historical personality of the man be left out of account, it may be said that the Hindus in their efforts for Self-realisation are aspiring after Christhood. What does Christ stand for as an impersonal ideal? He may be said to signify



the acme of spiritual evolution—a state where there is “peace that passeth all understanding.” When Christ declared—“I and my Father are one,” he hinted at that transcendental state which can be attained by any one whether he is a Christian or not. It is the verdict of Vedanta that every one, knowingly or unknowingly, is struggling to make real in life the Christ-consciousness. For the Christ-consciousness is nothing but Divinity, and Divinity is the birthright of man. May Christhood ever continue to be the object of our homage and not the degenerated church of Christ maintained by sheer dogmatism, bigotry and fanaticism!

### RAMKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA.\*

BY THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF RONALDSHAY,  
P.C., G.C.S.E., G.C.I.E., etc.

The temple of Dakshineshwar, a few miles above Calcutta, is easily picked out by any one steaming up the river (Hughly), by means of a group of tall casuarina trees, which can be seen from afar, standing in the temple grounds. It was built by a pious Bengali lady, Rani Rasmani, in the year A.D. 1855, and it was here that the famous saint of Dakshineshwar spent the greater part of his life. Few men have made a deeper impress upon the mind of Bengal in recent years than Gadadhar Chatterji, known to history as Sri Ramkrishna Paramahansa, and his chief disciple Narendra Nath Dutt, better known under the title of Swami Vivekananda. At a time when the craze for the ideas and ways of the West was at its height, these men stood for the ancient ideal of the East, for renunciation in an age of megalomania, for simplicity at a time when discoveries in mechanical science were making life elaborately complex.

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\* From the writer's *The Heart of Aryavarta*, an appreciative study of India and Indian outlook. Some of the italics in the article are ours.—Editor, P.B.

The bright sun of a January day lit up the temple buildings and gave charm to the well-shaded grounds in which they stood, as I was shown the various objects which had acquired particular sanctity on account of their association with the departed saint. Here in the north-west angle of the courtyard was the room in which he had passed the greater number of his days. In the grounds on the north my attention was directed to a clump of five trees, the banyan, the pipal, the nim, the amlaki and the bael, planted at Ramkrishna's request. Here, it was said, he spent much time in meditation and the performance of religious exercises. Next it was explained that the two main shrines in the centre of the courtyard were dedicated to Radha and Krishna, representing God incarnate as love divine, and Kâli, the Mother of the universe, standing for the personal aspect of the Infinite God which appealed most strongly to Ramkrishna.

Standing in the temple precincts surrounded by a group of Indian admirers of the saint, all eager to tell of his life and teaching, I found myself being carried away by their enthusiasm, and as I listened to their story I had little difficulty in conjuring up vivid pictures of the Master surrounded by his disciples, expounding his great doctrine of salvation along the path of self-surrender and devotion to God. The setting was there before my eyes. It required no great effort of the imagination to reconstruct events. One pictured the Master, a benign figure pacing to and fro along the terrace in the cool of the evening, halting now and then to engage in conversation with his disciples. As the shades of evening spread over the great courtyard one could see in imagination the lamps in the temple flaming into light, and the fragrant smoke ascending from the incense-burners as they were swung by the servants of the temple. And then one seemed to hear the sound of the evening service breaking in upon the stillness, the tintinnabulation of gongs, bells and cymbals echoing away over the murmuring waters of the holy river. Presently, as a silver moon rose in the sky, trees and buildings would emerge from the dusk of even-



ing, thrown into sharp silhouette against the star-strewn background of the night. And appropriate to such a setting a venerable figure, bowing down before the Mother of the universe, rhythmically chanting the name of God, repeating the aphorisms in which were enshrined the guiding principles of his life: *Brahman Atman Bhagavân*, God the absolute, God of the Yogi, God of the devotee are one; *Saranagata, saranagata*, I am thine, I am thine; *Brahma-sakti Sakti-Brahman*, God the Absolute and the divine Mother are one. Thereafter the gradual assemblage of the disciples—keen, responsive young Bengalis in the white cotton chaddar and dhoti of the country, their dark eyes glowing with enthusiasm—followed by a discourse from the Master seated, cross-legged, in their midst.

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Born of Brahman parents on February 20, 1834, (?) Gadadhar Chatterji found himself drawn to a religious life from his boyhood, and he became an assistant priest at the temple of Dakshineshwar from the date of its construction in 1855. He was no scholar, yet he possessed the power of attracting to himself men of light and leading of the day—Keshub Chandra Sen, Pandit Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bankim Chatterji and Protap Mazumdar amongst others. The latter, one of the most devoted followers of Keshab Chandra Sen, seems to have been forcibly struck and a good deal puzzled by the influence which Ramkrishna exercised over educated men. “What is there in common between him and me?” he asked. “I, an Europeanised, civilised, self-centred, semi-sceptical, so-called educated reasoner, and he, a poor, illiterate, unpolished, half-idolatrous, friendless Hindu devotee? Why should I sit long hours to attend to him, I who have listened to Disraeli and Fawcett, Stanley and Max Müller, and a whole host of European scholars and divines? . . . And it is not I only, but dozens like me who do the same.” And after due deliberation he comes to the conclusion that it is his religion that is his only recommendation. But his

religion itself is a puzzle. "He worships Shiva, he worships Kâli, he worships Rama, he worships Krishna, and is a confirmed advocate of Vedantic doctrines. . . . He is an idolator, yet is a faithful and most devoted meditator of the perfections of the One formless, infinite Deity. . . His religion means ecstasy, his worship means transcendental insight, his whole nature burns day and night with a permanent fire and fever of a strange faith and feeling."

He studied the doctrine of the Vedanta at the feet of one Tota Puri, a holy man who took up his abode at the temple for the space of nearly a year. But it was along the path of worship (*bhakti*) rather than by way of knowledge (*gnâna*) that he sought for the solution of the mystery of the universe.\* By temperament he was a mystic rather than a philosopher. The narrative of his life and teaching recalls inevitably the emotional figure of Chaitanya. Like the great Vaishnava saint of Nadia he gave vent to his pent-up feelings in song and dance. Hymns to the deity sung by his favourite disciples reduced him to tears, and frequently induced in him a state of trance. He was subject to such trances from his boyhood, his first experience taking place at the age of eleven, when, according to his own account, he suddenly saw a vision of glory, and lost all sense-consciousness while walking through the fields. His knowledge of God was intuitive, and he never felt the need of systematic study. A discussion on the subject of the study of the Scriptures was once in progress among his disciples when he exclaimed, "Do you know what I think of it? Books—sacred scriptures—all point the way to God. Once you know the way, what is the use of books?" A

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\* Not so. Sri Ramakrishna recognised the importance of the paths of Jnana, Bhakti, Yoga and Karma and attained the Supreme Ideal through each of them. The doctrine of harmony preached by him was not a matter of intellectual assent merely. It was the outcome of his personal realisation. For a full and comprehensive exposition of his life and teaching vide *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, published by the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas.—Editor, P.B.



young man, typical of the educated middle classes of the day, obviously proud of his scholarship and knowledge of books and men, proceeded one day to the temple, attracted by the growing fame of the saint.\* On learning that he was no scholar and had no use for books, he expressed extreme surprise, and at his first meeting embarked upon an argument with him on the subject of image worship. Ramkrishna swept aside his scholarly arguments. "Why must you worry yourself about things above you and beyond your reach?" he asked. "Does not the Lord of the universe abide in the temple of the human body and know the innermost thoughts of men? Seek then to know and revere God. Love God. That is the duty nearest you."

Apparent contradictions were nothing to him. God is the Absolute, the One, the All, the Brahman of the philosopher. But that does not prevent him from manifesting Himself in different aspects in His relations with the phenomenal world—as Krishna in His aspect of divine love, as Kâli in His aspect of creator of the universe and saviour of mankind. And when you realise God, such things cease to puzzle. "Sir, is it possible to see God?" asked the scholar. "Certainly," came the reply. "Cry unto the Lord with a yearning heart, and you shall see Him." It is clear from the testimony of his disciple that he himself constantly attained that pitch of spiritual exaltation which is called by the Hindus *samadhi*, a state of trance induced by God-consciousness—that communion with the Infinite enjoyed by the Rishis of old and spoken of by Professor B. N. Sen as the bliss of Brahman, which is beyond all words and above all reason.

The pantheism so congenial to Indian thought was

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\* Professor M. N. Gupta, a teacher in Calcutta who subsequently became a devoted disciple of Ramkrishna, and under the *nom-de-plume* of "M" wrote an account of his life and teaching entitled the "Gospel of Sri Ramkrishna." . . . The sketch of the saint and his teaching which I have drawn in this chapter is based upon Professor Gupta's narrative.

his by instinct.\* He was in the habit in his younger days of plucking flowers for the daily worship in the temple. On one occasion, we are told, he was gathering the leaves of the bael tree when a portion of the bark was torn from the tree. It seemed to him that a severe wound had been inflicted upon the Divinity which was within him, and was equally manifested in all things. So deeply was the idea of God immanent rooted in his soul that he never again picked the leaves of the trees. Difficulties put forward by man's reason were brushed aside. If they could not be explained by reason, they were discounted by faith. From the point of view of pure logic, consequently, his explanations were at times lacking in conviction. His reply to the question why, if everything is but a manifestation of God, should some things be harmful is a case in point. He quoted the story of a devout young man who refused, when warned to do so, to move out of the way of a charging elephant. The driver shouted, but the young man said to himself, "the elephant is a manifestation of the Divinity," and instead of fleeing from him he began to chant his praises. When he was subsequently picked up and restored to consciousness, he explained why he had not moved away, but was chided by his *guru* in these words, "It is true that God manifests himself forth in everything. But if he is manifest in the elephant, is he not equally manifest in the driver? Tell me then why you paid no heed to his warning voice?"

With even scantier consideration he brushed aside the question of the apparent partiality of God. "Am I then, Sir," asked Pandit Vidyasagar on one occasion, "to believe that we come into the world with unequal endowments? Is the Lord partial to a select few?" To which the Master replied, "Well, I am afraid you

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\* The prevailing philosophy of India which is Vedanta is not pantheism, for it considers the Ultimate Reality not as exhausted in the world. Sri Ramakrishna cannot also be called a pantheist, for he realised God both as immanent and transcendent and preached the same.—Editor, P. B.



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 will have to take the facts of the universe as they stand. It is not given to man to see clearly into the ways of the Lord."

The value which he attached to ratiocination and inspiration respectively, is well illustrated by a scene which took place one afternoon in the presence of a number of his disciples in the grounds of the temple. "Is there any book in English on the art of reasoning?" he asked one of his Western-educated followers. He was informed that there were such treatises and, as an example, was told of that part of logic which dealt with reasoning from general propositions to particulars. He appeared to pay little attention to these explanations, which evidently fell flat upon his ear. And looking at him a little while after, his would-be instructor marvelled and became speechless. I give the description of the scene in his own words. "The Master stands motionless. His eyes are fixed. It is hard to say whether he is breathing or not. . . . The smile on his lips shows ecstatic delight that he feels at the sight of the blessed vision. Yes, he must be enjoying a vision of unequalled beauty which puts into the shade the refulgence of a million moons! Is this God vision? If so, what must be the intensity of Faith and Devotion, of Discipline and Austerity which has brought such a vision within reach of mortal man?" The writer goes on to tell us that he wended his way home with this unique picture of *samadhi* and the ecstasy of divine love vividly reflected in his mind, and that there echoed within him as he went these words, "Be incessantly merged, O my mind, in the sweetness of his love and bliss! Yes, be thou drunken with the joy of the Lord!"

Ramkrishna did not dissent from the monistic explanation of the universe. It was only that he was driven by temperament to attach far greater importance to the Personal Aspect of God. The Absolute of Sankara could be realised, but only in perfect *samadhi*. On one occasion half returning to consciousness from a state of trance he was heard exclaiming, "Yes, my

Holy Mother (Kâli) is none other than the Absolute. She it is to whom the six systems of philosophy with all their learned disquisitions furnish no clue. But when a man returned from *samadhi* he became a differentiated ego once more, and was thrown back upon the world of relativity so that he perceived the world-system (*maya*) as real. Why? Because with the return of his egoity he was convinced that he as an individual was real; and "so long as his ego is real to him (real relatively) the world is real too, and the Absolute is unreal (unreal relatively)." He laid constant stress upon this.

The saint returning from *samadhi* could say nothing about the Absolute. "Once differentiated, he is mute as to the undifferentiated. Once in the relative world his mouth is shut as to the Absolute and Unconditioned." And since *samadhi* was not achieved by the average man, he must meditate upon and commune with the Personal God, for "so long as you are a person you cannot conceive of, think or perceive God otherwise than as a Person."

In Ramkrishna's own case this latter difficulty was undoubtedly a predilection as much as a necessity, for by temperament he was emotional rather than critical. "As a rule," he declared, "the devotee does not long for the realisation of the Impersonal. He is anxious that the whole of his ego should not be effaced in *samadhi*." And the reason which he gives is the one to be expected from a man of his temperament. "He would fain have sufficient individuality left to him to enjoy the Vision Divine as a person. He would fain taste the sugar in place of being one with the sugar itself."

His creed was summed up by him during a visit to Pandit Sasadhar in Calcutta one afternoon in 1884. Many paths lead to God, the path of knowledge, that of works and that of self-surrender and devotion. The way of knowledge is for the philosopher. His object is to realise Brahman the Absolute. He says "*neti, neti*" ("not this, not this"), and so eliminates one unreal thing after another until he arrives at a point at which all

discrimination between the Real and the Unreal ceases. The way of works is that laid down in the Gitâ, to live in the world but not to be of the world; to practise at all times an exalted altruism. Neither of these paths is easy to travel in the present age. It is almost impossible in these materialistic days to get rid of the conviction that the self is identical with the body. How, then, can a man understand that he is one with the universal soul, the Being Absolute and Unconditioned? Similarly with the way of works. A man may form a resolution to work without expectation of any reward or fear of punishment in this world or the next; but the chances are that consciously or unconsciously he will get attached to the fruit of his work. Let a man then choose the way of worship and seek communion with the Personal God, for the path of love, adoration and self-surrender to God is the easiest of all paths. It teaches the necessity of prayer without ceasing, it is in this age "the shortest cut leading to God."

Early in 1886 Ramkrishna was taken seriously ill. A graphic account of the suffering of his last hours in the garden of Cossipur surrounded by his disciples, is given by Professor Gupta in a passage of great pathos. He died not long after his fifty-second birthday.

Many of the young men who flocked to the temple at Dakshineshwar in the eighties of last century are preaching the gospel of the Master. Those who, following his example, have adopted the path of renunciation have established a monastic order, the headquarters of which are at Belur Math on the opposite bank of the Hugly to Dakshineshwar, with branch monasteries in Bengal, the United Provinces and Madras. Associated with the monastic order which consists of *sannyasins* and *brahmacharins* is a mission, these twin organisations standing for renunciation and service respectively, declared by the late Swami Vivekananda to be the two national ideals of India. The mission undertakes service of all kinds, social, charitable and educational. The monasteries are dedicated to the perpetuation through

their spiritual culture of the great Ideal and Revelation which Sri Ramkrishna Paramahansa embodied in his life. One of these branch monasteries, the Ashram of Mayavati hidden away from the world in the vast labyrinth of the Himalayas fifty miles north-east of Almora, is devoted exclusively to the study of Advaita Vedanta; leading to knowledge of the Brahman proclaimed by Sankara, the absolute, impersonal and unconditional God—the material and efficient cause of the universe.

Some of these men I have met at Belur Math. And having met them I know that it is for no colourless abstraction that they have renounced the world. Whether known as *saguna* Brahman (God Personal) or as *nirguna* Brahman (God Impersonal), it is to them the sole reality, the ultimate goal towards which sooner or later all mankind must direct its steps.

“RELIGION : ITS NEGATIVE SIDE.”

BY PANDIT SURESHWAR SHASTRI.

Major B. D. Basu, I.M.S. (Retired), writing in the February number of *The Modern Review* under the caption, “*Religion : Its Negative Side*,” comes to the conclusion: “Religion has hampered the upward and onward march of humanity, because it is responsible for (i) intolerance and causing persecution of so-called heretics and infidels and suppression of freedom of thought, (ii) degradation of women and sanction of religious prostitution, (iii) bringing into existence a class of people known as ascetics who do very little good to society (it also makes fanatics), and (iv) fostering superstition.” Major Basu adduces a number of quotations in support and elaboration of his theme and is very emphatic in his assertions.

This indeed is a serious arraignment of religion that it has clogged the progress of humanity. It would have been fairer if the writer had devoted greater space and

more thoughtful consideration to the justification of his attitude. As it is, the article is scrappy and meagre and does not evince the amount of thoughtfulness and deliberation that such a thesis reasonably requires, and does not indicate that experiential knowledge which alone entitles a man to pronounce on a subject of such extensive range and profound significance. A few examples will bear out our point. Major Basu begins by confessing that "it is very difficult to define religion," and adds, "Perhaps those thinkers are correct who consider it as a psychological phenomenon and a concern of individual subjective thought." From this it would naturally follow that the writer, in speaking about the negative side of religion, will dwell on the negative side of that particular psychological phenomenon. But in the next sentence he shifts his grounds and declares that since that particular *opinion* about religion did not prevail, therefore "*it* (*i.e.*, religion itself) has done incalculable mischief by setting man against man, nation against nation." Wonderful reasoning! Mr. X is a great scholar. Some one takes him to be an ignoramus and treats him as such. Ergo, Mr. X deserves and is responsible for that treatment.

Religion, in whatever sense we may take it, is admittedly a difficult subject to deal with. Its bearings and implications are intricate and far-flung, and scope indefinable. Besides, being the acme of human thought, aspiration and experience, it exerts a potent and far-reaching influence on all departments of life. Often therefore practices and institutions of quite different origins assume religious garbs and are fathered on religion by the popular mind. Discriminating scholarship carefully sorts them according to their causal relations, and often discovers in so-called religion, elements which are purely social or environmental and which would have been there even if there were no religion to sponsor them.

Take for instance the caste system. Is it a religious or social institution? Major Basu does not

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pause to think it over. He flies at Hindu religion for having advocated it. Without going into the merits or demerits of the caste system, one may safely say that to quote it as a negative side of Hindu religion is a premature conclusion. If Major Basu had shown that the institution is purely or mainly of religious origin, his castigation of religion on that score would have been justified. The word religion in the present instance may be aptly substituted by the term society in a comprehensive sense. It may be argued that the caste system is spoken of in the Hindu scriptures in the same breath with the theories of soul and God and can be therefore justly considered religious. But is the Sanskrit term *Dharma* equivalent to English *religion*? *Dharma* comprehends all that pertain to the well-being of man, including social laws and customs,—this is peculiarly a Hindu conception,—and *religion* is only a segment of it.

But even supposing that untouchability and caste system are aspects of religion, can we say that religion has thereby “hampered the upward and onward march of humanity?” No one will accuse the Americans of too much religiosity. Why then is there such sinister untouchability and caste prejudices against the Negroes and the Red Indians? Is religion responsible for the doings of the Ku Klux Klan? At least there is no lynching here in India! Why are Indians treated like untouchables in South Africa? The whites there are not particularly religious! Why are Indians of the status of Major Basu treated as untouchables in the first and second class compartments of the Indian railways by the whites and the semi-whites? These latter are not specially devoted to Hindu religion! Why are there so many class distinctions in the modern world which prides itself on having cast aside religious sentiments and prejudices? You cannot say that but for religion, there would not have been so much of hatred and jealousy. It is the evils of the human mind, that are the real source of all those factions and schisms in the human society, and religion happens to be only one of the channels of their



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flowing out, and if religion had refused to be their tool, they would have sought out other tools, as indeed they are doing in the present age.

Similarly his criticism of religion as fostering superstition and spreading false notions regarding anthropology is beside the mark. Did religion *create* these superstitions and false anthropological notions? The contrary is more likely the truth. The primitive man grows through superstitions; these tinge all his institutions including religion. Of course, superstition is not truth. But whether superstition is not beneficial to the cause of humanity, is not easy to decide. What is superstition to me is not so to another. What appears as superstition at one stage of mental evolution does not appear so at another. Even the primitive superstitions are nothing but vague imaginings of actual truths, and have been as such as beneficial to the primitive people as scientific truths are now to us. And as humanity yet comprises people who are not as rational and scientific as some of us are, the presence of so-called superstition in religion may not be an unmitigated evil.

Not all his shafts, however, have missed their aims in this way. Some of his criticisms are at least partially merited by religion, specially where religion has allowed its name to be exploited by secular institutions for securing longevity and respectability. We admit, for instance, that the *Devadasi* system is an unnecessary evil, though we emphatically repudiate that it is "religious prostitution" *sanctioned* by Hinduism. *Devadasis* only sing and dance before the deities, nothing more. It is true that as a class they are of questionable morals; but to say that such moral lapses are *required* and *sanctioned* by religion is preposterous. Religion is blamable in this case only to the extent that it requisitions the services of an institution of which the vileness of man can easily take advantage. But it is good to remember in this connection that in the Northern India where the *Devadasi* system does not prevail, "secular" prostitution is rampant in a measure which is unknown in the south.

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It is also apparently true that "in the name of religion, blood has been shed, murders have been committed, lives have been lost and property has been wantonly destroyed." But it is significant that "it is the Semitic religions which are more responsible for the state of affairs mentioned above," and also that the proselytising religions with the exception of Buddhism (which differs essentially from its fellows in its method of proselytisation) are all Semitic. Major Basu quotes from D. G. Ritchie's *Natural Rights* that "persecution, in the sense of repression for the purpose of maintaining true doctrine, is the outcome of Christianity." But before convicting religion we may conveniently remember that all those evils live even now under different guises in spite of the modern world being so blatantly irreligious. The fact is, it is no inherent defect in the Semitic religions that primarily caused or causes religious persecution. Persecution comes from a fundamental defect in the character of the Semitic and most European races. There is such a thing in their race-mind as makes them exclusive, intolerant and oppressively aggressive. This characteristic works itself out in various ways and forms, through religion, politics and social polity. If you stop its outlets through religion, it will seek other channels of manifestation. The hatred of the Greeks for the Barbarians and the Helots, of the Romans for the Plebeians, of the Jews for the Philistines, of the Christians for the Heathens and the Heretics, of the Muhammedans for the Kaffirs and the Infidels, and of the modern Whites for the Coloured Peoples,—all these are but expressions of the same fundamental exclusiveness. Considered in this light, religion does not appear as criminal as Major Basu would have it to be. Besides, with the ancient Hebrews as well as the Christians and the Muhammedans, religion has been so inextricably mixed up with politics, that new religious opinions have always meant new political factions, and the so-called religious persecution has been a political necessity. And



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blood-shed and assassination as political weapons have not yet become obsolete.

Then about animal sacrifice: It is certainly not the best religion nor very humane. But it may be said on behalf of Hinduism that it does not enjoin it on all and sundry indiscriminately. Only those who are of predominantly *rajasic* and *tamasic* temperaments (and they are by nature impervious to subtle feelings) may sacrifice animals. The presence of slaughter houses and meat stalls in every city and the overwhelming number of their customers are a strong reproof to any excessive concern at humane feelings being shocked by animal sacrifice on ceremonial occasions. Humanity is not yet so refined. One may, of course, question the nobility of a conception which associates Godhead with animal sacrifice. But that is a different question altogether. In the meantime, we may remember that the prescription of animal sacrifice is not psychologically quite futile and insignificant.

A truer description of Major Basu's thesis would be "Abuse of Religion." The evils he ascribes to religion are evils that necessarily attend the growing and evolving humanity and would exist even if there be no religion. They are begotten of the imperfections of the undeveloped and unillumined minds, and to eradicate and destroy them we shall have to adopt other means than vilifying religion. The writer castigates religion for customs, practices and beliefs which are either not religious at all, or only nominally and apparently religious being in fact of quite different origins, or intended honestly by religion but defiled by the natural vices of the human mind. The writer himself admits towards the end that many secular motives underlie the so-called religious propaganda.

Major Basu's arguments not only suffer from confusion of issues, but are also sometimes, we are led to think, not above prejudice, as his tirades against "a class of people known as ascetics" testify. There are a class of people to whom ascetics are eyesore, not because they are essentially bad, but because they are a re-

proachful reminder of those people's worldly outlook. We are sure Major Basu is not one of them. He says he has nothing to say against the *ideal* of asceticism. But it seems he does not want it to be practised, at least not by many. For he says that "religion has hampered the upward and onward march of humanity, because it is responsible for bringing into existence a class of people known as ascetics who do very little good to society." He disapproves of the "ascetics as a class who practise asceticism not from any higher motive than that of securing their happiness." So doing good to society is the standard by which men are to be judged, and who would deny that it is a fine ideal? But may we ask Major Basu who told him that being happy is so much worse than being useful citizens? He quotes Prof. Clifford. Supposing that the ascetics' objective is happiness, is Prof. Clifford's and Major Basu's knowledge of life and its aims so sure and perfect that he can on that basis abuse a class of men who are held in high esteem by the vast majority of his countrymen? "In India, the class of ascetics passing under the names of Yogis, Sadhus, Fakirs, etc., is a great pest and nuisance and represents degraded humanity." These are scarcely responsible words, and only a complete knowledge entitles one to be so positive and contemptuous. What does Major Basu know of asceticism? Did he ever practise it? Did he mix with the ascetics? His denunciations scarcely appear to have come out of experiential knowledge.

But we deny that the ascetics are mere seekers of personal happiness. As a class, they are the most unselfish and altruistic people the world has ever seen; and it is impossible to find their peers anywhere. Surely history is eloquent of their unselfish services. Who does not know what the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Muhammedan ascetics have done for mankind? Major Basu who besides being an authority on religion, is also an authority on history, ought to have remembered that Indian civilisation owes almost all its greatness to these

hated ascetics. It is sheer ingratitude for a Hindu at least to cry them down. It is indeed strange to favour asceticism and decry ascetics. An ideal is no ideal if it is not practised; and in practice, there must be both success and failure. And it is not surprising that there are backsliders among ascetics. But can we therefore justifiably condemn the whole class?

Evidently the writer wishes that only the perfect, if any, should enter the rank of ascetics. For all others therefore, there remains the alternative of belonging to that other class of people who form almost the whole of mankind and are generally known as householders. Does Major Basu really think that this latter class is on the whole a better set of people than the ascetics? Do these always seek the good of others and never their personal happiness? An unbiased comparison of these two classes will not yield, we are afraid, very flattering results.

Major Basu forgets that ascetics are not born but are recruited from among the householders. If therefore the recruits are not such fine materials, it is not the ascetics but the householders that are to be blamed. So long as asceticism is recognised as an ideal of life (and it will be so recognised for many many years yet to come, in spite of Major Basu and persons of his ilk), there will be many to pursue it. And the best service one can do to one's society is to utilise one's powers in improving the people from whom asceticism derives its following. The fact is, ascetics and householders are inter-related parts of a single whole, and they rise and fall with the rise and fall of each other. If it is true that the ascetics are fallen low to-day, it is because the householders are fallen still lower.

There is a self-imposed moderation which should characterise criticisms of institutions that are objects of great veneration of large sections of mankind. We regret Major Basu's criticism does not evince that restraint. Let us hope he will balance it by next giving us his opinions of the Positive Side of Religion.

SRI KRISHNA AND UDDHAVA.

(Continued from p. 140.)

श्रीभगवानुवाच ॥

इत्यभिप्रेत्य मनसा ह्यावन्त्यो द्विजसत्तमः ॥

उन्मुच्य हृदयग्रन्थीन् शान्तो भिक्षुरभून्मुनिः ॥ ३१ ॥

The Lord said :

31. Thus resolved is his mind, the good Brahmana of Avanti succeeded in removing the knots¹ of his heart and became a Sannyasin, calm and silent.

[1 Knots &c.—viz. egoism.]

स चचार महीमेतां संयतात्मेन्द्रियानिलः ॥

भिक्षार्थं नगरग्रामानसङ्गोऽलक्षितोऽविशत् ॥ ३२ ॥

32. With his mind, organs and Pranas under control, he wandered over the earth alone, entering towns and villages only to beg his food, and none knew who he was.

तं वै प्रवयसं भिक्षुमवधुतमसज्जनाः ॥

दृष्ट्वा पर्यभवन्भद्र बह्वीभिः परिभूतिभिः ॥ ३३ ॥

33. Seeing that aged shabby-looking monk, the wicked people, my friend, insulted him with various indignities.

केचित्त्रिवेणुं जगृहुरेके पात्रं कमण्डलुम् ॥

पीठं चैकेऽक्षसूत्रं च कन्थां चीराणि केचन ॥ ३४ ॥

34. Some took his triple staff and some his begging-bowl and water-pot ; some took his seat and rosary of Rudraksha beads and some his tattered clothes and wrapper.

प्रदाय च पुनस्तानि दर्शितान्याददुर्मुनेः ॥ ३५ ॥

35. Then, showing them to him they returned those things, but again snatched them from the silent monk.

(To be continued).

NEWS AND NOTES.

QUALIFICATIONS OF INDIAN LEADERSHIP.

It is not idle to speculate on the necessary qualifications of an ideal Indian leader. If only we consider the tremendous waste of time and labour, of man and money power, that unqualified and unillumined leadership means and has meant throughout the last stages of the national evolution, and the bewildering confusion that changed minds and changed programmes create in the national mind, we would at once agree that more knowledge and better equipment of our leaders are an urgent desideratum. Specially so, when we remember that India is pre-eminently a land of religion. Here even such secular things, as politics, social polity, industry, art, literature or education, have to be viewed from the standpoint of spirituality, thus necessitating the national leader to be not only thoroughly versed in secular knowledge, but also in knowledge spiritual. He must be, above all, a spiritual leader.

The following six qualifications, we think, are essential: *Firstly*, as we are a self-oblivious nation, lost to the consciousness of our national ideal and divorced from the ancient springs of action which influenced the daily life of our forefathers, the prime necessity in India is the revival and rehabilitation of the central motif of the nation. That being obviously religion, the ideal national leader should be pre-eminently religious. But religious in what manner or degree? India is the mother and home of almost all the religions of the world, of innumerable sects and creeds and philosophies. The ideal leader must, therefore, be informed about all those creeds and philosophies, not merely intellectually, for that in matters spiritual is of secondary value, but also in a deeper sense. He must practise them, undergo all the disciplines pertaining thereto and attain to their prescribed goals. These then are the first requisites,—an intellectual and spiritual knowledge of the different religions and philosophies of India. Next, he must discover the

synthesis of all those apparently warring creeds, inasmuch as without the discovery and declaration of such a synthesis, the foundation of the Indian nationality will not be laid. This synthetic vision then is the *second* qualification of our ideal leader. But it must be clearly understood that this synthesis is not mere eclecticism. Not only it must contain all the religions, but every religion also must find it within itself. Or the contemplated synthesis will turn out only another new creed. The *third* qualification is the leader's thorough acquaintance with the culture of the West. It is futile and foolish to think of the future of India as a purely Indian organisation. No nation on the face of the earth can with impunity dream of isolating herself from and barring the influence of other nations. India specially cannot deny the West. Our leader therefore must be thoroughly conversant with the spirit of the Occidental culture and civilisation, its customs and traditions, its hopes and aspirations, its ways and means, its probable future. For, the West is on the move and undergoing rapid changes, and unless we are sure of its future developments, no real and permanent union with her would be possible. He must learn to separate the grain from the chaff. To that end, a wide foreign travel is necessary for our leader, and the religion which the West consciously or unconsciously lives will also have to be realised and owned by him. This much accomplished, the next or the *fourth* step would be the finding of the synthesis of the East and the West. It must, of course, be the platform of spirituality on which the two parties shall shake hands in promise of eternal understanding and union. The synthesis will have to be conceived as a Spiritual Principle of which the different nations and their activities are so many varied expressions, making up altogether a beautiful harmonious whole. Thus also will be found out the future outlook of the Indian nationality, and the proportions and relations in which India should assimilate the Western culture. The *fifth* qualification is our leader's intimate acquaintance with the masses of India, with

their millions of villages, their lores and traditions, their beliefs and customs, their hopes and ambitions, their troubles and tribulations. And not only with the masses, but he must be acquainted with all, from the prince to the Pariah, who inhabit this great country. Therefore he must travel all over India from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, as a pilgrim, mixing and living with all, and dreaming and visualising all the glories of her past and regaining through them the lost clue of her historical continuity. He must be a skilled student of the different vernaculars, of Indian art and science, of sociology and politics, of folklore and philosophy, that the vision of Indian manhood that will greet his spiritual eye, may be one perfect in body, mind and soul. When he has achieved this much, he has almost qualified himself for competent leadership. Only one condition remains to be fulfilled: the synthesising of the spiritual and the secular in our individual and collective life. For, though such synthesis has not been unknown in the past, it cannot be denied it was very limited. The future obviously will be one of tremendous activity along apparently secular lines. This secularity, however, will have to be spiritualised, if the stability of the nation is to be ensured. Hence the need of the proposed synthesis. This is the *last* of the qualifications of our ideal leader, to which, however, must be added a heart as broad as the sky and as deep as the ocean, and a will as strong as steel.

The idea of such a perfection may seem Utopian to the unthinking. But the history of India testifies to some at least having been born in this land, who in outline corresponded to the above description. Of course, every age has its own problems, and what is, above all, wanted is that the leader should be able to declare: "I have known the Truth!" Such leaders have been known here. They are considered God-appointed or God Himself incarnate. One such leader was enough to guide us for two or three centuries, and we were required only to *act* according to the laid down Dharma. Whenever there has been a decline of religion, such leaders

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have come, and the Lord's promise in the Gita has not been in vain. We of to-day do not, however, believe in such mythical doctrines. We have been drawn into the maelstrom of so-called modernism ; and our ideals forgotten, we are running mad after politics. That is why we seek a new leader every two or three years, We have forgotten that our life, individual and national, is based on eternal verities ; and only on their knowledge, can one base his claim for Indian leadership. Let us remember that there is a Conscious Divine Will behind the affairs of men, and knowledge of that Will and oneness with it is the secret, authority and insignia of true leadership. Is such a one already born amongst us? If not, let us watch. God has never failed us before, He will not fail us now.

#### THE BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA.

The birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna fell this year on Sunday, the 14th February, and numerous reports of its celebration have been received from many different quarters of India and abroad. The number of festivals is growing larger annually as reports show, and this testifies that the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna is being more and more deeply appreciated everywhere. "The professed votaries of Sri Ramakrishna," as Mr. K. Natarajan of *The Indian Social Reformer* observed as chairman of the Bombay anniversary meeting, "may be counted by hundreds and thousands, but the grand truth that he preached and proved by his own life has reached far beyond the limits of India, and is fast becoming a pervading world influence." Slowly and steadily Sri Ramakrishna is coming into his own. The great truths that his life demonstrated are the spiritual foundation of life and the harmony of religions. And who can deny that in India at least, these are the most urgent requirements, recognised even by the practical politics of to-day? In the acceptance and assimilation of this grand life into the individual and collective life of India lies her salvation. Verily there is no other way.

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