FORTY-EIGHTH YEAR

# Prabuddha Bharata

OR

# AWAKENED INDIA

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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

## VOL. XLVIII

*Editor:* SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

VOL. XLVIII *JANUARY, 1943* No. 1

"उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।"

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

## TEACHINGS OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

By M.

Master's visit to Brâhmo festival—Why temples are holy—How to spiritualize the passions—Characteristics of true divine love—Parable of the three friends.

Wednesday, May 2, 1883. At about five o'clock in the afternoon, Sri Ramakrishna arrived at the temple of the Brahmo Samâj in Nandanbagan, accompanied by M., Rakhal, and a few other devotees. At first the Master sat in the drawing-room on the ground floor, where the Brahmo devotees gradually assembled. Rabindranath Tagore and a few other members of the Tagore family were present on this occasion.

Sri Ramakrishna was asked to go to the worship hall on the second floor. A dais was built at the eastern side of the room. There were a few chairs and a piano in the hall. The Brahmo worship was to begin at dusk.

As soon as the Master entered the worship hall, he bowed down before the dais. Having taken his seat, he said to M. and the other devotees, 'Narendra once asked me, "What is accomplished by bowing down before the Brahmo Samaj temple?" The sight of the temple recalls to my mind God alone ; then God-consciousness flashes in my mind. God is present where people talk about Him. One feels there the presence of all the holy places. Places of worship kindle God-consciousness in my mind.

'Once a devotee was overwhelmed with ecstasy at the sight of a Bâblâ tree.[1] The idea flashed in his mind that the handle of the axe used in the garden of the temple of Râdhâkânta was made from the wood of this tree.

'Another devotee had such devotion for his Guru that he used to be overwhelmed with divine feeling at the sight of his Guru's neighbours. Krishna-consciousness would be kindled in Râdhâ's mind at the sight of a cloud, a blue dress, or a painting of Krishna[2].

[1] The Indian acacia.

[2] Krishna had a dark-blue complexion.

She would become restless and cry like a mad person, "Krishna, where art Thou?"

*Ghosal:* 'But madness is not desirable.'

*Master:* 'What do you mean? Is it the madness that comes from brooding over worldly objects? One attains to this state by meditating on God. Haven't you heard of love-madness and knowledge-madness?'

*A Brahmo devotee:* 'How can one realize God?'

*Master:* 'By directing your love to Him and constantly reasoning that God alone is real and the world illusory. The Ashwattha tree alone is permanent; the fruits are transitory.'

*Brahmo:* 'We have passions like anger and lust. What shall we do with these?'

*Master:* 'Direct these six passions to God. The impulse of *lust* should be turned into the desire to have intercourse with Atman. Feel *angry* at those who stand in your way to God. Feel *greedy* for Him. If you must have the feeling of *I* and *mine*, then associate it with God. Say, for instance, "My Râma, my Krishna". If you must have *pride*, then feel like Vibhishana, who said, "I have touched the feet of Rama with my head; I will not bow this head before anybody else." '

*Brahmo:* 'If it is God that makes me perform all actions, then I am not responsible for my sins.'

*Master:* (with a smile): 'Yes, Duryodhana also said that: "O Krishna, I do what Thou makest me do, seated in my heart." If a man has the firm conviction that God alone is the Doer and he is His instrument, then he cannot do any sinful action. He who has learned to dance correctly never takes a false step. One cannot even believe in the existence of God until one's heart becomes pure.'

Sri Ramakrishna cast his glance on the assembled devotees in the worship-hall and said, 'It is very good to gather in this way, now and then, and think of God and sing His name and glories. But the yearning of the worldly man for God is momentary. It lasts as long as a drop of water on a red-hot frying-pan.'

The worship was about to begin, and the big hall was filled with Brahmo devotees. Some of the Brahmo ladies sat on chairs, with musical sheets in their hands. The songs of the Brahmo Samaj were sung to the accompaniment of harmonium and piano. Sri Ramakrishna's joy was unbounded. The invocation was followed by a prayer, and then the worship began. The Âchâryas, seated on the raised platform, recited from the Vedas:

'Om. Thou art our Father. Give us right knowledge; do not destroy us! We bow to Thee.'

The Brahmo devotees chanted in chorus with the Acharyas:

'Om. Brahman shines as Truth, Knowledge, the Infinite, the Immortal Bliss. Brahman is Peace, Good, and the One without a second. Brahman is pure and unsmitten by sin.'

The Acharyas chanted in praise of God:

'Om. O Reality, Cause of the Universe, we bow to Thee!'

Then the Acharyas chanted their prayer together:

'From the unreal lead us to the Real; from darkness lead us to Light; from death lead us to Immortality. Reach us through and through. O Rudra, protect us evermore with Thy Compassionate Face.'

As Sri Ramakrishna heard these hymns, he went into a spiritual mood. Then an Acharya read a paper.

The worship was over. Most of the devotees went downstairs or to the

courtyard for fresh air while the refreshments were being made ready. It was about nine o'clock in the evening. The hosts were so engrossed with the other invited guests that they forgot to pay any attention to Sri Ramakrishna.

*Master* (to Rakhal and the other devotees): 'What's the matter? Nobody is paying any attention to us!'

*Rakhal* (angrily): 'Sir, let us leave the place and go to Dakshineswar.'

*Master* (with a smile): 'Keep quiet! The carriage hire is three rupees and two annas. Who will pay that? Stubbornness won't get us anywhere. Without a penny you are making these empty threats. Besides, where shall we find food at this late hour of the night?'

After a long time dinner was announced. The devotees were requested to take their seats. The Master, with Rakhal and the others, followed the crowd to the second floor. No room could be found for him inside the hall. Finally, with great difficulty, a place was found for him in a dusty corner. A Brahmin woman served some curry, but Sri Ramakrishna could not eat it. He ate Luchi with salt and took some sweets.

The kindness of the Master knew no end. The hosts were mere youngsters; how could he be displeased with them, even though they did not show him proper respect? Besides, it would have been harmful to the householder if the Master had left the place without taking food. Moreover, the feast was arranged in the name of God.

Sri Ramakrishna got into a carriage; but who would pay the hire? The hosts could not be found. Referring to this incident afterwards the Master said to the devotees, jokingly, 'The boys went to the hosts for the carriage hire. First, they were put out, but at last they managed with great difficulty to get three rupees. The hosts refused to pay the extra two annas, and said, "No, that will do."'

* * *

Saturday, June 2, 1883. From Adhar's place, Sri Ramakrishna had come to Ram's house. Ramchandra Dutta, one of the chief householder disciples of the Master, had a house in Calcutta. He had studied medicine and was Assistant Chemical Examiner of the Calcutta Medical College, and lecturer in chemistry in the Indian Science Association. During the earlier part of his life he had been an atheist; but later he became a staunch devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and was one of the first few to announce the Master as an Incarnation of God. The Master visited his house a number of times and praised unstintedly the devotion and generosity of this beloved disciple. A few of the Master's disciples made Ram's house virtually their dwelling-place.

Ram had arranged a special festival in his house to celebrate the Master's visit. The small courtyard was nicely decorated. A Kathaka[3] seated on a raised platform, was reciting from the *Bhâgavata* when the Master arrived. Ram greeted him respectfully and seated him near the reader. Ram's joy knew no bounds. The Kathaka was in the midst of the story of King Harishchandra.

When this was finished Sri Ramakrishna asked the Kathaka to recite the episode of Uddhava, the friend and devotee of Krishna. At the request of Krishna Uddhava came to Brindavan to console the cowherds and the Gopis, who were sore at heart because of their separation from their beloved Krishna.

The Kathaka said: 'When Uddhava arrived at Brindavan, the Gopis and cowherd boys ran to him eagerly and asked him, "How is our Krishna? Has

[3] A professional reciter of stories from the Purânas.

He forgotten us altogether? Doesn't He even mention our names?" Thus saying, some wept, and others accompanied him to the various places of Brindavan still filled with the aroma of Krishna's sweet memory. The Gopis said, "Lo, here Krishna lifted up Mount Govardhana, and here He killed the demons sent by the evil-minded Kamsa. In this meadow He tended His cows; here on the bank of the Jumna He sported with the Gopis. Here He played with the cowherd boys, and here in these groves He met the Gopis secretly." Uddhava said to them, "Why are you, so grief-stricken at Krishna's absence? He resides in all beings as their indwelling Spirit. He is God Himself, and nothing can exist without Him." "But", said the Gopis, "we do not understand all that. We can neither read nor write. We only know our Krishna of Brindavan, who played with us here in so many ways." Uddhava said, "Krishna is God Himself; by meditation on Him, man escapes from birth and death in the world and attains liberation." The Gopis said, "We do not understand big words like liberation. We want to see the Krishna of our heart." '

The Master listened to the story from the *Bhagavata* with great attention and said at last, 'Yes, the Gopis were right.'

Then he sang :

Though I am never loath to grant salvation,
I hesitate to grant pure love.

* * *

*Master* (to the Kathaka): 'The Gopis had ecstatic love, unswerving devotion to one ideal. Do you know the meaning of devotion that is not loyal to one ideal? It is devotion tinged with intellectual knowledge. It makes one feel, "Krishna has become all these; He alone is the Supreme Brahman. He is Rama, Shiva, and Shakti." But this element of knowledge is not present in ecstatic love of God. Once Hanumân came to Dwarka and wanted to see Sitâ-Rama. Krishna said to Rukmini, the royal consort, "You had better the form of Sita, otherwise there will be no escape from the hands of Hanuman."

'Once the Pândava brothers performed the Râjasuya sacrifice. All the kings placed Yudhishthira on the royal throne and bowed down before him in homage. But Vibhishana, the king of Ceylon, said, "I bow down to Nârâyana and to none else." At these words Lord Krishna bowed down to Yudhishthira. Only then did Vibhishana prostrate himself, crown and all, before him.

'Do you know what this devotion is like? It is like the attitude of a daughter-in-law in the family. She serves all the members of the family —her brother-in-law, father-in-law, husband, and so forth, bringing them water to wash their feet, fetching their towels, arranging their seats, and the like; but with her husband she has a special relationship.

'There are two elements in the ecstatic love : *I-ness* and *my-ness*. Yashodâ used to think, "Who but me would look after Krishna? The child will fall ill if I do not serve him." She did not look on Krishna as God. The other element is *my-ness*. It means to look on God as one's own—"*my* Gopâla". Uddhava said to Yashoda, "Mother, your Krishna is God Himself. He is the Lord of the universe and not a common human being." "Oh !" exclaimed Yashoda, "I am not asking you about your Lord of the universe. I want to know how my Gopala fares. Not the Lord of the universe, but *my* Gopala !"

'How faithful to Krishna the Gopis were ! After many entreaties to the

door-keeper, the Gopis entered the royal court in Mathura, where Krishna was seated as king. The door-keeper took them to Him, but at the sight of King Krishna wearing the royal turban, the Gopis bent down their heads and said among themselves, "Who is this man with a turban on his head? Should we violate our chaste love for Krishna by talking to him? Where is our beloved Krishna with His yellow robe and the bewitching crown with the peacock feather?"

'Did you notice the single-minded love of the Gopis for Krishna? The ideal of Brindavan is unique indeed. I am told that the people of Dwarka worship Krishna, the companion of Arjuna, but reject Radha.'

*A devotee:* 'Which one is the better of the two: ecstatic love, or love mixed with knowledge?'

*Master:* 'It is not possible to develop ecstatic love for God unless one loves Him very deeply and regards Him as one's very own. Listen to a story. Once three friends were going through a forest, when a tiger suddenly appeared before them. "Brothers," one of them exclaimed, "we are lost!" "Why should you say that?" said the second friend. "Why should we be lost? Come, let us pray to God." The third friend said, "No. Why should we trouble God about it? Come, let us climb this tree."

The friend who said, "We are lost!" did not know that there is God who is our protector. He who asked the others to pray to God was a Jnâni. He was aware that God is the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the world. The third friend, who didn't want to bother God with prayers and suggested climbing the tree, had developed ecstatic love for God. It is the very nature of such love that it makes a man think himself stronger than his Beloved. He is always alert lest his Beloved should suffer. The one desire of his life is to see that the object of his love may not be even pricked on the sole of his feet by a thorn.'

Ram served the Master and his devotees with delicious sweets.

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# TIME PASSES AND GOD EVOLVES !

By the Editor

Children pursue the external pleasures, and so they fall into the snare of the wide-spread death. But the wise do not desire (anything) in this world, having known what is eternally immortal in the midst of all non-eternals.—*Kathopanishad,* II. i. 2.

## I

So we ring out 1942 and ring in 1943,—that is quite apparent to all. But what is not apparent outside the select group of the so-called scientific-minded metaphysicians, is that with every change of time *their* God too is evolving! Poor God, to be subjected to such a scientific treatment! Our memory at once harks back to those Westernized Indians of the last few decades, who finding the vast cultural gulf between themselves and their fathers, either disowned the older generations or wanted them to strut in hats, ties, collars, and all that, which the unsophisticated old people sternly refused to do. The modern scientific age wants to dress up its God in a similar way. Unfortunately, however, we succeed not in transforming Him, but alienating ourselves more and more-

from our spiritual background. The latest fad is emergent evolution. The Deity cannot be derived from the existing data. So He must be conceived of as emerging out of mind and matter, just as out of a combination of hydrogen and oxygen emerges a dissimilar category, water !

One recent writer is so very enamoured of such a theory advanced by Alexander and Lloyd Morgan, that he believes that only the purblind will fail to see such a palpable truth. True, he makes some amends by arguing that such an emergent evolution presupposes involution, and that God cannot evolve out of matter unless He is already involved there; for something cannot come out of nothing. The writer has displayed another ingenuity. To his pragmatic mind the Avatâra of God whom he equates with his Superman, is of more immediate interest than God Himself; and he circumvents the difficulties consequent on a theory of God's evolution, by weaving it round His Incarnation. The necessary corollary of such a theory of spiritual evolution is that the spiritual contents of our minds are on a higher and richer plane than those of our forefathers. The Supermen of contemporary history are a better class of people than the Avataras or Supermen of bygone ages. We may be grateful to the old, but have to follow the new. The older Avataras have been transcended and discarded by the process of evolution. The new emergents are better both intrinsically and pragmatically. We take note of this because it is not advanced merely as a philosophical hypothesis but as a sober religious belief.

## II

For an examination of the foregoing, let us start with the Hindu conception of the content of the highest spiritual experience and see if this can admit of evolution. The non-dualists conceive of Brahman as Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, which, obviously, cannot be a changeful thing. Society may alter and spiritual aspirants may grow by stages, but the Absolute knows no change—no evolution or involution and no emergence. The highest human achievement, if achievement it must be called, consists in realizing an already existing identification with this Absolute. 'Whoever knows the Supreme Brahman, becomes identified with It,' declares the *Mundakopanishad*. The highest knowledge, in other words is the same for all time. The knowledge of the Vedic Rishis could not be intrinsically different from that of a modern man of realization. Evolution is manifestly out of place here.

In the Bhakti cults, too, the position is not otherwise. After defining devotion as the highest love towards God, the *Shândilya-sutra* affirms that one who has realized God becomes immortal, that is, changeless. And Nârada, the author of the *Bhakti-sutra*, conceives of the highest gift of devotion as tranquillity and supreme bliss. The devotees are thus at one with the non-dualists in declaring that the human perfection consists in the achievement of a Beatitude, higher than which nothing can be conceived of and nothing can exist. Yoga also affirms that in the highest realization a man becomes established in his true, immutable nature.

So far about the theories. In actual life we find that the mystics of one age or one clime do not differ in their highest spiritual achievement from those of other ages and other climes. Shah Latif, the Sufi mystic, says, 'Be thou as a child. Give up individuality. They that are thus absorbed, neither

stand in prayer nor bend : they enter into absolute Being, when they enter into non-being.' The absolute Being and non-being of the Sufi saint cannot be a mutable entity. St. Augustine speaks of his God thus : 'What art Thou, then, my God ? . . . highest, best, most potent, most omnipotent, most merciful and most just, most deeply laid and yet near.' And Tauler describes the highest realization in the following words : 'His spirit is, as it were, sunk and lost in the Abyss of the Deity, and loses the consciousness of all creature distinctions. All things are gathered together in one with the divine sweetness, and the man's being is so penetrated with the divine substance that he loses himself therein as a drop of water is lost in a cask of strong wine.' Anyone with the least familiarity with the Hindu scriptures and the lives of saints, ancient, medieval, and modern, can quote parallel passages by the thousand about such experience of Saguna (qualified) and Nirguna (absolute) aspects of God. In fact the texts are so very akin to each other and the actual lives of the saints are so similar that these coincidences cannot be explained away as mere chance. One would rather subscribe to the view of Dean Inge, who writes : 'Mysticism is singularly uniform in all times and places. The communion of the soul with God has found much the same expression whether the mystic is a neo-Platonic philosopher like Plotinus, a Mohammedan Sufi, a Catholic monk, or a Quaker. Mysticism which is the living heart of religion, springs from a deeper level than the differences which divide the churches, the cultural changes which divide the ages of history.'

Religion, then, deals with a permanent something, and the highest goal lies in establishing a lasting relationship with it. The experience of this relationship, again, is identical in its highest manifestation. The little difference that meets the eye is due to conceptual formulation and not to an underlying divergence. But with this aspect of the question we shall deal more fully at a later stage.

## III

The next question we shall take up is that of the nature of the Avatara and his relation to evolution. The clearest conception of Avatarahood is to be found in the *Srimad Bhâgavata*, where we read : 'Just like an actor He assumes various forms.' (I.xv.35). The verse of the Gita in which the Lord declares that none other than Himself comes as an Avatara, is well known. The *Chandi*, too, holds the same view. An Avatara does not evolve, but he comes down, as the very word itself connotes. Similarly Jesus is the Son of God. He came down from above but was not evolved out of matter or, for the matter of that, from any earthly thing. Other religions, which subscribe to a theory of Avatarahood, are equally agreed on this point.

One may argue that such a view is unscientific, that unless it can be brought into conformity with the modern theories of emergent evolution, decent people will laugh it to scorn. But the real question at issue is not what it ought to be or how it should be defended, but what it actually is. One may either accept or reject it; but it is not open to one to pass it under the garb of a philosophy of the Superman and then father it upon the ancient scriptures. Let us be absolutely clear on this point. If we stand by the Avatara, our place is not with the evolutionists. The Superman is a magnified human being, but an Avatara is none other than God, though in human form. The

Superman may evolve, but not so the Avatara. For as we have already seen in the second section, God is an immutable entity, and there can be no question of His evolution, howsoever that may be conceived. Any change that meets the human eye can, at best, only be apparent. For a Deity that changes at every turn is no God, but only a passing phase of the material world, or a transient mental image of the Reality behind phenomena.

Strangely enough, the late Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal, though a devout Vaishnava, propounded a theory of the evolution of the Avataras, and held that the Fish, the Boar, the Lion-man, the Dwarf, and others of the series of ten Avataras marked only different stages in the evolutionary process. If for the sake of argument we admit that there is too well-graded an arrangement of the bodies of these Avataras to be passed over lightly by a scientific mind, we cannot overlook the fact that such an evolution refers only to the physical side and not to the mental or spiritual. The Spirit may descend as a dove, or It may appear in a forest conflagration, but It is never transmuted by such varying appearances. The man of vision sees It as the Supreme Spirit and not as an earthly thing. And it is this vision that matters and not the ideological presentation of the philosopher.

True, the scriptures do not speak of the descent of God alone; lower beings may often come down. Avataras have accordingly been variously classified. But even there the lower Avataras are not evolutionary emergents. They are what they already were in their own pristine glory. They come down for fulfilling some Divine command. That done, they return to their original state without undergoing the slightest spiritual transformation in the process.

This unscientific attitude will be impugned. Nevertheless we disdain to take shelter under a pseudo-science which would transform facts to suit its convenience rather than take them as they are. There are highly gifted beings, the man-gods, who declare that they are of God, nay, they are God,—beings whose appearance on earth synchronizes with an all-round uplift, who talk not like the Pharisees but as people in authority, who cannot tolerate any pecuniary transactions in their Father's temple, and who live and behave at every turn as people of another world. Science may reject their testimony, call them liars, and seek their true place among the emergents; but religion will still refuse to be brow-beaten. And who knows who will win! Science started with matter, but has now stumbled on mind. The day may not be far away when mind will find its home in a more stable entity.

## IV

And, after all, is it science in whose name we are asked to throw overboard all our ancient, universal beliefs? We do not presume to be scientists and do not, therefore, dare enter its own proper field. But does human society evolve strictly in conformity with the biological laws? What about the human mind, the moral values, and the spiritual entities? So far as society is concerned, Swami Vivekananda pointed out long ago that the theory of evolution must undergo substantial transformation before it can be accepted as a true account of social metabolism. Says he, 'You are certainly aware of the laws of struggle for existence, survival of the fittest, natural selection, and so forth, which have been held by the Western scholars to be the causes of elevating a lower species to a higher. . . . Patanjali holds that the transformation of one

species into another is effected by the "infilling of Nature (प्रकृत्यापूरात्)". . . . In my opinion, struggle and competition sometimes stand in the way of a being attaining its perfection . . . . Whatever may happen in the lower strata of Nature's evolutions, in the higher strata at any rate, it is not true that it is only by constantly struggling against obstacles that one has to go beyond them. Rather it is observed that there the obstacles give way and a greater manifestation of the Soul takes place through education and culture, through concentration and meditation, and above all through sacrifice. . . . Now see how horrible the Western struggle theory becomes !'

These pregnant words of the Swamiji become all the more replete with meaning when we look at contemporary Europe. The Europeans boasted of their unceasing evolution and mocked at the placid East, and so they sincerely believed that their world was progressing every day. For a time the worse sides of the evolutionary process, viz, struggle and competition and rooting out of the weaker, were hidden away from the citizens of the ruling States, as these processes were directed towards unorganized masses overseas. People at home only saw the brighter side. Plenty and prosperity seemed to be ever on the increase. But a biological theory applied to human society was taking its toll unawares. The classes were gradually organizing themselves against the masses, and dictators were coming into prominence who apotheosized even the blacker aspects of animal existence. If Sir Thomas Browne stopped only with a statement of facts that 'all cannot be happy at once, for the glory of one State depends upon the ruin of another,' Mussolini went farther and asserted: 'War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it.' Here, then, evolution has reached its zenith !

## V

But is the picture of the human society any the better when evolution is taken at its best? They say that a struggle is only a step leading to a higher synthesis, a better state of equipoise. We wish it could be true. But there is no historical evidence to show that it is really so. If peace is coming by degrees, the struggle for rooting out competitors is assuming more uncontrollable proportions. The Great War of 1914-18 is followed by the world conflagration of 1939.

Such a simple theory of progress assumes that evil is a decreasing quantity while good is ever on the increase. Sociologists have racked their brains for drawing a very optimistic picture of the European society, and historians have ransacked the archives of the past to supply an optimistic background for a bright picture of the future. But the common-sense man still stands unconvinced. May be, some people have attained greater material prosperity. But misery still stalks in the slums and bylanes of civilization, and these are not few to be sure. 'No one can seriously maintain', writes Harry Barnes, an American sociologist, 'that social and economic equality exists where we face such economic and social inequalities as are revealed not in the vocal harangues of the soap-box orator but in the sober and reliable statistics gathered by every great nation.' As for the moral standard achieved, the same writer says, 'The upper classes capitulated pretty thoroughly to the prevailing something-for-nothing psychology of the past era. Freebooting in railroads, banks, utilities, receiverships

and the like became shockingly frequent. It was inevitable that, sooner or later, a process of imitation would set in among the criminally inclined of the lower classes.'

Such is a picture of the society where the theory of emergent evolution developed. And what was the psychological background that gave it birth? The obvious difference between theory and actuality goaded the philosophers on to a reliance on chance. 'If present facts did not vouchsafe a better state of things, nature would somehow evolve a happier something,' argued the Westerner. It is wishful thinking at its worst. When one points out that dead nature cannot evolve a higher spirit, the evolutionary philosopher swears by an evolving Deity, or rather nature apotheosized into a psychic entity! And what is this nature? It is only a bundle of biological ideas transferred to human society in order to justify social and international brigandage. The Deity only represents the aims and aspirations of the present-day world. It is dialectical anthropomorphism pure and simple.

## VI

Progress is a good thing. But when it does not know its own goal it is nothing but running after a will-o'-the-wisp, an unsubstantial phantasmagoria that allures and leads, but gives no rest. The present-day Western society is pictured as bottomless by G. B. Shaw: 'It is clear to me that though they are dispersing quietly to do very ordinary things. . . yet they are all falling, falling, falling, endlessly and hopelessly through a void in which they can find no footing. There is something fantastic about them, something unreal and perverse, something profoundly unsatisfactory.'

The Western ideal of an evolving Deity and emergent Superman may impart a great degree of dynamism to society and inspire hope in the hearts of men even in the midst of a dire calamity like the present War. But it cannot grant spiritual equipoise and lead to sustained selfless endeavour even in the midst of a triumph like that of 1918. It is thus that, though 1914-18 found the Western statesmen swearing by all sorts of high ideals, Versailles revealed an utter lack of self-restraint. The leaders turned to their human instinct rather than Divine guidance, they relied on the evolutionary urge rather than Divine dispensation; and thus sowed the seeds for a second world war.

The fact is that the modern evolutionary sociologists have failed to base society on the stable foundation of spirituality. Their evolving Deity, which is only another name for a changing social ideal, has led them to a *regressus ad infinitum*. If the present is intolerable, a change must be brought about, they argue. And if that change does not fulfil the expectations, the remedy lies in further transformation. If science can proceed by experimentation in the laboratory, why not in society as well?

The other difficulty with this mode of thought is that it ignores, or pays little heed to, the spiritual side of men. According to the evolutionary thinkers life and mind have evolved out of matter, or at best they are emergents, and so also is the Deity. Their primary concern, the starting point, is matter. Society has to be more careful of the outside world, of the window-dressing, as it were, and then better emergents will somehow come into existence, more customers will be attracted to make our business a flourishing concern. They talk of culture and civilization in terms

of material prosperity. And when they look inward, it is the social relationships that count more than intrinsic spiritual worth or moral values. Humanism, thus, is elevated to the seat of religion. Economics, politics, and social ethics are given a greater attention than spiritual advancement. The result is that though our societies have made rapid strides on the physical plane, on the spiritual plane we are as infantile as ever. Our huge machines find children as their masters, and turn on the latter crushing down every one mercilessly. We complain about the other fellow's self-aggrandizement, but fail to take care of the Satan in us. And still with a fatalistic imbecility we refuse to retrace our steps, to correct our mental perspective, to transvaluate values; but rather go on imagining that nature has some big surprise in store for us,—a higher Deity, a nobler Superman is being hammered out of this deafening din and bustle! The ancients said that the Lord made men after His own image; but the present generation expects to make a God after its own imagination!

Such is the genesis of an emergent Deity and such is the aftermath of each stage of evolution! It is progress indeed! And yet with such an equipment and such evidence in their possession, the evolutionary philosophers promise us a rational backing in our honest belief in an immutable Godhead! An Indian saint, it is said, met Socrates and asked him what was the subject of his inquiry. On being told that the latter dealt with things human, the saint burst out laughing, 'How could man grasp human things without first mastering the Divine?'

The philosophers ignore the evidence furnished by mystics, saints, and prophets, and want to arrive at truth through ratiocination. They may have thus succeeded to a great extent in evolving a consistent philosophical system. But at best this system relates to the outer world. We may readily concede that each generation differs from the other in its mental equipment. We may also agree that the conceptual formulations of the Divine truths are becoming richer and increasingly more comprehensible to a larger number of people. It is evident, for instance, that a greater number of men can now talk intelligently about many spiritual experiences, just as they can do so about other feelings. But talking does not amount to realization. It will be a mistake, for instance, to think that our feelings of joy are greater, just because we can talk about them more philosophically than did the past generation. It is absurd to argue that ignorant people cannot be saints. In fact, as history teaches us, sainthood does not depend on intellectual attainments. A highly embellished philosophy may cover an ugly spirit, while a transparent intellectual poverty may reveal a spiritual beauty. Truly was it said that religion is realization: it begins where philosophy ends. When without that solid background of realization one talks glibly of an evolving Deity and emergent Avataras, one is reminded of a parable told by Sri Ramakrishna. A vainglorious youngster told his friend that his maternal uncle was a rich man, inasmuch as he had a cow-shed full of horses. 'Pooh!' retorted the other, 'You might as well say that you have seen a stable full of cows. You have seen neither the one nor the other.'

Hegel substituted the Absolute Idea for the Absolute Godhead, and now the evolutionary thinkers have dethroned the Absolute by their own ideas!

# ART AS SADHANA*

By Nandalal Bose

Art is an expression of joy (Ânanda). There is joy in creation. The Upanishads declare that out of joy the world came into existence, from joy to joy it moves, and in the end enters into joy. An artist creates for the joy of creating. The test of genuineness of any work of art is its capacity to gladden the hearts of men. Once it comes into life, it knows no death. Suppose that all the marvellous works of art at Ajanta and Ellora are destroyed, suppose also that only a single artist has had the luck to look at them: they would live, in essence, in the enraptured heart of that single artist and inspire him to create for them a new body and a new lease of life. When a work of art is genuine it is living; its existence is almost organic and its repeated rebirth through a long line of descendants is actual and inevitable.

So thought Prof. Patrick Geddes who, years ago, visited us at Santiniketan. At that time we were trying to paint some frescoes on the wall. But owing to lack of proper material and of a thorough knowledge of technique we had to give up the attempt. The professor felt sorry at our discouragement and said, 'Why should you stop? Even if you work with a piece of charcoal and a single person happens to look at your work and like it, you are more than rewarded. Although your work might exist on the wall only for a day it may remain lifelong in the mind of that single onlooker. If you do not work, your idea—your conception—dies even before it lives in your mind and no one, not even your own self, is any the richer.'

All the different arts of sculpture, painting, poetry, music, dancing, etc., are united in a single endeavour. Every one of them in its own way, through a rhythm peculiar to it, essays to express the rhythm of joy which is the essence of this whole creation. In that respect the Sâdhanâ of art is akin to Yoga or spiritual Sadhana. You aim at realizing the One hidden behind all that is apparent, the One by knowing whom one comes to know everything. An artist has the same goal. 'An image of a god and a blade of grass', so said some Chinese artist, 'have the same appeal to a master, and inspire him to an equal pitch of joy and expression.' In this, of course, no disrespect is meant towards the image of a god, but the blade of grass gets its due.

An artist ought to be absolutely detached. As a biological unit and a member of society, he may have his share of personal instincts, impulses and sentiments, but as an artist and at the moment of creation, he should wholly transcend them. His personal likes and dislikes in relation to the subject in hand would simply obscure his vision and obstruct his passage from personal feeling to impersonal expression. In the process of creation the artist should go beyond his everyday self, composed of hunger, sex, and the like, so as to allow his personal emotion to become impersonal Rasa or the bliss of being (existence).

* Based on a talk at the Mayavati Ashrama on 18 June, 1942. The subject of discussion, mainly, was the relation between art and spiritual Sadhana.

The artist may choose to depict either a heart-rending or a pleasant theme. He has no partiality as he is neither attached to nor affected by any particular emotion or sentiment. He tries always to rise above them towards Rasa and create a body for the same. It is only when Rasa is not the aim and attainment that his work is affected by the dual sentiments of attraction and repulsion, pleasure and pain. Therefore, it is quite evident that the artist like the Sâdhaka aspires to attain to the pure, equal, and universal bliss. His work is worship even if he does not tell the beads or meditate or practise any other spiritual austerity.

Take for instance the conception of Kâlikâ or Natarâja. The man who beheld the first dawning of it in his consciousness might have been a Sadhaka, but he was an artist more or less. And the man who first gave a concrete form to the conception was a Sadhaka in spite of his being an artist. Both the Sadhaka and the artist had conceived a totality of rhythm, movement, form, colour, and other attributes within a unique Rasa and by the Rasa.

Moral values, as judged by social standard, are in no way applicable in the field of art. The very thing which is despised by society may, sometimes, inspire the artist to produce a great work. And that work may afterwards inspire and ennoble a great many other people. People may decry a thing as immoral; but at the magic touch of a master's brush it reveals something that remained hidden there, or even borrows something from the artist's self. It is transformed into beauty and significance. For it wholly depends on the attitude of the artist, whether his theme should founder in the realm of good and evil, moral and immoral, or rise higher. It is the Upanishad that declares, 'By the Self one knoweth taste and form and smell, by the Self one knoweth sound and touch and the joy of man with woman; what is there left in this world of which the Self not knoweth?'[1] Therefore, no good or bad quality dwells in the object. If the artist can find and recreate the pure bliss or Rasa, which the Creator creates and enjoys therein, even poison becomes nectar,—the mundane, divine. In fact, danger lies in laying stress on sentiment or theme; we get it all right, but the mind does not attain its freedom in Rasa. If the doctor instead of focussing his attention on the disease did so on the patient, the poor patient would die.

But still you ask whether the depiction of a theme which, judged by social standard, is immoral does not hurt society. How is that possible? When a real work of art is in question,[2] be it noted that it does not express any good or bad sentiment but transforms the same into Rasa and rhythm. It sets the artist and any one who loves and understands art free from all mental habits and social superstitions, necessary limitations though they be of our everyday life. The least of its benefits, conferred on man, is socially good, and not evil. Of course, there are such weak, neurotic minds as are unable to stand this elixir of life. Well, let such minds remain in cotton-wool protection,—let all elderly children remain in a glass-house for show and no harm will come to them. Art should never

[1] Sri Aurobindo's translation of *Katha*, II. i. 3.

[2] All that glitters is not gold. The whole discussion is about real works of art. There are, of course, things that pass muster under the name and deceive some and indulge others in their low propensities; but they are nothing more than articles of trade. Only real art, like real spirituality, rises above all moral considerations.

degrade itself to the low level of their use or understanding. It is they who ought to be raised to the level of necessary health and plenitude where art is meant for the wise and the strong.

A few years back, an agitation was set up to destroy all erotic figures on the temples of Puri and Konarak. A preposterous proposal! Had it been carried out it would have been sheer vandalism and some of the highest achievements of art would have disappeared. I do not claim to know the exact purpose which they were meant to serve. Scholars differ on that point. This much I should say that they depict one of the nine Rasas, the primal or Âdi Rasa which is incorporated in the total movement of life. Of undoubted greatness are those figures considered as works of art.

An artist is swayed by different emotions at different periods of his life. At times he creates something which is almost divine and touches, as a Chinese artist once remarked, the fringe of Infinity. At other times his work falls short of that height. There is nothing amazing in this. Change in circumstances, change in mental state makes different individuals of the same artist. At the moment that he comes to realize Rasa and grasp the mystery of rhythm he is, indeed, able to enter the highest state attainable by man. But such moments are rare. Caught in the net of day-to-day life, there are lapses of memory with occasional eclipsing of light. To attune the whole life to a rhythm of unalterable bliss is the ultimate aim of his life, though not yet an accomplished fact.

The Sadhaka has to pass, stage by stage, through various realizations towards the supreme one of Advaita. So, too, the artist. But it may appear to the former that the latter preoccupies himself with all that is transient, illusive, and unreal—but why? This is what the artist has to say in reply. Mâyâ or illusion is the basis of creation and the basis of art: but the Creator is never deceived by his own power of illusion; it cannot delude Him. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, the snake's poison does not kill the snake. The artist is but a disciple of the sole Creator, the supreme Artist. He, too, in his knowledge and conscious handling of Maya becomes a master: Maya becomes Lilâ (play). Be the theme insignificant or great, transient or immutable, the artist's only preoccupation is how to construe it in the string of Unity that runs through, holds together, and sets moving all this universe of form and movement. A mere preoccupation with theme would be his pitfall. That would enslave him to Maya. Maya as realized by the true artist is a swing and motion of rhythm within the Unity.

Only an artist devoid of a sense of the totality and the unity which are present everywhere, would require particular subjects or particular sentiments. Therefore it is that, before long, his source of inspiration dries up. The eternal fountain of bliss is not known to him.

I was born a Hindu and brought up in Hindu tradition. So it is no wonder that I have painted so many Hindu gods and goddesses. At present I paint landscape and ordinary life as well as those divinities. I try to get the same kind of joy and contentment from both. That the conceptions of gods and goddesses were immeasurably higher to those of everyday human life and sensible things, is what I formerly believed. But keeping pace with my mental development, now I refuse to lay any stress on mere form and appearance. . . .

Things appear and pass on the crest of the Unseen Rhythm and symbolize during their brief stay the One Reality. 'All this Universe of motion moveth in the Prâna and from the Prana also it proceeded'[3]—so says the Upanishad. Life Movement or Life Rhythm is the word that the Chinese artist would use in explanation. In my own humble way I seek to feel and express the same and consequently see no essential difference between high or low, great or insignificant. That is, formerly I used to see godliness in the gods alone, —now I try to find it in 'sky, water, and mountains'[4]—in plants, animals, and human beings. . . .

In all ages and countries, great art is produced by great ideas. Medieval Europe had the ideal of Christianity, ancient India those preached by Buddha and Krishna and the Chinese their *Tao*. But when the personality of a great man is worshipped as a symbol of the ideal, before long, the ideal is overshadowed and obscured by that personality. Nature and life are neglected. The light of love and wisdom is seldom shed on them. Such exactly has been the case in our India. It is, I believe, in Nature that the image of Kali or Shiva did appear at first to the Sadhaka. That Nature attracts or interests us but little to-day. 'All this is for habitation by the Lord, whatsoever is individual universe of movement in the universal motion'[5]—is what the *Isha Upanishad* teaches us at the very first step. That is what India should realize in every fibre of her conscious being. That is how the future art of India will have to feel and visualize a new world and a new life of integral truth and beauty.

[3] Sri Aurobindo's translation of *Katha*, II. iii. 2.

[4] Chinese synonymous phrase for landscape.

[5] Sri Aurobindo's translation.

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# REMINISCENCES OF SISTER NIVEDITA*

By Sir Jadunath Sarkar Kt., C.I.E., D.Litt.

I had the good fortune of meeting Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret E. Noble) for the second time in October 1904. She was at Buddha Gaya with Sir J. C. Bose and Dr. Rabindranath Tagore. We were struck by her penetrative interpretation of the Indian scriptures, art, and folk-lore, which fact was highly appreciated by Dr. Tagore. The poet had his own beautiful way of expression of course, but he said that Nivedita had the power of going into the very heart of things and she was a marvellous exponent of them. In the dusk we used to meditate under the Bodhi tree. The Bodhi tree was the direct descendant of the descendants of descendants of the tree under which Buddha had attained Nirvâna twenty-five centuries ago. As you all know, a branch of that tree was taken to Ceylon during the reign of Ashoka and planted there by King Tissa of that island. A short distance off, there was a big circular stone slab with the marks of the Vajra or thunderbolt, which is said to have been supplied by Indra to Buddha. Many of you might have seen

* From a talk at the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal (Hardwar).

that emblem or figure of the thunderbolt in the books of Sister Nivedita. Seeing that mark, Nivedita remarked, this sign of thunder should be adopted as the national emblem of India. Its significance is that when a man gives up his all for the good of humanity, he becomes as powerful as the thunderbolt for the work of the gods. Nivedita emphasized the bold and courageous implications of this symbol. This symbol has now been practically banished from India but is used by the Tibetan followers of Buddha.

We generally had some evening walk at that period with Nivedita and Rabindranath. You know, perhaps, Sujata, the daughter of the headman of the village of Urubela. She offered food to Buddha in a golden bowl when he was sitting under a tree in a famished condition. During our walk, we reached a village now called Urbil. Nivedita said that that was Urubela. She began to praise Sujata and said that she was the ideal of a householder, who should supply necessaries to true recluses. In the fervour of her zeal, Nivedita took up a clod of earth and exclaimed, 'This, the home of Sujata, was sacred soil.'

The movement which is now called Aggressive Hinduism, was so named by Nivedita. I do not like the word aggressive. I prefer to call it active, Active Hinduism. Aggression has something of violence associated with it. It means selfishness and usurpation, encroachment on the legitimate rights of another, as the Japanese and Germans are doing to-day. Those of you who have read the philosophy of religion, know that there are two terms, passivism or quietism and activism. Passivism means being always on the defensive only. There used to be no conversion to Hinduism. Brother Douglas of the Oxford Mission who is a devoted missionary sent out by the Oxford University, once remarked to me : 'Well, Jadu Babu, the extinction of the Hindu race is a question of arithmetic, as you cannot bring new members within your fold.' Yes, if no conversions are made and if Hinduism is not made active, the extinction of the Hindu race is a question of a hundred years or a century and a half. But Sister Nivedita urged Hinduism to be aggressive or active. She considered the Buddha as a reformer of Hinduism, and not the founder of a sect distinct from and antagonistic to Hinduism. It was the aim of Buddhism in its origin to purify Hindu society and life. Buddhist missionaries went to Europe, China, Japan, and other parts of the world to convert the people and to spread a reformed Hindu religion. I use the word Hinduism not in a limited sense, but in a comprehensive sense.

By Dharma Buddha and Ashoka alike emphasized moral conduct and truthfulness. To fulfil the needs of every age a great man is born, an Incarnation so to say. So, when the Brahmo Samaj at the end of the nineteenth century lost its position as the leader of the vanguard of Indian reform and was in a divided condition, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa came. Sikhism, too, represents an attempt to reform Hinduism from within. In the *Adi Granth*, the religious book of the Sikhs, we find the teachings of Guru Nanakji formed less than fifty per cent, while more than half he collected from the sayings of the Hindu saints, Dadu and Kabir, etc. Nivedita always insisted that Buddha himself was a Hindu reformer, to take the most comprehensive meaning of that word, his missionaries preached Hinduism, but of a purer and more moral character. She believed that Hinduism had something to give to others, even to the Christians.

Hinduism is more rational than Christianity. Christianity preaches salvation only through belief in Christ. Many Christians nowadays do not believe in a concrete individual Satan. Satan is now taken to be merely a symbolical representation of the evil promptings of our heart. Nivedita wanted to say that the principles of Hinduism, which do not force us to believe any set of rigid dogmas, have many things to give to the world at large. This Dharma, as said above, is not a dogma or creed, and it can be practised by Christians and others also. Sister Nivedita explained many rituals

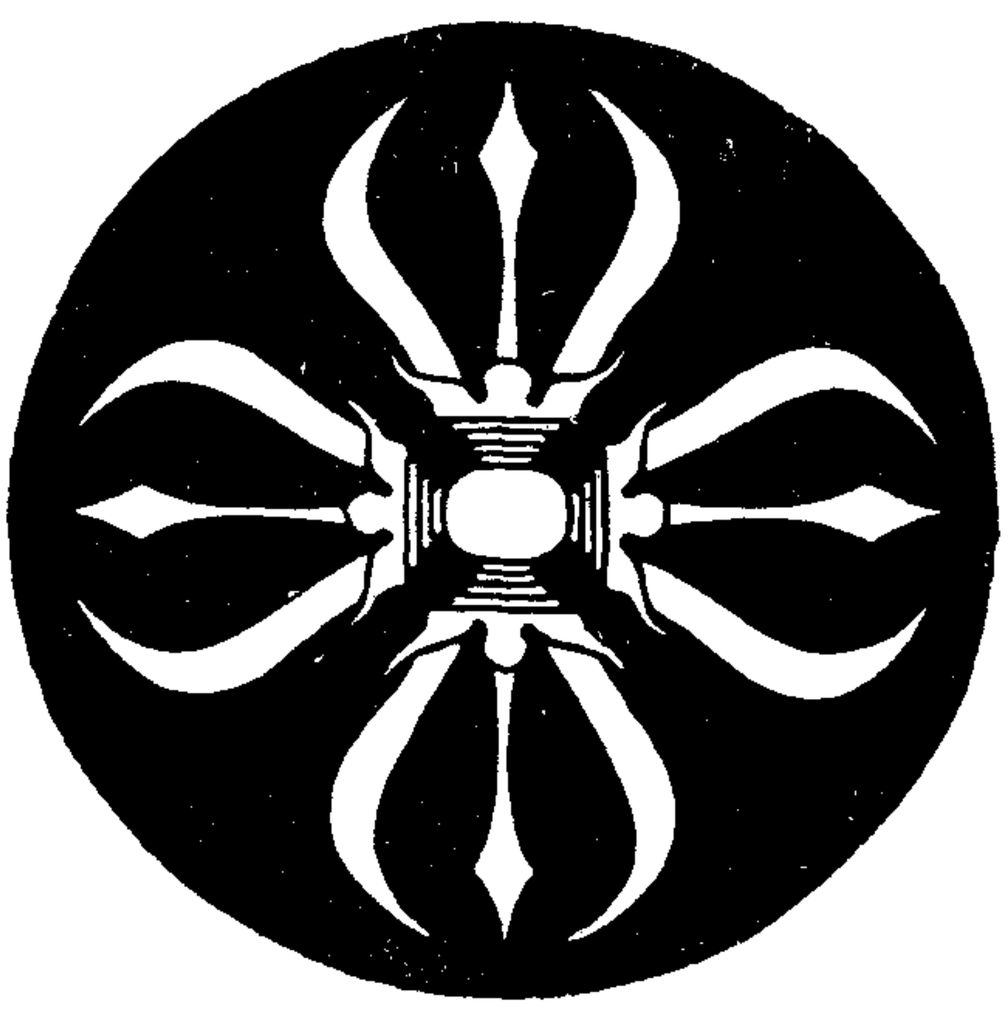


BODHI TEMPLE AT BODHGAYA

BODHI TREE

and customs of Hinduism in a new and noble way by entering into their spirit. She had a living sympathy with and wonderful power of interpreting the things and thoughts of India of the past.

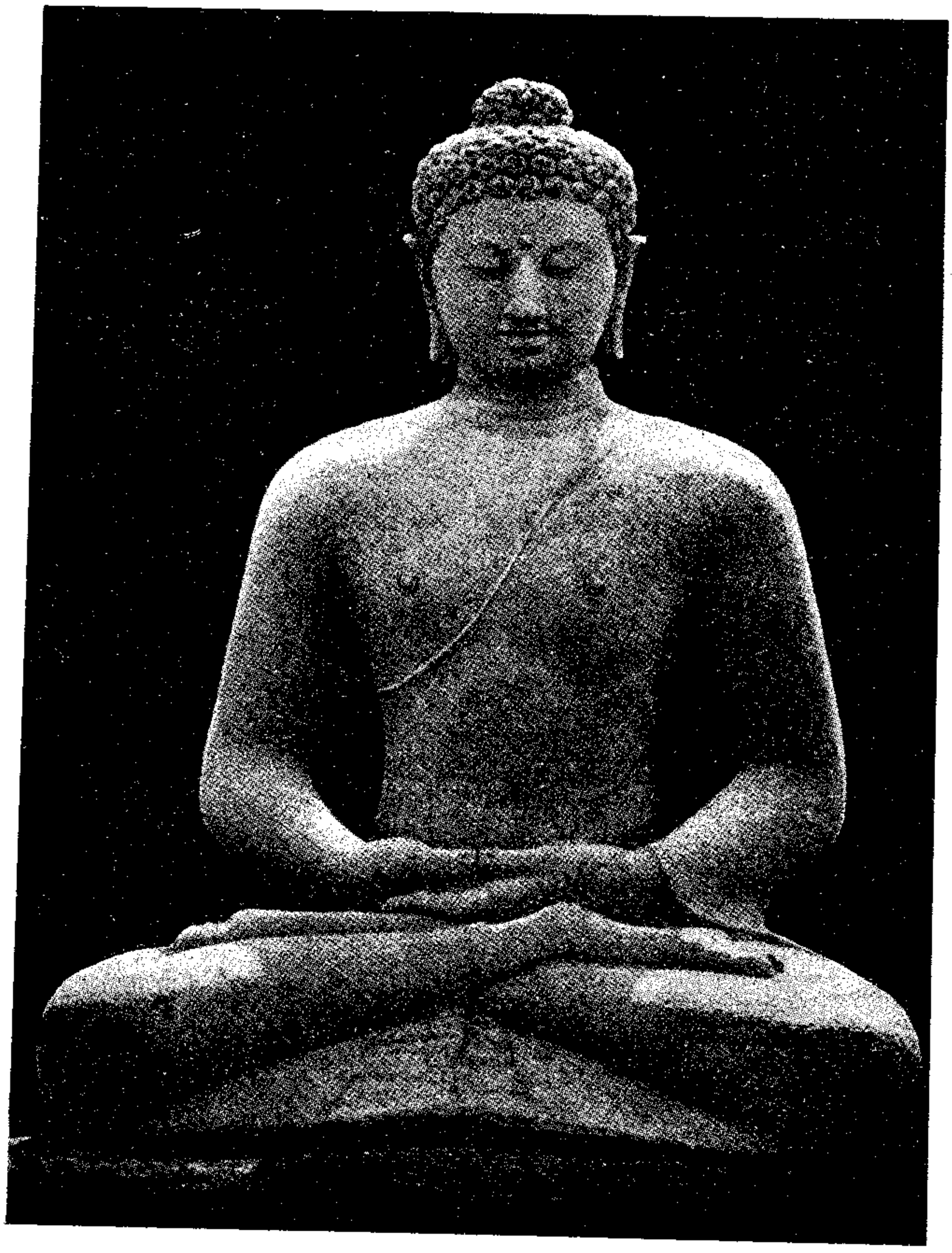
Soon after her arrival in Bengal, she wanted to lecture on *Kâli the Mother*. You can hardly imagine the feeling of horror among the educated Hindus at that time in Calcutta, on hearing the very title of this lecture. They all had the vulgar idea about Kali which they had derived from the Kalighat temple of Calcutta, which was then virtually converted into a butcher's shop where hundreds of goats were daily killed and meat was sold in the compound. Dr. Mahendralall Sircar, the great homoeopath and scholar, who was a rationalist and to some extent an atheist, said that none should go to Kalighat and see Kali. Really it was very difficult to find a president for Nivedita's lecture on Kali. Mr. N. N. Ghose, Principal of Vidyasagar's College, who had at first agreed to preside, afterwards held back. Nothing daunted, Nivedita delivered her lecture in the Albert Hall without a president. Kali the Mother, she said, is the killer of darkness, the punisher of evil-doers. She represents the necessary moral vigour and courage. **'नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः**— the Supreme Soul cannot be attained by the weak,'—thus she showed a great lesson to be followed by the future India, in the Kali worship.



VAJRA

Sister Nivedita was deeply grieved to contemplate India's present degradation and weakness; she wanted that Indians should take their stand boldly and honourably in the comity of nations. They should conduct original researches. Some sages there will always be in our land to continue meditation and to commune with the Supreme Spirit. Those who cannot, should contribute something original and remarkable in the field of the different branches of intellectual inquiry, which contributions will be recognized by the world at large. In that way we Indians can gain our rightful place among the nations. So whenever any Indian made any original researches in any cultural field, she was overjoyed. For that reason she adored Sir J. C. Bose, whom she considered to be one of her personal friends. A European scientist remarked truly of Dr. Bose that he was the first to place India on the scientific map of the world, though Raman and other eminent savants came in later days. The present speaker for his original researches in Indian history based on Persian manuscripts, was much encouraged by her.

She visited many sacred places of India undergoing privation and hardship like any Hindu pilgrim, and explained the inner significance of the Tirthas in her own novel way. Take for instance Hardwar and Prayaga, the confluence of two streams. On these holy spots one will be driven to think that though their courses are different, the rivers have met together and they will reach the same goal, the ocean. Similarly, if our goal is God-realization, though the ways of approach may be different, we shall all ultimately reach the ocean of Absolute Bliss. That is why Tirthas have grown up near and about the Ganges in Northern India as well as on the Godavary, the Krishna and the Cauvery in the South, but not in the desert of Marwar.



DHYANI BUDDHA

*Courtesy: O. C. Ganguli*

Sister Nivedita had a wonderful, sympathetic, and penetrative power of going to the very heart of things. The rituals, the customs, and the traditions, some of which we have forgotten and some of which we follow blindly or as

TRIMURTI

explained by the priests, were restored to their original colour, their true meaning, by the novel and critical exposition of the Sister. First she wrote *The Web of Indian Life* in which she threw new light on various Hindu systems. She wrote many other books in the same spirit.

She was a great supporter of Indian art. Any original contribution by an Indian was encouraged by Nivedita. She used to write art notes in *The Modern Review* and wrote also a large number of essays in that journal till her death (1908-11).

When Abanindranath's picture of Mother India was published in *The Modern Review*, she was overjoyed. She wrote criticisms and pointed out the defects of our young artists. She was a good critic of art and had studied European art thoroughly. Indian art of the Bengal School owes much to her wise guidance. The pictures of Ajanta would simply put her into an ecstatic mood. The picture of Rahul and Yashodhara is a striking example. She marvelled at the vivid expression of the eyes and faces of Yashodhara and Rahul, though different in age and character. She praised the fresco paintings of Ajanta in which she found the expression of true Indian art, and spoke of the Tri-murti in Elephanta as 'the synthesis of Hinduism in stone'.

She wanted India to regain her past glory—political, cultural, military. She was a supporter of Indian political aspirations. When Dr. Bhupen Dutt, the younger brother of Swami Vivekananda, was put on trial in the police court of Calcutta, at first no one seemed to have the courage to stand bail for him. Nivedita to the astonishment of all entered the court and offered to stand bail for Dr. Dutt. Passionately loving the independence of India, she remarked that the right place

of Raja Rammohan Roy was by the side of Ranjit Singh of Lahore. That is to say, the intellect of Bengal and the valour of the Punjab should act side by side for the political regeneration of India. She was a nationalist of nationalists.

She loved her adopted land and admired all that is great and good in Mother India. She would not spare anybody if he spoke ill of Mother India. An incident happened in London. The wife of an English officer in India, while speaking about India at a London meeting, said, 'Immorality prevails in the harems of the Indian gentry.' Nivedita questioned the authenticity of the statement. The speaker apologized saying she had heard it from a missionary in India. Nivedita rebuked her for making this off-hand statement against a whole nation without personal knowledge.

From what has been said above we see that Nivedita contributed to the cause of India's regeneration by her penetrative power of interpretation of our culture, her lucid exposition, her insistence on an active, energetic, proselytizing, and reforming Hinduism, her call for true manhood and sincerity in our public life, and her deep appreciation of Indian art. She rendered the noblest service to India in more ways than one.

By the premature deaths of Sri Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita the Ramakrishna Mission has lost the ablest tongue and the ablest pen. India at large, too, has lost far more than the general public know.

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# THE POET'S WORKSHOP

By Prof. James H. Cousins

A sculptor, on being asked to describe his art, said that all one had to do was to get a piece of stone and chip away the fragments one did not need. A poet, if asked to do the same, might say that one had only to get paper and pencil or pen and put down the words one needed. The reply of the sculptor's questioner, 'I did not think it was so simple,' might be made also to the poet. Nor is it so simple, despite the whimsy of the artist's reply and the simplicity of the questioner. To make a sculpture or a poem involves something to be done, something to do it with, and somewhere to do it in : that is to say, a workshop, and not only a suitable place but essential equipment appropriate to what is to be accomplished.

On the side of craft the poet has the advantage over other artists in that he can carry his workshop, like a tinker or a shoe-maker, about with him. A sculptor cannot carry chisel and mallet and six feet of granite in his pockets or under his arm : a poet can go about with a writing-pad and a pencil or fountain-pen, and set up his workshop in any inconspicuous place.

But the essential part of the work of the poet is not done in his workshop unless he be of the objective order (a novelist or historian or scientist in verse) and requires references and paraphernalia. The real work of poetry is done by *the workshop in the poet;* not by the apparatus of writing, but by the subtler apparatus of feeling and thought

and the processes and qualities that poetry is made by.

The two main classes of poets, the externally excited and the internally impelled, are, curiously for all their differences, describable by two words that need only a change of position of one letter to make them the same—reactive and creative. Unlike the plastic arts, which are stable and solid, the art of the poet is tangible to only a very small extent, and its tangibility, in manuscript or book, is not fundamental or essential : poetry was intended to be heard, not seen; in its beginnings it was all intangible. I can give you from memory a poem on the Taj Mahal without paper or pen or writing, with nothing more than the memory and voice that I carry about with me. But I cannot give you the Taj Mahal itself save in substance, and that is beyond my carrying capacity.

A poem can move in a more or less circular manner; that is, it can give you the mental experience of a succession of ideas that move back to where they began. But no statue can, of itself, move in a circle : the most it can do is to make *you* move more or less circularly around it if you are to be truthful in saying you have seen it, 'in the round,' not merely frontwise or in profile.

Yet, for all the appearance of simplicity and easy transit in the poet's workshop, he would be a poor artist who had not a curtained door that opened into an inner room—a builder's yard, a witches' cauldron, perhaps, (one speaks with reverence) a Shekinah where dwells the cloud-hidden presence of the Creative Spirit. It is there, in fact, that the Great Work is done. The movement of pen on paper is not the creating of a poem, but its recording. The movement may come at the end of an apparently motionless hour. 'A line perhaps may take us half a day', Yeats said; and Francis Thompson said the same thing differently (as poets have been doing without apology since the first poem was made) :

> From stones and poets we may know
> Nothing so active is as that which
> least seems so.

The power of true poetry (I distinguish between true poetry and poetry which is not so true) arises from its being a synthesis of all the arts and crafts. If you could be admitted to the poet's inner workshop, and its process could be translated into physical sounds and sights and actions, and 'amplified', you would run the risk of being shaken to dust by the tremendous, complex, simultaneous interaction of building, sculpturing, painting, dancing, music that was going on : hammers clashing, saws thrilling, wheels turning, forms gyrating, drums beating, harps twanging; an unintelligible hubbub from which would emerge, as from a seven-times heated forge, a handful of words—but words charged with the magic of Keats, the fire of Shelley, the energy of Browning, the vision of Rabindranath, or whatever quality the genius of the poet can express.

It is this simultaneous fusion of the characteristics and qualities of the various arts that makes the utterances of poetry so impressive and lasting. The age in which Sappho lived is distinguished from our own by having preceded it to oblivion; but the few lines of her poetry that are scrupulously treasured by scholars, speak the immortality of the heart and mind expressed through imagination and art. A Japanese poet was remembered for centuries for a five-line 'hokku', and a few years ago was ceremonially made the patron of all Japanese poets. As William Watson sang :

Captains and conquerors leave a little dust,
And kings a dubious legend of their reign.
The swords of Caesars, they are less than rust.
The poet doth remain.

To the extent that a poem (if it is only human) makes a home, or a place of worship (if it recalls the divinity of its true home in the spirit) for the imagination, populates it with worthy images, decorates it fittingly, fills it with music, and thrills it with dancing, it will fulfil its mission of voicing what George Meredith called 'our inmost in the sweetest way'. Not all poems do so to the same extent in any or all of the qualities of figurativeness, docoration, music, rhythm through which ideas and feelings are expressed. The greatest reach less than perfection in one or other of these qualities: hence the variety in poetry, and the fascination (and contradictions) of its study. The ultimate secret is in the poet's inner workshop. We cannot enter that workshop when it is working in the poet. But those who have made a study of the products of the workshop can infer from their characteristics something of the technique of creation that lies behind them: something, not everything; for the poet would be the last person to say that his or her poem is a perfect expression of the inner vision and impulse: this would be the same thing as saying that the finite fully expresses the infinite, which, as old Euclid used to say, is impossible. One of them (myself in fact) sang it thus in the morning of this incarnation:

I heard a wonderful thing
When I drank of the spirit's wine;
And what I heard I sing—
But only the song is mine;

Only the struggle of speech
Like a whirl of leaves in a blast,
Or a fringe of shells on a beach
That tells of a wave that has passed.

From a rapture a moment shared
I fall on a broken wing;
But what I have heard I have heard—
And the least is the song I sing.

Not all can be poets: it is given to few even to be bad poets, for the discipline of poetry is such that it takes one to be a very bad poet indeed to reach a level below which the qualities of poetry disappear. But the study of poetry (in its mother tongue first, and in other tongues later) is one of the essentials of education, through which high thought and fine feeling may be stimulated, and the qualities of poetry (which are the qualities of true life) be carried into individual action and group organization.

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'Man is man, so long as he is struggling to rise above nature, and this nature is both internal and external. . . . It is good and very grand to conquer external nature. But grander still to conquer our internal nature. It is grand and good to know the laws that govern the stars and planets; it is infinitely grander and better to know the laws that govern the passions, the feelings, the will, of mankind. This conquering of the inner man, understanding the secrets of the subtle workings that are within the human mind, belong entirely to Religion.'

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

# THE RETURN FROM KAILAS

By Swami Apurvananda

## Gourikund the Ice-reservoir

Our party which left Garbyang, the last Indian village on the route to Tibet on 27 June, followed the usual route up to Taklakot; from where it chose the longer route to Kailas *via* Tirthapuri, the usual shorter one being *via* Manas, so that we had to visit this sacred lake on our return journey. Our last camp nearest to the holy mountain was at Dripu at an elevation of 17,000 ft. from where we had a charming view of Shiva's abode shining in its massive, round, and white resplendence on which we feasted our eyes and with whose spiritual atmosphere we filled our souls.

On the tenth of July we began to move away from Kailas towards Gourikund. It was the hardest day for us during the whole course of our tour in Western Tibet. Our caravan left Dripu before sunrise. The morning was very chilly and misty. The track wound among huge granite boulders of various sizes and led up to a slow ascent, which gradually became so steep that even the horses had to stop at every tenth or twelfth step. It recorded an alpine height of 18,599 ft.

On our right stood a mountain with a silvery mantle of snow which, brightened by the first gleam of the rising sun, shone like melted gold. A few pilgrims were moving ahead of us and it was a pleasant sight to see those Tibetan pilgrims going round the holy Kailas by prostration even in those early hours of the morning. Their power of endurance, determination, and devotion brought a new inspiration to our minds and as a result we forgot for the time being all our sufferings and difficulties.

Gradually the ascent became frightfully steep. Now the highest point of Domala was within sight but nobody was sure of reaching there. At this stage our whole party got scattered, each struggling in his own way.

As soon as our whole party collected at the highest point we slowly made our way down the slope. But this steep descent was by no means less tiresome than the ascent just finished. The fear of tumbling down headlong was constantly oppressing us. Somehow we reached Gourikund or the ice-reservoir. The big Kund at an altitude of 18,200 ft., some four hundred feet below Domala, with precipitous mountain walls on both sides and embankments of high ridges on the other two, commands a great respect from pilgrims. It is believed that Gouri, the consort of Lord Shiva, performs her daily ablution in that water. Hence many pilgrims aspire to have a bath in that sacred Kund or at least to touch its holy water. As we stood near the frozen water looking like a slab of ice, we were at a loss to find out how a bath there could be possible. At last with great difficulty the top layer of ice, four inches in thickness, was broken with the help of hill-sticks and an opening big enough for a man to plunge in was made. The water which was transparent as crystal gave out a bluish tint. It was not all water under the surface of ice, but the bottom of the Kund was strewn with big ice-boulders of bluish hue; so the depth of the Kund could not be ascertained. Some of us had our bath there. But the whole body was so benumbed and it became

so inert after the plunge that none had either the strength or the consciousness to come out of the water and hence had to be dragged out.

The weather was bright and cheerful when we took our bath in the Gourikund. Our guide said that he never had been there under a blue sky though he had visited the place more than forty times, during the last twenty years. The panorama around was magnificent and the whole place was steeped in divine silence. The icy surface of the grand Gourikund which was not less than half a square mile in area looked purple and the glaciers of the surrounding mountains gave out crimson tint being illumined by the bright sunshine. As we stood amazing at the sublime beauty of the whole panorama a terrific sound unnerved us. Before we could collect ourselves and realize the situation we found avalanches coming down, and in the twinkling of an eye they stood in the form of a hillock some four hundred yards off at the north-east corner of the Kund. Our guide advised us not to stop there long. So, we hastened our steps among the irregular boulders along the northern shore of the Kund. Riding was out of the question; somehow we began to crawl down. The descent was so steep that rolling down seemed the easiest method!

After a long struggle the whole party reached the open valley of the swift-flowing Jamdu-chu which was on our left. We had another three hours' journey to cover before rest for the day could be expected. After a light refreshment and rest we left the beautiful valley for Tsumutulphu or Jaudipur as it is generally called by Tibetans. The picturesque Gumpha was to our right at the feet of a mountain. Our tents were fixed on the very spot in the green valley by the side of Jamdu-chu where ten years back His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore when on a pilgrimage to Kailas fixed up his camp.

The whole of the afternoon we had neither the strength nor the mind to bear the temperature. Extreme exhaustion from the exciting journey during the forenoon compelled us to be inside till the sun sank down behind the mountain range. When we got ourselves ready for a visit to the Gumpha, darkness enveloped the earth. Though it was very late the priest was cordial towards us and opened the shrine room and led us inside. The inner sanctuary was not big enough for all of us; so we came in batches. The main deity on the altar was Lord Buddha or Saky Thubha and on either side were wooden images of Buddhist monks. It was very interesting to see several Hindu mythological gods and goddesses being worshipped there. Acharya Shankara also was one among the gods. When and how those Hindu gods found their places there is a matter of antiquarian interest. Outside the main shrine we were shown a big wooden pole nicely carved, some six feet long. The priest said that it was the walking stick of Lord Shiva, presented by the Lord Himself to a Guru Lama of that Gumpha.

### Towards the Enchanted Lake

We broke our camp next day and started at half past seven. For more than two miles the road was leading by the side of Jamdu-chu when to our great dismay it was found that a precipitous and narrow ridge was staring at us. After a long struggle when the whole party safely reached the top of the ridge the sight of a vast plateau in front simply overwhelmed us. To the north of that immense plateau was the holy Kailas, to the far off south was the amazing beauty of the grand Gurla Mandhata and to the west was the

Shelachakung mountain range. From the top of that ridge the endless barren grey plateau looked like a vast ocean. After a short repose we began to climb down and gradually plunged into that plateau.

As the day advanced the journey became more tedious and monotonous. At last at half past twelve, jaded and tired, the whole party reached Bangdu which was our halting place for the day. The heat was terrible. Even inside the tent the temperature was eighty degrees. Some of our companions had a refreshing bath in the rivulet.

Next morning it was not possible because of the extreme cold to break off our camp and start before seven. All were afraid of the Jamars or Tibetan marauders who, we heard, were prying somewhere near Manas which we expected to reach soon. But we proceeded boldly, as there was no way for escape. The whole caravan began to proceed keeping the Kailas range at the back towards the Gurla range through the desert-like table-land. To our right was Bakra village with several houses which looked like a small oasis in an endless desert. The trackless place through which we were proceeding was full of sand and small thorny bushes. I was walking in the company of our guide hearing from him many interesting stories about Tibet and its wonderful people, which lessened the sufferings of the tedious journey.

### Origin of Rakshas Tal

We went on talking for more than two hours. In the meantime the day began to advance and to our right at a distance the bright sun rays were found playing on the blue waters of Rakshas Tal, the Ravan Lake or Langak Tso of the Tibetans. There is an interesting story connected with the origin of Langak Tso. It is said that Râvana the ten-headed and twenty-armed king of Lankâ desired to take Lord Shiva along with his favourite abode, the holy mount Kailas, and began to perform very hard austerities for thousands of years. Ravana's Tapas propitiated the Lord of Kailas who in order to bless Ravana appeared before him in an effulgent form and asked him to beg for the desired boon. Ravana prostrating himself before Nilakantha in the fullness of his heart and with tears in his eyes, asked for his only boon of taking the Lord along with Kailas to Lanka. The great God granted his prayer on condition that Ravana must present himself the next day in front of Him at the top of Kailas before sunrise to take Him. If he failed to do that He would not go.

Next morning, long before sunrise, Ravana began to climb up the top of Kailas but in the darkness he lost the way. In the meantime the sun rose up in the sky. Ravana being foiled in his attempt was bent on uprooting the whole Kailas. With his mighty twenty arms he in great rage began to shake and pull the mount. The shaking was so violent that the whole Kailas began to tremble and the dislodged stones started rolling down with deafening sound. The attendants of Shiva began to run helter-skelter in different directions. Pârvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, clinging to the Lord in fear, asked what the matter was. The great Shiva only smiled and gave a little pressure with the tip of his toe on the top of Kailas. As a result of that pressure Ravana fell unconscious on the ground. During the period of struggle for uprooting Kailas Ravana sweated so profusely that it formed into a lake.

The water of the Manas Sarovar is sacred to the Tibetans whereas they consider the water of Rakshas Tal not worthy of drinking even. To the oppo-

site side of the Ravana lake stood a precipitous mountain range covered with virgin snow of exquisite beauty. It is said that Rakshas Tal is smaller than the Manas but as for us we were simply struck with wonder at the sight of the vast transparent sheet of water of the semi-circular Rakshas Tal. It was beyond our imagination that such a vast lake could at all exist at an altitude of nearly fifteen thousand feet in a mountainous region. Two fairly big barren rocky islands added to the beauty and grandeur of that lake. One of the islands is known as Lachatu or the swan island and the other is called Top Sarma. During the winter months when both the sister lakes freeze, then all the swans and other aquatic birds that dwell in those two lakes take shelter in those islands and lay innumerable eggs there. The water of the Rakshas Tal becomes so much frozen that men and animals can walk over it.

### To Manas Sarovar

To-day the whole caravan was moving rather irregularly. So it was rather difficult to keep touch with the whole party. The place through which we were passing was very uneven and full of small thorny bushes; hence the onward march proved very difficult both for the tired animals and men. Our guide was leading the party and I was accompanying him. Gradually we reached the shallow, dry bed of the Gangachu, a stream which carries the surplus water of the Manas Sarovar to its sister lake which is some forty feet below the level of the Manas. The bed of the Gangachu is some fifty feet wide. There were a few hot springs in several places by the side of the Gangachu; but time did not permit us to see them. A funny story is current amongst the Tibetans about the Gangachu. It is said that two golden fishes that lived in the Manas Sarovar fought with each other and one pursued the other from the Manas to the Rakshas Tal. The course which the golden fishes took formed into a stream and became known as the present Gangachu.

After a march of more than one hour we reached an elevated place wherefrom the entire contour of the vast plateau we had just passed through could be seen. The whole landscape was simply charming and marvellous. Our guide said that in another half an hour we would reach the shore of the Manas.

Soon the endless waters of the Manas Sarovar came into our view. It looked as if the other side of the lake touched the horizon and got mixed up with the heaven-kissing tops of the Gurla Mandhata. Foamy ripples were dashing against the shore, as it were, in a playful mood. Hundreds of swans that were seated on the bank near the water-level got frightened at our unexpected approach, and with a great noise flew into the lake. Those that were in the lake with their young ones went further off in terror.

### Manas Sarovar

According to the direction of the guide our tents were soon pitched within five yards of the water-level of the lake. All of us after touching the sacred water of the Manas began to get ready for the bath. A bright sun was overhead and the temperature was ninety degrees. The bath was quite pleasant and refreshing. The altitude of Manas Sarovar is 15,098 ft. above the sea level. The water was very cold no doubt, but compared with the icy cold water of Gourikund a dive in the Manas was rather pleasant. We were under the impression that the surface of the lake would be covered with a thick layer of ice, but it was not so. The

whole lake freezes in the middle of December and the surface is covered with a layer of transparent ice some five or six feet thick. One peculiarity of the Manas during the freezing time is that terrible eruptions take place and at several places heavy boulders of ice are thrown off to the shore. Sometimes the ice of the Manas bursts with a tremendous noise and water gushes out with great force and small pools are formed. Because of these eruptions and cracks and owing to the common belief amongst the Tibetans that Manas is the abode of gods, nobody dares to cross the icy surface of that lake. According to geologists and the common tradition in Tibet there are many hot springs at the bottom of the holy lake, and that is the cause of heavy eruptions.

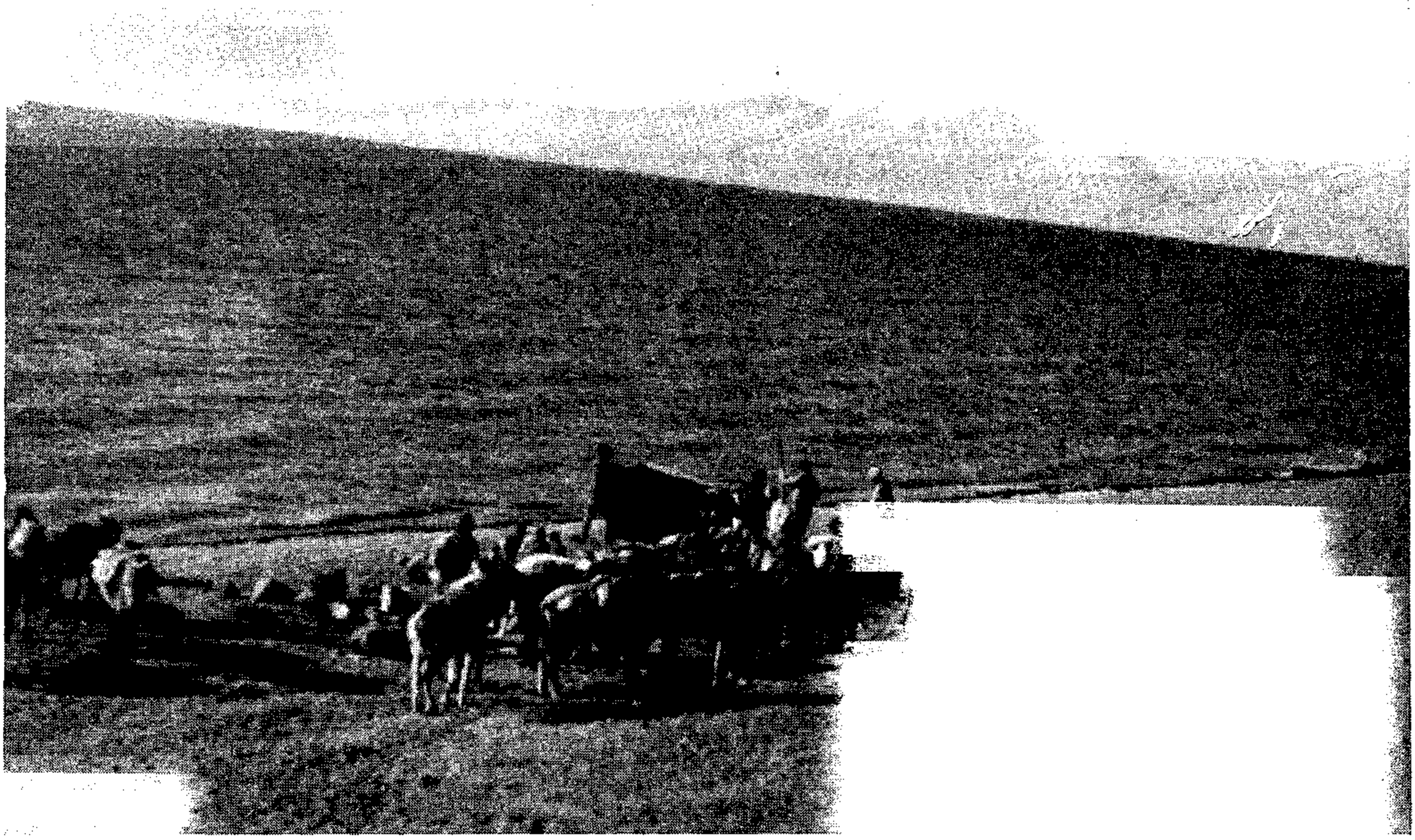
The depth of the Manas—the Tsoillaph of the Tibetans—is nearly 300 ft. and the circumference about sixty miles, and it covers an area of more than 200 sq. miles. Round its holy shores there are several monasteries in which Tibetan Lamas stay even during the freezing winter striving for self-realization. In the west of the lake is Gossul Gumpha, in the north-west the Chiu Gumpha, in the north the Cherkip, Lnagpona, and Pur Gumphas, in the east Seralung Gumpha and in the south Yeango and Thundlu or Thokar Gumphas. Many pilgrims go round the holy Manas Sarovar as is done in the case of Kailas. Some Tibetan pilgrims make prostration circuit of the Manas Sarovar also. We too had a mind to make a circumambulation of Manas Sarovar but owing to various reasons that project had to be given up.

Kalidas and many other poets of olden times while describing the Manas Sarovar mentioned lotuses and swans among many other things seen in the Manas. There are thousands of swans in that lake no doubt, but we could not see even a single lotus there! We saw several varieties of aquatic birds including swans, ducks, cranes, and wild geese swimming, or leisurely sitting on the bank of that part of the Manas we visited. Fishes also are plentiful in that lake and are of various species but hardly any big fish can be seen. The Tibetans and Bhotias consider the fishes washed ashore to be the holy Prasâda of that lake.

Next morning after leaving behind the Manas we began to proceed towards the west. Herds of big hares were seen running in great haste. After crossing an elevated uneven place we gradually climbed on a high ridge from where a full view of the majestic Kailas peak as also the huge blue waters of the two grand sister lakes with a big plateau separating them could be had. Under the canopy of the sunny blue sky stood the gorgeous silvery peak of the holy Kang Reinpche. It occurred to my mind that the cosmic body of the Lord of the universe was before me. The grand Kailas peak was the head of the Lord and the two vast lakes were His eyes glistening with tears of compassion. The great God was seated there in His own glory casting His merciful look upon the afflicted world. The distant horizon stood encircling this accumulated beauty. An overpowering solitude made the place more sublime. The celestial aura pinned me to that enchanted spot and it was with great difficulty that I could snatch myself away from that place.

We left that big gorge in the solemn hours of the next morning for Barbu—a place some fourteen miles off—as our destination for the day. Another day's march from Barbu would take us to Taklakot.

The following day we reached Taklakot and took shelter in our old place. Though still in Tibet yet after



BY THE SIDE OF MANAS SAROVAR

GURLA MANDHATA BEYOND MANAS SAROVAR

FOAMING KALI RIVER

coming to Taklakot everybody felt that some civilized part of the world had been reached. It was arranged that the following morning we would visit Simling Gumpha which we could not see during our onward journey.

SIMLING GUMPHA

The Gumpha which was the biggest in the whole of Western Tibet was beautifully situated on a hill-top some 800 ft. in height, just by the side of the Mandi or mart. A very steep ascent, something like climbing on a high wall, brought us near the stone-built huge entrance gate of the Gumpha where we were met by two Dabas (novitiates) of the monastery who led us inside. First we were taken into the main chapel where on an elevated altar, a big, lively, gilt statue of Lord Buddha in meditation posture was installed as the central figure. Butter lamps were burning in front. Many metal statues of Indian gods and goddesses were also beautifully placed on the altar. The

SNOWY PEAKS

temple itself served as the prayer-hall where the high priest gave daily sermon.

On one side of the temple were heaps of manuscripts. The guide monk said that all those were religious scriptures, the number of which was three thousand. Amongst those were the voluminous books—the famous Kangyur as the Tibetan scholars call them—the translation of Lord Buddha's actual teachings in 108 volumes and books on different schools of philosophy, as also grammar, poetry, astronomy, astrology, Tantras, sacred Mantras and translations of many Sanskrit books. We were told that the total number of Lamas and Dabas at the monastery was about two hundred and fifty.

In the whole of Western Tibet Taklakot is comparatively less cold. So during the winter months the number of the monastic inmates swells up to five hundred.

After taking leave of the Guru Lama we reached our place at half past ten. That very noon we left for Pala, a place situated almost at the foot of the snow-covered Lipu Lek Pass. The distance was only six miles. So by four o'clock we reached Pala and pitched up our tent near the two dharmsalas which were preoccupied by the Bhotias. Our next halting place was Kalapani from where Garbyang was reached next day.

Through the grace of the Almighty our pilgrimage ended happily. Now all the recollections of that pilgrimage have become my priceless possessions. Even to-day during the quiet moment of daily life when I meditate on those happy

KAILAS

golden days of the pilgrimage to Kailas the whole picture of the land of Shiva becomes a living presence to me in an instant and from the inmost core of the heart wells up the prayer:

O Lover of Solitude, my salutation
to Thee
Who art very near as well as far
off.
O Destroyer of the God of Love,
my salutation to Thee
Who art the smallest as also the
largest.
O Three-eyed One, my salutation
to Thee
Who art the oldest as well as the
youngest.
This salutation of mine is to Thee
Who art all, as also transcending all.

# SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

By Swami Pavitrananda

'Latu is the greatest miracle of Sri Ramakrishna,' Swami Vivekananda once said with reference to Swami Adbhutananda, 'having absolutely no education, he has attained to the highest wisdom simply at the touch of the Master.' Yes, Latu Maharaj, by which name Swami Adbhutananda was popularly known, was the peer of the Master in this respect that he was entirely innocent of the knowledge of the three R's. Nay, he even surpassed Sri Ramakrishna in this ignorance; for whereas the Master could somehow manage to read and write, with Latu Maharaj any reading or writing was out of the question. It is said that once Sri Ramakrishna attempted to teach young Latu how to read and write. But in spite of repeated attempts Latu pronounced the Bengali alphabet in such a distorted way that the Master out of sheer despair gave up the attempt to educate Latu. But it does not matter that Latu had no book-learning. Books supply us knowledge by proxy, as it were. Latu had direct access to the Fountain-head of knowledge. The result was that great scholars and philosophers would sit dumb at his feet to hear the words of wisdom that dropped from his lips. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that when a ray of light comes from the Great Source of all light, all book-learning loses its value. Sri Ramakrishna's own life bore testimony to this fact. And to some extent this could be witnessed even in the life of Swami Adbhutananda, his disciple.

SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

The early name of Swami Adbhutananda was Rakhturam. He was born of humble parents in a village in the district of Chapra in Bihar. His early life is shrouded in obscurity. It was very difficult to draw him out on that point. As a Sannyâsin he was discreetly silent on matters relating to his home and relations. If anybody would ask him any question about his early days he would sharply answer, 'Giving up all thought about God will you be busy about these trifles?' And then he would become so grave that the questioner would be awed into silence. Once a devotee expressed a desire to write a biography of Latu Maharaj. To this he raised objection saying: 'What is the use of writing my life? If you

want to write a biography, just write the biography of the Master and of Swami Vivekananda. That will be doing good to the world.' Thus his humility did not allow anybody to have access to his inner greatness nor did it let people know any incidents of his life which would otherwise have been of great interest and profit to the public.

From the meagre details that fell from the lips of Latu Maharaj in his unguarded moments it was known that his parents were very poor—so much so that they could hardly make both ends meet in spite of their constant hard labour. Scarcely was Rakhturam five years old, when he lost both his parents. His uncle then looked after him. As ill luck would have it, Rakhturam's uncle also had an unfortunate turn of circumstances and he had to leave his parental homestead and come to Calcutta for means of livelihood. The boy Rakhturam also accompanied him, and after a hard struggle for some days in Calcutta got employment as a house-boy in the house of Ramchandra Dutta, who was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna.

Sometimes out of evil cometh good. Dire poverty drove Rakhturam to Calcutta, but there he got shelter in the house of one who was afterwards instrumental in opening out a new world for him.

As a servant Rakhturam was hard-working and faithful, but he had a keen sense of self-respect even at that early age. Once a friend of Ramchandra gave the indication of a suspicion that Rakhturam might pocket some money from the amount given him for marketing. Young Rakhtu at once flared up and said in half Bengali and half Hindusthani words, 'Know for certain, sir, I am a servant but not a thief.' With such firmness and dignity did he utter these words that the man was at once silenced. But he could not tolerate this affront from a boy servant. He reported the matter to Ramchandra, who, however, supported Rakhturam rather than his friend—the boy servant had already won the confidence of the master so much! Unsophisticated as he was, Rakhturam was very plain-spoken, sometimes to the point of supposed rudeness. And he was no respecter of persons. As such, even the friends of Ramchandra had sometimes to fear Rakhturam. This characteristic, good or bad, could be seen in Latu Maharaj throughout his whole life.

Ramchandra being a devotee, in his house there was a religious atmosphere and religious discussions could be heard. This had a great influence on the mind of Rakhturam, especially at his impressionable age. Once Rakhturam heard Ramchandra saying: 'One who is sincere and earnest about God realizes Him as sure as anything,'—'One should go into solitude and pray and weep for Him, then and then only will He reveal Himself,' and such other things. These simple words impressed Rakhturam so much that throughout his whole life he remembered them, and often would he repeat them to others exactly as they were heard. From these words he found a clue as to how to build up his religious life, and they shaped his life. Sometimes Rakhturam could be seen lying down, covering himself with a blanket, his eyes moistened with tears which he was wiping with his left hand. The kind ladies of the house thought that the young boy was weeping for his uncle or village associations, and they would try to console him. Only the incidents of his after life indicated why Rakhturam was weeping at that time.

At Ramchandra's house Rakhturam heard of Sri Ramakrishna, and naturally

he felt eager to see him. And soon Rakhturam found an opportunity to go to Dakshineswar and meet the Master. At the very first meeting Sri Ramakrishna was greatly impressed with the spiritual potentiality of the boy, and Rakhturam felt immensely drawn to the Master even without knowing anything about his greatness. The pent up feelings of love of this orphan boy found here an outlet for expression, and he felt so very attached to Sri Ramakrishna that henceforward it was impossible for Rakhturam to do his allotted duties with as much vigour and attention as he used to do formerly. All at Ramchandra's house noticed in Rakhturam a kind of indifference to everything, but they loved him so much that they did not like to disturb him.

Shortly after Rakhturam's meeting with Sri Ramakrishna, the latter went to Kamarpukur and remained there for about eight months. Rakhturam felt a great void in his heart at this absence of one whom he loved so much. But he would still go to Dakshineswar now and then and pass some time there sad and morose. Those who knew him thought he had, perhaps, been reprimanded for some neglect of duty at the house of Ramchandra and had come to ease his mind. For how could they know the great anguish that made his heart heavy? Latu Maharaj afterwards said: 'You cannot conceive of the sufferings I had at that time. I would go to Sri Ramakrishna's room, wander in the garden, stroll hither and thither. But everything would seem insipid. I would weep alone to unburden my heart. It was only Ram Babu who could to some extent understand my feelings, and he gave me a photograph of the Master.'

When Sri Ramakrishna returned from his native village, Rakhturam acquired a new life, as it were, and he would lose no opportunity to go to Dakshineswar to meet the Master. Ramchandra would now and then send fruits and sweets to the Master through this boy servant of his, and Rakhturam welcomed and greatly longed for such occasions.

Gradually it became impossible for Rakhturam to continue his service. He was athirst to be with the Master as much as possible, and the moment he came away from Dakshineswar he felt his life miserable. He openly expressed his desire to give up his job and remain at Dakshineswar. The members of Ramchandra's family would poke fun at him by saying, 'Who will feed and clothe you at Dakshineswar?' But with the innocent boy that was not at all a serious problem. The only thing he wanted was to be with the Master at Dakshineswar.

At this time Sri Ramakrishna also felt the necessity of an attendant who could look after him. And when he proposed the name of Rakhturam to Ramchandra, the latter at once agreed to spare him. And thus Rakhturam got the long-wished-for opportunity of serving Sri Ramakrishna. As a mark of endearment Sri Ramakrishna would call Rakhturam 'Leto', 'Neto', or 'Latu'. Afterwards 'Latu' was the name which became current. Of all the monastic disciples Latu was the first to come to the Master.

Latu deemed it a rare privilege to be an attendant of one whom he loved so much, and he threw himself heart and soul into his new duties. How service to the Guru leads to God-realization is exemplified in the life of Latu Maharaj. He was to Sri Ramakrishna what Hanumân was to Sri Râmachandra. He did not care for anything in the world, his only concern in life was how to serve the Master faithfully. A mere wish of Sri Ramakrishna was more than

a law—a sacred injunction with Latu. Latu was once found sleeping in the evening. Perhaps he was over-tired by the day's work. Sri Ramakrishna mildly reproved Latu for sleeping at such an odd time, saying, 'If you sleep at such a time, when will you meditate?' That was all, and Latu gave up sleeping at night. For the rest of his life Latu would have a short nap in the day-time, and the whole night he would pass awake. He became the living illustration of the verse in the Gita—'What is night to the ordinary people is day to the Yogi.'

Unsophisticated as Latu was, he had this great advantage: he would spend all his energy in action and waste no time in vain discussions. Modern minds, the sad outcome of the education they receive, will doubt everything they hear, and therefore discuss, reason, examine to see if that be true or right. Thus so much energy is lost in arriving at the truth that nothing is left for action. It was just the opposite with Latu. As soon as he heard a word from the Master he rushed headlong to put it into action. Afterwards he would rebuke the devotees who would come to him for instruction by saying: 'You will simply talk and talk and do no work. What's the use of mere discussion?' Of course Latu was fortunate in having a Guru in whose words there was no room for any doubt or discussion and whom it was blessedness to obey, and the more implicit that obedience the greater the benefit that could be reaped. And Latu was a fit disciple to take the fullest advantage of this rare privilege.

When Latu came to Sri Ramakrishna he did not bother much about the spiritual greatness of the Master. He loved the Master, and so he longed to be with him. But the influence of such holy association was sure to have its effect. So there began to come a gradual transformation in the life of Latu. With reference to this the Master one day said to Latu that God was passing a camel through the eye of a needle. Thereby Latu understood, humility personified as he was, that unfit though he was God was moulding his life to make him a proper recipient of His grace.

Sri Ramakrishna gave him instructions in spiritual practices; and Latu with his tremendous faith in the words of the Master lost no time in putting them into practice. Many incidents are told of his power of deep meditation. One day Latu was meditating sitting on the bank of the Ganges. Then there came the flood-tide, and waters surrounded Latu. But he was unconscious of the external world. The news reached the Master, who at once came and brought back his consciousness by loudly calling him. Another day Latu went to meditate in one of the Shiva temples just after noon. But when it was almost evening, there was still no news of Latu. The Master was anxious about him and sent some one to search for him. It was found that Latu was deeply absorbed in meditation and his whole body was wet with perspiration. On hearing this Sri Ramakrishna came to the temple and began to fan him. After some time Latu returned to the plane of consciousness and felt greatly embarrassed at seeing the Master fanning him. Sri Ramakrishna, however, removed his embarrassment by his sweet and affectionate words.

At this time Latu was in high spiritual moods day and night. With reference to this, the Master himself once remarked, 'Latu will not come down, as it were, from his ecstatic condition.'

Latu loved Kirtan—congregational songs to the accompaniment of devotional dance. Even while at the house

of Ramchandra, if he would see a Kirtan pasty, he would run to join it, sometimes forgetful of his daily works. When Latu came to Dakshineswar he got greater opportunities to attend the Kirtan parties. On many occasions he would go into ecstasy while singing with them.

A straw best shows which way the wind blows. Sometimes insignificant incidents indicate the direction of the mind of a man. One day Latu, along with others, was playing at an indoor game called 'Golakdhâm'. 'Golaka' means heaven. The point aimed at by each player was that his 'piece' should reach 'Golaka'. In the course of the play, when the 'piece' of Latu reached the destination he was so beside himself with joy that one could see that he felt as if he had actually reached the salvation of life. Sri Ramakrishna was witnessing the game. When he saw the great ecstasy of Latu he is said to have remarked that Latu was so happy because in personal life he was so eager to attain liberation.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that frankness is a virtue which one gets as a result of hard Tapasyâ in many previous births; and having frankness one can expect to realize God very easily. Latu was so very frank that one would wonder at seeing such a childlike trait in him. He would unreservedly speak of his struggle with the flesh to the Master and receive instructions from him.

Once Sri Ramakrishna told Latu, 'Don't forget Him throughout the day or night.' And of all forms of spiritual practices it seems Latu laid the greatest stress on repeating the sacred Name. This also was his instruction to others who would come to him for guidance in later days. To a devotee who pathetically asked him, 'How can we have self-surrender to God whom we have never seen?'—Latu Maharaj said in his inimitable simple way: 'It does not matter if you do not know Him. You know His name. Just take His name, and you will progress spiritually. What do they do in an office? Without having seen or known the officer, one sends an application addressed to his name. Similarly send your application to God, and you will receive His grace.'

With all his spiritual longing, Latu's chief endeavour in life was to serve the Master. Once he said in reply to one who questioned him as to how the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna got time for worship when they were so much devoted to his service, 'Well, service to him was our greatest worship and meditation.'

Latu accompanied Sri Ramakrishna as a devoted attendant when he was removed to Shyampukur and thence to Cossipore and served him till the last moment. Latu was one of the chosen few to whom the Master gave the Geruya cloth as a symbol of Sannyâsa. Afterwards when the actual rite was performed and the family name had to be changed, Latu was named Swami Adbhutananda by the chief disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, perhaps, because the life of Latu Maharaj was so wonderful —Adbhut—in every respect. Latu Maharaj was one of the first three members of the Ramakrishna Math at Baranagore. It was they who first gave the start and others joined them to make the Brotherhood complete.

After the passing away of the Master, Latu Maharaj accompanied the Holy Mother to Brindavan and stayed there for a short period. His love and reverence for the Holy Mother was next to that for the Master, if not equal. The Holy Mother also looked upon him exactly as her own child. At Dakshineswar when she had had to pass

through hard days of work, Latu had been her devoted assistant. Brought up in a village atmosphere she was very shy and would not talk with anyone outside a limited group. But as Latu was very young and had a childlike attitude towards her, she was free with Latu. The depth of love and devotion of Latu Maharaj to the Holy Mother throughout his whole life was wonderful and beggars description.

(*To be concluded*)

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# END HUMAN MISERY

By Manu Subedar, B.A., B.Sc. (London), Barrister-at-Law, M.L.A. (Central)

The incapacity to react properly to events and incidents on the part of millions of men and women is at the root of all (or most) suffering in the world. We permit our anger to take us in language and imagination beyond what is reasonable and proper, or even possible. The Jew, who has been deprived of his all in Hitler's Germany, wishes and says that he wants the blood of Hitler. When I asked him whether Goebbels and Goering and others were also not guilty and would not continue the persecution of the Jews, he included them in the list of those on whom he would have his vengeance. When I said that the whole Nazi Party in Germany had the same feeling and would act in the same manner, the list of the intended victims of counter-persecution increased. When I pointed out that the bulk of the German population had indulged in Jew-baiting, some of them even without any profit or advantage to themselves, he indicated that the German people should be brought under Anglo-Saxon control and sternly put down. It was only when I asked him what about the women and children of the Nazis and of Germany, that he realized the *reductio ad absurdum* of the proposal for violent revenge against large communities.

I pointed out to him that if this was his programme, which he was unable to put into effect merely because he and his brother Jews had not the resources, he was no better than Hitler whom he was condemning. After the counter-persecution of the Jews had ended, the German children, if any were left, would harbour the desire for blood and revenge, and the chain of evil would continue.

## Break the Chain of Evil

It is necessary for the peace and progress of humanity that this chain of evil, this vicious circle, this link of revenge, should be broken. Sometimes it is in a visible form; sometimes its voices and echoes would be heard aloud everywhere in angry growls across the ocean. But whether it breaks out virulently in the form of a war (such as the one through which the world is now passing), or whether it remains dormant in the form of hatred on account of race or colour, dominating intolerance of one people over another, jingo exclusiveness aggressive and demonstrative sullenness of the oppressed, or bad manners and bluff of the oppressor, the interests of humanity demand that its seed should be uprooted and burnt. Force and violence are no solution for the lasting troubles

of the world, but are only a landmark in human march towards horror and brutalization. The so-called war to end war in 1914-18 failed to accomplish its purpose, but, on the contrary, led to preparations for an even more deadly struggle. The Nazi idea of a total war is a complete negation of all that human life and culture have stood for in the past, at least to the extent of giving lip-service to it, because, outside the Nazi world, there have been others, who have preached one thing and practised another thing.

### Human Obligations

The titanic struggle now going on in the world must raise the reflection in the mind of every right-thinking man, that something is wrong somewhere. It is not only necessary for a man to be a good son, a good brother, a good father, a good neighbour and a good citizen. World events are showing that every man must be something more than this—a good human being. To what limits of evil can an individual go in order to secure the good things of earth for himself, forgetful of what he is inflicting in the process on others? There will be cynics, who will say there is no limit. But every great moral teacher of mankind has taught not only restraint and tolerance, but definite obligation to others. Charity and sharing of the good things with others have been the tradition in every faith. The economic complications in the present-day life have rendered many of these virtues simple, copy-book maxims. When a man acts by himself towards another individual, he can see what he is doing. When a man acts as part of a system, he does not see what the system is doing to others, and in many cases he does not want to see, because the sight is unpleasant. It is necessary in modern life not merely to be loyal to the group to which one belongs, but to see that the group as a whole is not doing anything terrible (anything that one would not like to be done to oneself) to other human beings. Inside the country, the law intervenes, protecting children, women, workmen and employees, members of the public as users of the road, railway, inns, restaurants, and in various other capacities. In other words the State intervenes wherever there is a possibility that some one, on account of superior opportunity, or superior resources, is trying to take advantage of the weakness and the helplessness of some one else. Religion and ethics have been thus fortified by law, arising out of the enlightened conscience of the country as a whole. This is what is extolled as human civilization. And yet the same people, who support or even actively work for such legislative provisions, protecting the weak inside the country, are intolerant towards, and sometimes actively engage in measures and activities against other human beings outside their group, which has left frustration, misery, deprivation and, in the event of the war, untold horrors and miseries.

### Fear and Greed

The guiding principle for human beings is self-preservation and when this self-preservation is thought of collectively, many measures, which an individual would never take by himself, are adopted not with any reluctance, but with great enthusiasm. Men, who would not individually do any harm in their dealings with another human being, have been worked up under discipline to destroy recklessly the persons and property of those, whom they consider as their enemy. The origin of such enmity is partly fear, but largely greed. The outward

expression of this is the harbouring of a sense of injury with a view to taking revenge when the opportunity occurs. Months and years and decades are taken to prepare and, as the conflict is in the field of physical violence, history shows that the outcome has been intermittent, and that abundant seeds of further trouble are always left behind.

Politicians, though much reviled, are doing what they can, but they cannot, in the very nature of things, look beyond their nose or deal with issues further than the immediate. That is why there appears to be very little hope for the world in the direction indicated above, viz, the elimination of the seeds of the poisonous plant of violence and the breaking of the chain of revenge. Such a breach is possible only when not only the oppressor is removed, but all oppression is removed. If the link of evil is to be broken, somebody in the chain must turn round and approach the other side not with anger, but with love. The tolerance, which has been preached in the great religions of the world, is not tolerance towards evil. It is forgiveness of the past and sternness on oneself with a view to preventing an overwhelming feeling of anger and revenge. In every such quarrel the righteous man must condemn the wrongdoers on both sides and entertain sympathy and commiseration for the sufferings of the common man on both sides.

### Destroy the Seeds

He, who yields to the evil passions, is not necessarily brave. Nor is he, who manifests tolerance, necessarily weak. I invite every reader to try a personal experiment for himself, and for twenty-four hours suppress a feeling of annoyance, reproach, condemnation, and violence towards others and all ideas and schemes for achieving these results. He will find it very difficult. In a world in which incitement is the order of the day—incitement through propaganda and through prejudice, through words and through gestures, and in a million other ways between individuals and groups and nations, races and colours—he will find himself in cold isolation. Let him try to throw oil over troubled waters and he will find that both the combatants turn on him for attempting to show them the better method. But on refiection, it would be discovered that the easier is not the best method. What is fatally facile is a mark of corrosion of the human spirit. It undermines all that mankind has built up and claims as its high heritage of civilization. The major function of man is not to grab and, in the process of grabbing, destroy recklessly, because somebody more powerful is bound to come round and the erstwhile oppressor may be suppressed. It is when men forget their link with God, who has created all as equals, that they lay the foundation for trouble. The course of such troubles is sometimes dull like a river in summer-time, but sometimes it is stormy and rapid, devastating all in front of it, like the great rivers of the world when flooded by an unusual downpour. On the physical plane, men will learn river engineering in order to prevent disasters like those which have occurred hitherto. But on the moral plane, men do not wish to learn. Giving way to every feeling of annoyance and of intolerance, they are swept off their feet into a violent effort to bring about an immediate corrective. What results, however, is mighty disasters, in which most of them are destroyed. The destructions in the form of wars leave behind seeds that create

new Frankensteins, new illusions, and new excuses for a further series of aggression and violence. In other words, in a continuous chain of causation, of actions and reactions, the best human instincts are blunted and the best of human civilization is wrecked. The method of stopping these evils altogether by destroying their seeds, or of easing them and reducing their malevolence in the first instance, is what one has to seek and, having found it, it is the duty of every decent human being to get it accepted by sane people, if any are left in the world.

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# WHAT IS HINDUISM ?

By Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, M.A., D.Lit. (London)

The following five questions were addressed by a Muslim friend to Mr. Nirmal Chandra Chatterjee, M.A., B.L., Bar-at-Law, President of the Bengal Branch of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, and Mr. Chatterjee passed them on to me for my reply. Scholars know how difficult it is to define a religion like Hinduism which is as comprehensive as life itself, and I have tried to do it to the best of my light as a convinced believer in and follower of the Hindu way of thought and life. Criticisms and discussions are invited from persons who have thought over the matter, to enable us to arrive at a more satisfactory and all-inclusive description or definition of our religion.

*Question 1:* (a) *What is Hinduism ?* (b) *Are Hinduism and Hindu Religion identical ? If not, what are the differences ?*

*Answer:* (a) Hinduism is a religion without any formal or official creed. It is a federation of different kinds of religious experience, rather than a single type of religious experience excluding or denying all other types. It is the religion which naturally evolved on the soil of India among the Indian people (of diverse racial origin and originally with different cultural backgrounds and spiritual outlooks), some of the most characteristic features of which were discussed, described, and formulated or given a poetic expression to by Indian sages and thinkers, and saints and devotees—Rishis, Jinas, Buddhas, Âchâryas, Siddhas, and Bhaktas—from the days of the Vedas (and even earlier) downwards. A sympathetic understanding of the diverse forms of religion in its motives, ideals, and practices has always characterized these thinkers and saints. The following are some of its salient characteristics:

(i) It believes in, or seeks to establish by reason, an Ultimate Reality, which man (who in his essential being, which continues after death, is a part of this Reality) can attain through self-culture and knowledge and intuitive experience, or through Its own grace (the grace of God)—a Reality which both transcends life as we see it and is immanent in it.

(ii) It recognizes and seeks to remove the various kinds of misery that are in life.

(iii) It embraces life and the universe (which are unending throughout the Kalpas or aeons) in all aspects, and does not look upon man as something detached from the world of Nature to which he belongs. Man

and the universe are expressions of the same Divine Spirit (Paramâtman) or Energy (Shakti) or Order (Rita) working through them.

(iv) It does not pin itself down to the experiences and opinions of any single individual—Incarnation or prophet—although it reverences all. It recognizes that the Ultimate Reality manifests Itself in various forms, and that Truth is approachable by diverse paths, and as such does not insist upon or inculcate a particular creed which must be accepted by all and sundry. It believes that man can attain to the *summum bonum* in life through the best that is available in his environment followed in a spirit of sincerity and charity.

Some doctrines like Karma or man's action determining his fate, and Samsâra or transmigration, are almost universally believed in by Hindus (including Brahmanists, Buddhists, Jainas, and others), but it is not required of everybody to subscribe to these as a compulsory creed.

(b) If the word 'religion' is taken in its original sense in Latin (from Latin *relegere* 'to collect, to ponder over, to give heed to, to observe, to care'), viz, 'pondering over (the mystery of being, of the Divinity that is behind life)', then Hinduism (i.e., the Hindu way of thinking) and Hindu religion are identical. The question can be better answered in the Hindu way. Religion covers (i) thought or philosophy, and (ii) life. The second is based on the first, especially when we act consciously; as one thinks about life seen and life unseen, so one acts. The practical aspect of Hinduism we often popularly call Dharma, which means 'that which holds', i.e., the way or rule of life. Dharma, or religion in practice, is (i) Nitya-dharma, the eternal laws of morality which must be followed by all (e.g., truth, non-stealing, non-injury), as well as (ii) Laukika-dharma, the secondary rules of life, which differ with different ages, lands, and peoples (e.g., performing certain ceremonies, fasting, avoiding certain foods, etc.). Hindu Darshana ('sight' or 'insight', i.e., philosophy) and Hindu Dharma ('the holding one', Hindu usage, religious and social life, custom) are the two aspects, the obverse and reverse, of Hinduism. Ahimsâ or non-injury to all life, Karunâ or loving-kindness, and Maitri or active good-doing are among the highest duties, the highest Dharmas, of man. Socially man has a threefold debt—Rina—to pay: Deva-rina or debt to God by worship and by service, Pitri-rina or debt to the forefathers by marrying and having a family, and Rishi-rina or debt to the sages by study and dissemination of knowledge. Detachment from the world and from the concerns and affairs of the world, and a spirit of renunciation (Vairâgya, and Tyâga), are looked upon as inevitable corollaries to an all-absorbing desire for attaining to the Ultimate Reality which is freedom or salvation (Moksha) for man from all sorrow and suffering. Dharma or the good or virtuous life, Artha and Kâma or the good things of life and joy and happiness acquired through Dharma, and Moksha or liberation from the bondage of life—this is the fourfold aim in the life of man.

*Question 2: What are the books or scriptures that contain the definition of Hindu religion?*

*Answer:* As said before, Hinduism does not adopt a single form of religious experience as the sole or the only true one. Consequently, books giving the experiences or opinions of different men cannot singly give the whole truth, the entire range of thought that Hinduism enfolds. The Vedas (includ-

ing the Upanishads), the *Râmâyana* and the *Mahâbhârata* (the latter including the Bhagavad Gita), the Purânas, and the Smritis, and other works, contain and explain the main ideas relating to thought and life in Hinduism; and there are the various philosophical treatises, texts and commentaries, and devotional hymns and discourses by medieval and modern saints, which give the different types of religious thought and experience which are found in Hinduism.

For those who want to study one or more 'scriptures' to form some idea of Hinduism, I would suggest the following:

(i) The thirteen principal Upanishads (particularly the *Isha*, the *Kena*, the *Katha*, the *Mundaka*, and the *Shvetâshvatara*).

(ii) The Bhagavad Gita (supremely important for Hinduism).

(iii) The *Shraddhotpâda-Shâstra*, a work on the Mahâyâna form of Buddhism, by Ashva-ghosha, found only in Chinese (and English) translation, the original Sanskrit being lost. (Buddhism is but one of the forms of Hinduism—'the export form of Hinduism' as it has been called by an eminent authority on Hinduism and Buddhism).

Among modern works, the following may be recommended:

(i) Works on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.

(ii) The writings of Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita.

(iii) Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan's *Indian Philosophy* (2 vols.) and *Hindu View of Life*.

(iv) *Sanâtana Dharma: an Advanced Text-book of Hindu Religion and Ethics*. Published in 1904 (2nd edition) by the Board of Trustees, Central Hindu College, Benares.

(v) Sir Charles Eliot's *Hinduism and Buddhism*, 3 vols.

(vi) J. Estlin Carpenter's *Theism in Medieval India*.

(vii) Rabindranath Tagore's *Sâdhanâ*.

(viii) Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy's *Dance of Siva*.

(ix) *The Cultural Heritage of India* (3 vols.), the Ramakrishna Mission, Belur, Bengal.

*Question 3: Can a man with all the beliefs and practices enjoined in the Koran or the Bible or in the Panchashila of Buddhism be recognized a Hindu if he so desires?*

*Answer:* Certainly, provided he does not flout as false or erroneous and sinful the considered opinions of Hindu philosophy (e.g., the idea that the One Ultimate Reality manifests Itself as many, and that worship through images is not only *not a sin* but is a stage in our progress Godwards which is necessary for many people), does not so long as he is living among Hindus go counter to long-established Hindu notions of propriety and good form (e.g., in the matter of eating beef), and does not seek to make converts to his own ideas of religion by force or fraud.

*Question 4: What are the qualifications that a human being born anywhere on earth should possess in order to be known as a Hindu?*

*Answer:* Hinduism does not seek to lick into a standardized type with the 'Hindu' name all the various manifestations of the human mind and of humanity: it recognizes diversity on the basis of unity, and seeks no imperialism on the spiritual plane. Any natural religion, which is not intolerant of other religions, thinking itself to be the specially favoured path of God before which the rest must yield (e.g., the ancient religions of Babylon, Egypt,

Greece, Italy, the Teutonic, Celtic, and Slav worlds; Mazdaism; the religion of China; the Shinto of Japan; the religions of Africa, of Oceania, of Pre-Columbian America), is in harmony with Hinduism, the natural religion as it evolved in India. But if any individual feels specially attracted to Hinduism, and wishes to call himself or herself a Hindu, he or she can only be expected to possess the following qualifications :

(i) He or she must have a broad charity and fellow-feeling for all religions, and must accept the position that all religious experiences are true and are inevitable in relation to their land, age, and race, and that it is a sin to seek to destroy a religion or cult so long as it does not infringe upon the rights of others. If he or she does not believe in the possibility of a fusion or synthesis of the various types of religious experience, there must be at least the convinced support for a federation of different kinds of religious culture rather than for their suppression by a single type.

(ii) He or she must have a knowledge of one or more of the special forms of religious experience which developed in Hinduism, and an intelligent appreciation of these. He or she may affiliate himself or herself formally to any particular type of these religious experiences, according to his or her spiritual needs or tastes.

(iii) While following scrupulously the Nitya-dharma, mentioned in answer to question 1(b), he or she is expected, so long as there is the desire to be known as a Hindu (and particularly when he or she is living among Hindus), to conform to the more important Laukika-dharmas of the Hindu people.

As in its local, temporal, and racial aspects Hinduism is an expression of the culture of the people of India, it can only be expected that a non-Indian who seeks to live in India as a Hindu will identify himself with the well-being of the people of India, within legitimate bounds, i.e., without trespassing upon the rights of other peoples. For one who accepts Hindu philosophy and religion and lives outside Hindu lands, there will be no citizen's obligations to India and no need to adhere to the Laukika-dharma of Hindudom in India.

*Question 5: What are the beliefs and practices that disqualify a man from being called or known as a Hindu ?*

*Answer:* See answer to question 3.

Absence of a spirit of reverence for Hindu thought (as in the Hindu scriptures) and for the Hindu way of life is an essential disqualification.

(i) If a person believes that God's truth is denied to people outside of a particular religion and that those (including Hindus) who do not belong to that religion or will not accept it are damned in the sight of God, he or she cannot be known as a Hindu.

(ii) If a person believes that those who entertain a belief or follow a practice or ritual held to be repugnant or sinful by his or her own religion, are sinning in the sight of God even if such a belief, practice, or ritual does not infringe upon the religious or civil rights of others (e.g., worshipping through symbols or images, as in the case of Hindus including Buddhists, and Roman Catholic Christians), he or she cannot be known as a Hindu.

(iii) If a person lives among Hindus and does not follow the well-established Hindu notions of propriety and right living subscribed to by the general Hindu public opinion (e.g., in the matter of marriage and divorce or the absence of it, in avoiding

certain foods, in following certain feasts and festivals, etc.), i.e., if there is no conformity to Hindu usage in the matter of Hindu Laukika-dharma (in addition to following entirely Nitya-dharma), while living among Hindus, he or she cannot be known as a Hindu.

In the case of an Indian person, particularly when living in India, if he or she does not have the conviction of being an Indian first and something else afterwards, one whose natural background is the life and culture of India of which Hinduism is an integral part, he or she cannot be a Hindu.

In conclusion, it is with the greatest pleasure I quote the following: 'In my opinion the best ideal will be to seek unity in the midst of diversity, and to recognize that diversity of religious thought is bound to remain. There is a passage in the Holy Koran which says that God could have so moulded humanity as to have only one religion, but He preferred to test mankind, to see how they use their gifts of understanding and discernment. It appears that this diversity of thought is a part of the scheme of things and is quite in keeping with the scheme of Nature in other directions. The trees, the flowers, and the fruits are a significant illustration of Nature's love of variety, with their different colours and flavours and perfumes. Let us recognize that all religions have a right to exist. With this broad basis of fellowship let us study them and respect them. This is what the Sufis and mystics of India, who based their spiritual conquests on sympathy and love, did in the past, and this is the spirit in which India may find the best solution of its cultural problem in the future.' (*The Cultural Problem*: Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs, No. I, pp. 24-25).

These sentiments have been expressed by a distinguished Indian Muslim statesman, Sir Abdul Qadir, formerly Adviser to the Secretary of State for India, now Chief Justice of Bahawalpur State. Similar broad and charitable views have been expressed in his interpretation of Islam by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Râshtra-pati or President of the Indian National Congress, who in his person inherits the best traditions, spiritual and cultural, of India—particularly Islamic India—and of Arabia, by his insistence on the fundamentals of religion, relegating the proper secondary position to the accidentals—these fundamentals being Faith in God and doing good—the fundamentals, in fact, of all natural religions; and it seems that the best thought in all religions can be in harmony with them. All the sorrows and sufferings of Mother India will be over when we Indians, particularly the Muslims amongst us, follow the lead of men like Abdul Qadir and Abul Kalam Azad, whose views will give them an honoured place in a brotherhood which is wider and higher than any brotherhood of an exclusive sectarian religion or organization, viz, the brotherhood of man,—and not of men like the late Sir Muhammad Iqbal when he wrote his Urdu poems *Shikwah* and *Jawâb-i-Shikwah* in the spirit of a militant, intolerant, and all-exclusive Islam which failed to recognize that God did not have a favourite people or religion and was not the exclusive property of a particular group of men but belonged to the whole of humanity as a Just and Impartial Creator, Sustainer, and Taskmaster, who fulfilled Himself in many ways and not in a single one only.

# THE 'HINDUISM' OF THE KERALA CHRISTIANS

By Prof. P. J. Thomas, M.A., D.Phil. (Oxon), M.L.C.

The well-known community of Christians inhabiting the States of Travancore and Cochin and further north the Malabar Coast, often called 'Syrian Christians' (because they use Syriac language for their worship), are mostly descendants of caste Hindus converted by one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, St. Thomas, who is believed to have come to Kerala by sea in 52 A.D. and to have died in Mylapore (Madras) in about 68 A.D. after preaching the gospel all over S. India and, perhaps, beyond. Cranganore, where he landed, was then the greatest port of India. It was also called 'Muchiri'; hence the Greek name 'Muziris'. It was the capital of the powerful Chera kings who ruled over all Kerala and some tracts beyond the Ghats. In the surrounding country then lived and still live the great majority of the Nambudiri brahmins, a class of Vedic brahmins noted for their gentle bearing and unostentatious learning. The Christian tradition is that about sixty-four of these Nambudiri families were received into Christianity by St. Thomas and that there were among them some families of Addhya (Arya?) brahmins of high status. This tradition is supported by various evidences; nor has it been challenged by the Nambudiris themselves. At any rate, it is certain that the first converts to Christianity were men of high social position. According to some accounts, even a Chera king (Palli Banavar) accepted Christianity, but seems to have given up his throne on doing so. At a later stage (*Circa* 345 A.D. and 825 A.D.) Christian traders from Mesopotamia and Persia are said to have colonized in Malabar, and some of them must have got mixed up with the Hindu converts. This did not make much difference, because the foreigners were few, and they readily conformed to local customs, as did the Sakas and Gujars who settled in N. India later and got absorbed in Hinduism. As is well known, Hinduism has a unique genius for absorbing alien peoples and even alien customs, almost unperceived. The colonists thus soon became more Indian than even the indigenous folk!

The notable feature about the Syrian Christians (who now number over a million, and stand high in economic and educational status) is that they have been socially united with their Hindu neighbours. Whether in physical features, dress, or social customs, there was for long little difference between them and caste Hindus. The Christians observed nearly all the social customs and caste practices of the Hindus, and mingled with them in national and even temple festivals. In fact they obtained a social status in Kerala which was not below that of the caste Hindus. They were patronized by many kings of Kerala and dwelling places were made for them in the vicinity of royal palaces. In many an old metropolis of Kerala, the church even to-day stands in close proximity to the royal palace and temple, and was generally built on ground presented free of tax for all time and, perhaps, with funds granted by the ruler. Offerings were often made by leading Hindus to those churches. In this way, the planting of Christian communities in many places was due to the special patronage of some Hindu prince

or chieftain. That the concord existing between Hindus and Christians was not confined to social relations but to religious life will be evident from many facts. Christians formerly took part in temple festivals and got in turn similar co-operation from Hindus at their own church festivals. Syrian churches till lately needed nearly the same paraphernalia for their festivals as Hindu temples; and such articles (State umbrellas, ornamental torches, *Kadina*, *Venchâmara*, etc.) were mutually lent between temples and churches. There has also been a long-established custom, in one place at least, of a temple lending its elephants for procession in the neighbouring Christian church. In fact, in former days there was much in common between temple and church in architecture and external appearance. Churches had also large landed properties and were administered in about the same manner as Hindu Devasthânas. It is no wonder, as Rajasabhabhushana K. Chandy states in an article in *Social Welfare* (August 1942), that in popular belief the temple god and the saint in whose name the church was dedicated were associated together and that certain Christian families received Prasâdam from temples. It is said that one of the twelve trustees of a certain temple formerly was a Christian. Even to-day, members of certain ancient families continue to visit temples. In these circumstances, is it any wonder if intimate co-operation went on between the followers of the two religions? Christians, although professing a non-Vedic religion, were not regarded as Mlechchas; on the other hand, various time-honoured practices indicate that they were regarded in a quite different way. A curious custom which has survived till this day is that ghee made impure by contact with Hindu untouchables was taken to a Christian so that by his touch it might be made pure again. There is also an old proverb to the effect that the Nazrani (Syrian Christian) should not be regarded as impure. All these indicate a state of great concord between the followers of the two religions, at a time when Manu's law was predominant.

What was the cause of such remarkable amity between these Christians and their Hindu neighbours? This was partly due to their ethnical and social affinity. It was due also to the fact that the Christians were fulfilling an important economic function and were enjoying a high economic status. In Hindu society, the three high castes—brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaishya—predominated. In Kerala, the Nambudiri was the brahmin and the Nairs fulfilled the function of the Kshatriya; but there was no class to fulfil the function of the Vaishyas, who were economically the most important. Syrian Christians apparently stepped in to discharge the Vaishya functions—namely, trade and money dealings. Perhaps the older priestly families considered such work *infra dig;* but the rank and file found in this their opportunity. Help in this regard must have been received by their contact with Syrian colonists who were traders by profession. For many centuries, these people controlled the lucrative trade in the pepper of the Malabar Coast. They had ships and carried on trade with Arabia, Persia, and Abyssinia in the west, and with Burma and Malacca in the east. This brought the Christians wealth and influence. They also carried on the internal trade and collected the king's customs. The rulers, therefore, found it advantageous to confer their patronage in a special manner on these Christians. There are still preserved two copper plate grants, both ostensibly

from Chera kings of early centuries, in which valuable privileges were conferred on the Christians of Cranganore and Quilon respectively. These privileges (traditionally seventy-two in number) include the use of decked elephants, State umbrellas, etc., at church festivals and marriages, the privilege of constructing stylish houses, and the right to service from certain Hindu functionaries. This last-named privilege is said to have extended over seventeen of the Hindu artisan and other classes (not untouchables), and there are still vestiges of this in many areas. All this, perhaps, means little now; but they meant a great deal of social prestige in those days when all social relations and ceremonial precedence were decided by long-established custom, and any unauthorized change would be visited with severe punishment from the ruling powers.

While it is true that the economic prosperity of the Christians was the basis of their high social status, it must be admitted that the social unity between the Hindu masses and Christians was also largely due to the fact that the latter also conformed to the same mode of life and observed the same taboos in regard to food and drink as their Hindu neighbours. It is said that the Chera king, Palli Banavar, after accepting Christianity, as said above, retired to the precincts of an out-of-the-way temple and died there performing Tapas; the god he worshipped is still shown; it is a bearded Vishnu (?). Or was it an Indian image of Christ? A small bronze statue of the king is still found there; it has a cross and Rudrâkshamâlâ hanging around the neck. This symbolizes the early Christianity of Kerala; it was clearly a Hinduized Christianity, and must have then appeared to the average Hindu somewhat like a Darshana of Hinduism, and, therefore, did not appear as an alien religion. As among brahmins, priesthood became hereditary in one or two of the Addhya brahmin families converted by St. Thomas. As high priests (bishops) did not marry, a nephew was selected to succeed.

Many of the Christian families were strict vegetarians formerly; and even those who ate meat strictly avoided beef. That was also the custom of most of the caste Hindus, i.e., Nairs; and only the Nambudiri brahmins were strict vegetarians. It is true that Hinduism is the most tolerant of religions, but it must be conceded that the Hindu social system was for long the most intolerant. While the orthodox Hindu tolerated all forms of religious belief and practice, he denied social contact to those who ate things considered impure. Beef was the principal of these taboos. Hence the great barrier between caste Hindus and untouchables, between Hindus and Muslims.

Not only did the Christians of Kerala observe the taboos in regard to food; they also strictly conformed to nearly all the social customs of Kerala. At birth, marriage, and death, they observed the same customs as caste Hindus; even now the Pula (or pollution) connected with death is observed and Shrâddhas are performed among the orthodox families. Like the caste Hindus, they kept the untouchables away from them and performed ablutions when they or their kitchens were polluted. So fastidious were they in these matters that their priests are said to have refused to eat with dignified Portuguese ecclesiastics when they first came in the sixteenth century. According to the decrees of the Synod of Diamper (1599), many Christians of the time had to perform purification ceremonies if their kitchens were polluted

by the touch of Shudras. The custom of consulting astrologers was also common. The Synod of 1599, under the lead of the Portuguese archbishop, censured such definitely Hindu customs, and forbade many of them under severe penalties; but they continued to prevail in several parts of the country till quite recent times.

After further contact with European missionaries, especially after the introduction of Western education, many of these customs and taboos have disappeared or have become less common; and more freedom in regard to food and drink has come to prevail. This has weakened the social concord that formerly existed between caste Hindus and Christians, and in certain areas the social status for long enjoyed by Christians disappeared in course of time. While formerly churches were built in close proximity to temples, to-day they must be built as far away from temples as possible. The old co-operation in regard to festivals has also diminished or disappeared. Formerly Christians did not carry on conversion work as a rule; at any rate, conversion from lower castes was rare. But with the spread of European mission work the position changed and the influx of the lower social strata into Christianity led to a lowering of the general social status of all Christians vis-a-vis the Hindus. It is true that the Syrians did not intermarry or even interdine with the new converts; separate places were built for their worship. Yet various factors have worked for broadening the barrier between Christians and caste Hindus. However, in the towns these barriers are breaking down under the influence of modern ideas.

In spite of recent changes, Syrian Christians are still Hindus in social outlook, and most of them treat the backward classes much in the same way as caste Hindus. They still have a veneration for the Sanskrit language and the Hindu epics which their ancestors studied and treasured. Among Catholic Syrians (who are well over half the total number of Syrian Christians) and to some extent among the Jacobite Syrians (who form the next numerically large group) many old Hindu practices still prevail. In many places, the maintenance of such practices is essential if Syrians must obtain the traditional services from the Hindu functionaries of the village. Is it any wonder if the more orthodox among the Syrians frowned at the missionaries when the untouchables were brought into the faith, and gave support to caste Hindus in their exclusion of untouchables from temples? But the number of such Christian Sanâtanists has fallen considerably and that tribe is bound to be soon extinct, if not already so.

Thus we see that the concord between Christians and Hindus in Kerala has been due largely to the Christians keeping up a great part of the social heritage of the Hindu ancestors. Was this in keeping with Christian principles? On this a fundamental difference of opinion has for long existed. Even in the Catholic Church, opinion is divided on the point. Many still support the view of the French missioner, de Nobili, who allowed his brahmin converts to remain separate with all their caste practices, but a large number now considers that such practices compromise Christian principles. There is no doubt that some aspects of the Indian caste system are incompatible with the brotherhood of man which is the corner-stone of Christianity. At any rate it is certain that concord between caste Hindus and Christians on the old basis—i.e., observance of caste and exclusion of untouchables from social contact—cannot con-

tinue any longer. Fortunately, as the best minds in Hinduism are equally opposed to untouchability and caste exclusiveness, social concord may now be re-established on a new basis. The temple-entry proclamation of H. H. the Maharaja of Travancore has given a noble lead in this matter, and if economic justice will also be meted out to the backward classes, Hindu society will soon be rid of a fell canker which has been corrupting it for ages. The danger ahead lies not in the religious nor in the social sphere, but in the political. This must be averted by divorcing religion from politics, by making it possible for people of all religions to live amicably. China has shown a notable example in this matter, but if India is to follow this example, a fundamental change is called for in the outlook of both Hindus and Muslims, and, perhaps, some modifications will be required in laws and customs. The problem as regards Hindus and Christians is really much simpler, especially in Kerala; but political forces are now tending to make it less simple in some parts of Kerala. However, with sensible lead in both communities, the differences can be settled amicably, and a new concord may be established on a more permanent basis. This is an end well worth striving for.

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# MAYA IN MODERN SCIENCE

By Swami Sharvananda

Of all ancient philosophical theories no one has been so much misunderstood and criticized from different quarters as the famous Mâyâ theory of Shankara Vedanta. Yet the mystery of it is that it has survived the buffets of criticism all these years extending through nearly thirteen centuries. On one side there had been eminent critics of this theory both among men of speculative philosophy and men of practical religion, whose scathing criticism tried to destroy it at its very root; on the other hand we notice equally eminent and brilliant thinkers and profound mystics supporting and substantiating it both by reason and experience. And so, no wonder, that of all the philosophical thinkings of India, the Maya theory of Shankaracharya alone has deeply attracted the attention of all the students of Indian philosophy. Shankaracharya himself does not claim to be the originator of the Maya theory, on the other hand, he avows that it is based on the Nirvishesha-advaita-brahma-vâda of the Upanishads. It is acknowledged by all unbiased students of the Upanishads, that the general trend of the Upanishadic philosophy is non-dualistic of the absolute type. And if an absolute non-qualified Intelligence (Nirvishesha-brahman) is accepted as the ground (Adhishthâna) of this phenomenal universe, then no other philosophical theory except the Maya-vada of Shankaracharya, can be rationally adequate to explain the apparent contradiction which pervades the whole of our experiences of the phenomenal world.

It is sometimes wrongly interpreted that the Maya theory means *total unreality* of the phenomenal world: we can understand that such notions are easily formed on a superficial reading of some of the Vedantic dicta like, 'Brahma satyam, jaganmithyâ, jiva brahmaiva

nâparah,—Brahman is the real, the phenomenal universe is unreal, the individual soul is verily Brahman and not different from It.' Shankara also uses the word Mithyâ for the Adhyâsa of the phenomenal world in his *Vedanta Bhâshya*. But a little first-hand study of the literature of Shankara Vedanta would convince us in what sense the word Mithya or unreal has been used. As Vachaspati Mishra tells us in his famous *Bhâmati* annotation on the Shankara Bhashya of the Vedanta Sutra, that Mithya or unreal has two meanings, one is Apahnava, i.e., negation and the other is Anirvachaniya, i.e., inexplicable or undefinable. And when the Vedantin says that this world is unreal, he means it not in the first sense, but only in the second. Madhusudana Saraswati in his *Advaita Siddhi* affirms the same view that Mithya means Anirvachaniya. Then, again, Padmapadacharya, the famous disciple of Shankara, in his commentary *Panchapâdikâ*, explains the true import of the epithet Anirvachaniya thus: 'Sadasadbhyâm anirvachaniyam,' i.e., what is different from both (absolute) Being and (absolute) non-being, is Anirvachaniya. If there be an entity which can neither be affirmed as absolute Being, nor as absolute non-being, then it is certainly an undefinable, inexplicable something. And the phenomenal universe of our everyday experience, as we shall see later on, *is* such an entity. So when the Advaitins say that this world is Maya and unreal, they mean, strictly speaking, that it is neither real, nor unreal, in the absolute sense, like a chimera or a hobgoblin; it is something inexplicable. It may not be unreal but it is certainly non-real. Sri Swami Vivekanandaji has beautifully elucidated this point in his lecture on *Maya and Illusion*. He says, 'But the Maya of the Vedanta in its last developed form, is neither Idealism, nor Realism, nor is it a *theory*. It is a simple statement of facts—what we are and what we see around us.' Further on he explains himself: 'This world has no existence. What is meant by that? It means that it has no absolute existence. It exists only in relation to my mind, to your mind, and to the mind of everyone else. We see this world with our five senses, but if we had another sense, we would see in it something more. If we had yet another sense, it would appear as something still different. It has, therefore, no real existence; it has no unchangeable, immovable, infinite existence. Nor can it be called non-existence: We see it exists, and we have to work in and through it. It is a mixture of existence and non-existence!' 'Our whole life is a mixture of this contradiction of existence and non-existence.' Indeed this contradiction exists not only in our experiences and knowledge, but also in our practical life. Sri Swamiji has expatiated on this point in his own inimitable style in the aforesaid lecture on *Maya and Illusion*. I do not mean here to enter into the dialectic of the Maya theory, for that I refer our readers to *Advaitasiddhi* and *Chitsukhi*, the two monumental works on Advaita polemics. We shall try to show simply that Maya not only pervades our experiences, but has entered into the domain of certain positive sciences of to-day.

Beginning from the early dawn up till late at night, the whole of our daily life is regulated by time according to our clock which again has been standardized with reference to the sunrise or the sunset. Now, this conception of time according to clock is as fictitious as the sunrise or the sunset itself. In short, it has no absolute value but is only relative, i.e., it is

true only so long as we are in a particular position on earth. But what is the feeling in our own mind?—that the time by our clock is an absolute verity, and we stand to lose a lot if we disregard it to be so. Yet, is it not of the same type of reality as the phenomenon of dream? While dreaming, every bit of the phenomenon also appears to be perfectly real! In both the cases, change the position or state, the experience also changes! Then again, when we try to lift our mind from our terrestrial time to the sidereal time of the astronomer, we come to a different temporal universe altogether. Our whole conception of time assumes a different form: the mathematical figures that our astronomy presents us in calculating the date of the birth of our galactic system and its evolution into stars and planets, are indeed so vast that before their immensity thought collapses. And ultimately we are forced to acknowledge with modern physics that cosmic time is but an abstract conception! I am not referring here to the metaphysical view of Kant, that time is but an *a priori* form of knowledge, I mean the ultimate verdict that a modern material science like physics is forced to deliver upon our notion of time.

There is still a stranger story to tell about time. We all feel that the past is all dead past. We cannot go back to the days of Akbar or Charlemagne however we may try. But modern physics tells us, 'No, it is quite possible to do so.' Time which is only one of the four dimensions of the continuum, is as much determined as the other three of the space, and in that capacity it is never *really* divided into two divisions, the past and the future by a definite 'now'. Our feeling about division of time, that it is divided into three parts as past, future, and the 'spacious present', is wholly fictitious and relative. And, therefore, it is quite possible for us to travel back to the days of Akbar, to the sixteenth century, as we are travelling forward towards some futurity, say the twenty-second century. Theoretically it is not impossible. Do we require any further proof about the Mâyic nature of time? Indeed the English absolutist Bradley has truly said, 'Time is not real as such, and it proclaims its unreality by its inconsistent attempt to be an adjective of the timeless.' (*Appearance and Reality*). The greatest of modern scientists, Einstein, also asserts that 'all time is local', and, therefore, relative. There is no such thing as absolute cosmic time.

What is true of time is equally true of space. In our practical life space plays, perhaps, a more important part than even time. If we are to travel by foot from one place to another and if we be infirm and old, the distance appears to be the most stern reality of realities. The last mile often appears to be the longest mile! Suppose we are in India and here we measure our distance by miles, and miles by yards and feet. And every bit of these units of measurement appears to be true and real to all of us; we make use of them constantly in our practical life. Next, suppose we travel towards the north pole and there we measure the distances we cover by our same unit of measurement, the foot-rule or yard-pole, and be satisfied that we have gone through the same distances, as we do in India. But our physicist tells us, 'No, absolutely speaking you have not travelled the same distance in the north pole, as you do in India, according to your yard-pole. You do not know that your yard-pole itself has undergone a contraction when it is

taken to the north pole, due to the attraction of gravity. So a mile in India is not exactly the same as a mile in the north pole; according to the measurement by the same yard-pole, the latter is a bit less than the former. Hence it is plain that we only deal with relative values of space, while all the time we feel that we are dealing with the absolutely real space.

Next, when we lift our mind from the terrestrial space to that of the stellar universe and try to visualize the immensity of space by the astronomical computation of millions of light-years, our brain gets dizzy, and we feel ourselves wafted on the wings of imagination into the region of mere abstraction. From astronomy when we go to physics to study the nature of space in minutia, we find ourselves in a greater bewilderment, so much so that we have no choice left but to admit that the whole conception of space is as much a *concept* as time. Nay, modern physics tells us unequivocally that time and space are not two different entities outside us in which all things exist, but they are the two aspects of one entity, or call it a matrix, the time-space-continuum, in which our experiences of the phenomenal universe occur. But our actual feeling is just the opposite of it. Further, when we see a distant object, say the sun, we feel and say that it is so many millions of miles distant from us; and the light comes travelling through all this distance of fixed space, even as we travel from one place to another or as a wave in water travels from one point to another, only with this difference that light travels at the incredible speed of 186,000 miles a second. But Einstein tells us that, it is not light that is travelling through a fixed space, as we imagine, but the series of events called the light of the sun come to us through the *warping* of space. There is no such thing as a fixed space as the ancient Euclidean supposed it to exist and as we all also feel it existing about us. Space is as much bending and warping as is time. I own, it is impossible for an ordinary mind to form an adequate mental picture of this warping of space, although it is the only ultimate finding about the space of the mathematical physics of to-day.

In our minds we all feel that time is flowing on from moment to moment, and the space is an eternally fixed frame in which all things exist and all events occur from eternity to eternity. But when we try to probe into the nature of space, both through the study of the minutia as well as of the astronomical universe, a different story is revealed to us. We feel, even as Euclid and Newton felt, that all things exist by virtue of space; but Einstein avows that space exists by virtue of objects perceived. The eminent English astronomer and scientist Sir James Jeans tells us that when certain experiments of modern physics are rightly interpreted in the new light of the Theory of Relativity, 'we find that space means nothing apart from *our* perception of objects, and time means nothing apart from *our* experience of events. Space begins to appear merely as a *fiction* created by our own minds, an illegitimate extension to Nature of a subjective concept which helps us to understand and describe the arrangement of objects as seen by us, while time appears as a second fiction serving a similar purpose for the arrangement of events which happen to us.'[1] (The italics are ours). So should we not say that both time and space are but Maya in modern physics?

[1] *The New Background of Science.*

Next, when we turn our attention from time and space to its content matter, and pursue the path of analysis that modern physics has taken, we are bewildered still more by the presence of Maya even there. We all feel in our daily experiences that the objects of our perception exist actually out there in the external world exactly as we perceive them. A chair *is* a chair, a table *is* a table, and exists by its own right whether we see it or not. And this feeling of ours is doubly assured by similar perceptions of our other fellow beings, and also by the success we attain in our dealing with them in our practical life by taking them as really existing. So roughly speaking, a table *is* a reality to all intents and purposes; its being appears to be absolute. The nineteenth-century physics and chemistry ended their analysis of matter by asserting that the ultimate components of this material world are about eighty-seven elements, each atom of which is made up of two sorts of electric charges, electrons and protons, which behave more or less like corpuscles of energy. The electrons move about the protons, as planets do about the sun. Now, if I try to visualize the reality of the table on which I am writing, first in the light of chemistry and then of physics, I notice first the table vision disappears and in its stead appears a large concourse of gross molecules of carbon compound,—all in motion with great speed, yet all are held in a system by some unseen force of attraction.

When I pursue my analytic vision still further I find, before my mental eye, even the molecules break up into tiny atoms of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and so on. Further on, the whole jumble of that atomic concourse melts away into the finest sparkling points of electrons and protons, all dancing, darting, and twirling in beautiful cadence, group by group, some again loosely around all the groups; still others breaking loose from the dance, dart away into the infinity of space. Such indeed was the picture that eminent chemists like Earnest Rutherford and Niels Bohr had drawn about the ultimate nature of a material object like table.

Now let us follow the further modification of the picture of table in the light of the newer theory of the constitution of atom as propounded by the two living German physicists Heisenburg and Schrodinger. According to them we know nothing about the real nature of the constituents of an atom. All that we know are only the radiations that come out of it and never the source of the radiation. A further elaboration of this theory would mean that 'we can never identify an electron at one time with the electron at another, if in the interval, the atom has radiated energy. The electron ceases altogether to have the properties of a "thing" as conceived by common sense; it is merely a *region* from which energy may radiate'. (Russell). According to this newer theory, we should find even those tiny points of electron and proton of my table getting dissolved into mere radiation. But what is radiation?—only a series of events, of which the last perceptible ones are occurring in my own brain! So the concrete reality of my table gets ultimately dissolved into mere radiation of immateriality, should we say, of nothingness! The word radiation in modern physics carry with it no picture of substantiality, but only a mathematical formula, a symbol, a ghost of suggestions, and ultimately a tag to our own mental fancy! Truly has Bertrand Russell said, 'Now owing chiefly to two German physicists, Heisenburg and Schrodinger, the last

vestiges of the old solid atom have melted away, matter has become as ghostly as anything in a spiritualist seance.' (*Outline of Philosophy*). In another place he tells us, 'The main point for the philosopher in the modern theory is the disappearance of matter as a "thing". It has been replaced by emanations from a locality—the sort of influences that characterize haunted rooms in ghost stories. . . . All sorts of events happen in the physical world, but tables and chairs, the sun and moon, and even our daily bread, have become pale abstractions, *mere laws* exhibited in the successions of events which radiate from certain regions.' And a region?—a point in space? But ah! space itself, as we have seen, is a subjective abstraction, 'a fiction created by our own mind', as James Jeans calls it! Then where we stand now in reference to matter? Are we not confronted with Maya at every step in our physical life? Neither can we disregard it wholly by calling it a 'ghost', because like a veritable ghost it haunts us day and night; nor can we instal it on the altar of absolute verity. For the modern physics with all the force of its empirical demonstration and mathematical logic forbids us to do so. I may conclude this section by quoting another eminent scientist Dr. Eddington, on the nature of matter; he says, 'The frank realization that physical science is concerned with the world of shadows is one of the most significant advances. . . . In the world of physics we watch a shadowgraph performance of the drama of familiar life. The shadow of my elbow rests on the shadow table as the shadow ink flows over the shadow paper. It is all symbolic, and as a symbol the Physicist leaves it.' (*The Nature of the Physical World*).

(*To be concluded*)

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# NOTES AND COMMENTS

## To our Readers

Few there are who will feel sorry for 1942, so full of misery was it for humanity in general and certain parts of India like Bengal and Orissa in particular! But has 1943 any better promise for us? Nay, things in themselves do not matter: it is the inner equipoise, the lifting of the heart to the Almighty, in spite of all this, that counts. In the *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna* we get directions for training our passions together with a concrete example of philosophic calm even under contumely. . . . The Editor in his *Time Passes and God Evolves!*—pleads for looking behind phenomenal changes to the Permanent Verity. . . . It is this outlook that can convert *Art* into a means of *Sâdhanâ*, as is shown by Mr. Nandalal Bose, the famous artist of Vishwabharati. . . . To Sir Jadunath Sarkar we are indebted for his *Reminiscences of Sister Nivedita*, which have more than a passing interest. . . . Prof. James H. Cousins, the well-known Irish poet who has made India his home, grants us a peep into *The Poet's Workshop*. . . . Swami Apurvananda gave us an account of his *Pilgrimage to Kailas* in the May-July issues of this magazine last year. This time we have an account of *The Return from Kailas*. . . . Swami Pavitrananda's life-sketch of *Swami*

*Adbhutananda* will be published in two issues. . . . Mr. Manu Subedar has made a timely appeal for *Ending Human Misery*. . . . Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji focuses his vast scholarship and insight into Hinduism on the baffling question, *What Is Hinduism?* The answers given are worth serious consideration by those who care for Hindu consolidation. . . . At our request Prof. P. J. Thomas of the Madras University has contributed an illuminating article on *The Hinduism of the Kerala Christians*, which lights up one aspect of Hinduism in relation to other sects. . . . They talk of *Mâyâ* as a dreamer's theory. Let them take note of the facts of *Modern Science* presented here by Swami Sharvananda.

## Is Christianity a Universal Religion?

In *The Aryan Path* of October 1942, Mr. John Middleton Murry maintains that Christianity is originally and essentially a religion of individual regeneration: 'In Britain we still maintain that our national religion is Christianity. In Russia and Germany the pretence has ceased. And that is at least more honest. For Christianity is originally and essentially a religion of individual regeneration: a deliberate breaking away from the Jewish religion of national solidarity. To suborn such a religion to the purpose of the extreme nationalism of modern Europe is obviously a fantastic perversion, indeed a deliberate and explicit repudiation of Christianity.' Thus a religion loses its universality in proportion as it identifies itself with national aims and aspirations. But it preserves its catholicity by confining itself to individual regeneration. According to the writer Christianity toppled down from its high pedestal the day it became an ally of European imperialism: 'For the extremity of the perversion of Christianity was reached in the establishment of the European empires, by robbery and violence in the East. Christianity made its effective appearance in the East, not as a religion of individual regeneration and individual brotherhood, but as an overwhelming display of material force, and the imposition of an alien rule based on superior armaments and aimed at nothing else than the exploitation of the Eastern races as slaves.' While admitting that there is much truth in the above generalization we hesitate to condemn Christianity outright whether in its Eastern or Western manifestation. For are there not excellent elements preserved in the hearts of truly Christian people both in the East and the West? Mr. Murry is on surer ground when he writes: 'If Christianity is to have any standing in the East in the future, it can only be in so far as it does actually become what it has so long falsely pretended to be—a religion of individual regeneration and universal brotherhood.' The writer is a bit obscure when he asserts that the salvation of Christianity lies in the doctrine of the Cross —a self-imposed annihilation. Writes he: 'The terrible, the absolute failure of Christianity as an organized and institutional religion—Church Christianity as Tolstoy called it—has always evaded, and indeed striven with every weapon against, the process of self-annihilation to which it was committed by the teaching and example of its Founder. It has preached the way of the Cross and avoided it like death.'

Discretion urges us to keep clear of such controversies. Let honest Christians themselves judge their own religion. We shall be fully satisfied if they see the moles in their own eyes and avoid seeing only the motes in others.

### Sir Jadunath on India's Unity

In the course of a lecture at the Rotary Club of Dehra Dun as reported in the *Hindusthan Standard* of 6 October 1942, Sir Jadunath Sarkar said, 'If you look at a relief map of our country, . . . you will find that India as a whole stands isolated from the rest of Asia. . . . Even before modern science had triumphed over physical barriers by giving us rapid and easy means of transport, pilgrims, students, preachers, conquerors, and adventurers had passed from one part of India to another, however remote, in safety and frequency. . . . Calcutta is distant 1200 miles from Lahore by road, but the difference in elevation between these two widely separated cities is only 900 feet, or in other words, you ascend only nine inches by advancing a mile. How can such a region be divided from the military point of view?. . . During the two thousand years of Hindu and Buddhistic rule in India, in spite of political disunion and differences of language and customs, a uniform Sanskritic stamp was printed upon the literature and thought of all the provinces of this vast country. There was, throughout India in the Hindu age—as there is among the Hindu population throughout India to-day—a basic unity of religion, philosophy, literary ideas, and conventions, and outlook upon life. Coming still further down the course of centuries, we can broadly say that there has been achieved some approximation also in physical type and mode of life among the various foreign races that have lived long enough in India, fed on the same crops, drunk of the same streams, basked under the same sun and submitted to the same rule in their daily lives. . . . The Indian people of to-day are no doubt a composite ethnical product, but they have all acquired a common Indian stamp and have all been contributing to a common culture and building up a common type of traditions, thought, and literature.'

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# REVIEWS AND NOTICES

AJMER—HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE. By Diwan Bahadur Har Bilas Sarda, M.R.A.S., F.S.S. *Published by S. K. Sarda, Civil Lines, Ajmer. Pp. 458. Price, not mentioned.*

The volume is a veritable encyclopaedia of information with respect to Ajmer. From the Barli inscription dated fifth century before Christ to the visit of Lord Linlithgow on March 7, 1940, from the genesis of the sanctity of the Pusnkar lake to the horse-shoe design of the Boarding Houses attached to the Princes' College—almost every item of facts and events is mentioned here. Yet the book is written in such a way that it grips the attention at once and keeps the reader engaged till he gets at least some idea about that great historic city. It is a guide book, history, administration report —all combined. The book is divided into four parts: (1) Descriptive, (2) Historical, (3) Administration, and (4) Pushkara and Merwara. Every information given in the book is well documented, and the whole thing is the outcome of laborious research work—perhaps for many years.

The author, widely known for his activity in the Central Legislative Assembly—hails from Ajmer, and his great love for his birth-place is evidenced in every page. Not only that, his manner of writing creates in the reader a similar feeling towards the place. As one reads the section dealing with the history of Ajmer there comes before one's mind's eyes a galaxy of historic figures—Chauhan, Rajput, Pathan, Moghul, Rathor, Marhatta,—and one wonders what a great part this small place played in the past history of India. Nowadays she bears only the relics of the past glory in the form of buildings, monuments,

etc., exciting the curiosity of historians, visitors, and sight-seers. As one closes the chapter one heaves a deep sigh at the thought of the transitoriness of human glory and earthly power.

Nowadays Ajmer is struggling to solve her problem of poverty, famine, education, public health, etc., with no better result, we should say, than in other parts of India.

The inclusion of thirty-seven illustrations has greatly added to the value of the book. We congratulate the author on his splendid achievement.

THE MENACE OF HINDU IMPERIALISM. By Swami Dharma Theerthaji Maharaj, B.A., LL.B. *Published by the Hindu Missionary Society, P.O. Box No. 225, Lahore. Pp. XV+334. Price Rs. 4-8.*

In the *Introduction,* the writer tells us: 'We have sufficiently realized our inherent national strength and need not be afraid now of a frank examination of some outstanding weaknesses.' For examining these weaknesses the writer seems to have depended mainly on R. C. Dutt, S. V. Kelkar, M. M. Kunte, and Abbe Dubois. The brahmin is the villain of the historical drama that stands revealed in these pages. The author takes his cue from the following sentence of R. C. Dutt: 'Priestly supremacy threw its coil round and round the nation from its early youth, and the nation never attained that social and political freedom and strength which marked the ancient nations of Europe.' After examining the course of the Indian history, the writer concludes: 'Even British Imperialism is relenting but Brahman Imperialism knows no remorse. It is as cruel as ever.' From such a theory the natural corollary is: 'Freedom with caste is a mockery. The Hindu masses who are but pawns in the hands of their caste masters will be safer in subjection to a foreign rule than under the free domain of the superior castes. . . . Let every one who dares to demand Swaraj or Independence for India, publicly pledge himself to root out caste.' Since the Congress, the socialists, and other all-India political organizations do not officially denounce caste, they cannot be trusted, nay, not even such stalwarts as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal are above suspicion.

When a writer starts with such a bias, it is natural to come across sentiments and phrases that would be avoided in all sober writing. Look, for instance, at the headings of some of the chapters: *How Brahmanism Crushed Nationalism, Brahman Imperialism Triumphant Is Hinduism, Hindus Perish under Hindu Raj—Travancore-Cochin-Kashmir, Hindu Culture Is Anti-national, Brahmanism Responsible for Hindu-Muslim Conflict, Brahmanism Fortified under the British.* Some of the choice phrases and sentiments are: 'the ancient method of the Vedas and the Purânas of blackening the character and belittling the greatness of our adversaries', 'we are persuaded to forget all the present injustices . . . in order to preserve the sublime culture of our ancestors which has kept us in ignorance', 'the sacrifice of our manliness and freedom in the fire of Aryan lust and selfishness', 'the masses of India are growing distrustful of their Hindu Masters'. Let us now take a few examples of historical half-truths and untruths: 'Brahmanism did not care for philosophy'—the Kshatriyas did so; the Aryans were not and are not Indians, but the people in the Gangetic valley were and still are so; it is the latter who should properly be called Indians; Buddhism was the national religion; Pali was the language in which Buddha spoke; widow-marriage was common among the Aryans; one party of Aryans left India for Iran in protest against 'the vice of drink and cruel animal sacrifices increased to such an extent as to create a split in the community'. But we are assured by the author that in all these diatribes against the brahmins and their priestcraft, he has no rancour in his heart against any individual. It is the system that repels him, and it is the system that has to be thrown overboard. We are presented with a unique theory of caste: 'The four Varnas were the corresponding social groups in society—young men in the Brahmachari period were the Sudras; Grihasthas . . . were the Vaishyas; warriors of the Vanaprastha stage formed the group of Kshatriyas; and the wise men of age and learning who had retired from life . . . as Sannyasins composed the group of Brahmanas.'

In spite of all this, we are not inclined to condemn the book outright. Even Miss Mayo's *Mother India* served a useful purpose by drawing our pointed attention to some of the evils of society, and legislators took the matter earnestly in their hands. Who knows if *Hindu Imperialism* will not serve such a negative purpose! The Augean

stable is badly in need of a thorough cleansing, as will be apparent from some of the damning facts presented in this volume: 'According to the Census of 1901 the Christian population of Travancore was only 6 lakhs. By 1931 it rose to 17 lakhs or 33 per cent of the total population. . . . As matters stand at present the Thiyya Hindu of Hindu Travancore has not as much right of free citizenship as the lowest Hindu in the Muhammadan State of Hyderabad or the lowest Hindu of Christian British India.' In the Cochin State 'already two and a half lakhs or 27 per cent of the total population (1921) have become Christian'. We need not lay our conscience to sleep with the blind complacence that things are much better in British India and explain away the phenomenon of conversion as due merely to political and economic factors. For who can deny the existence of social inequities throughout the country and more so in the South? There is untouchability, misuse of temple property, and false philosophy under the guise of spirituality. True, the present volume shoots wide of the mark and is often very painful reading. We wish the writer's pen was more restrained. But even as it is, it may serve to open our eyes to things that escape attention through constant presence. After all it is a lacerated heart that speaks through this volume!

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# NEWS AND REPORTS

## *RAMAKRISHNA MISSION CYCLONE RELIEF WORK*

The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, writes on 16th December, 1942:—

The Ramakrishna Mission is carrying on relief work against enormous difficulties of communication and transport in 224 villages of the Midnapur, 24-Parganas and Balasore Districts through 10 centres: in the first, in the Khejuri, Nandigram and Mayna Thanas; in the second, in the Saugor Thana, and in the third in Bhograi Thana. In the week ending on the 12th December we distributed 1,636 mds. 1 sr. of rice, 1,005 mds. 32 srs. of paddy, 167 mds. 12 srs. of dal, 10 mds. of salt, 91 pieces of new cloth, 263 chaddars, 685 pieces of used cloth, 51 blankets and 158 mats among 51,607 recipients.

From the 4th November to the 12th December, altogether 4,983 mds. 33½ srs. of rice, 3,361 mds. 1 sr. of paddy, 317 mds. 8 srs. of dal, 42 mds. 22 srs. of salt, 4,395 pieces of new cloth, 685 pieces of used cloth, 4,141 blankets and 1,328 mats have been distributed in the three Districts.

Our total receipts up to the 15th December are Rs. 1,80,120/-, and our total expenditure about Rs. 79,000/-. We have also received articles worth approximately Rs. 67,000/-. Our weekly expenditure is roughly Rs. 25,000/-.

The following are the principal donations received from the 19th November to the 15th December:

Swami Sambuddhananda, Ramakrishna Mission, Bombay, Rs. 21,500/-; The Ananda Bazar Patrika and Hindusthan Standard Bengal Cyclone Relief Fund, Rs. 21,049/13/-; The Tata-Scob Dealers' Association, Calcutta, Rs. 5,000/-; Through the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Patna, Rs. 3,900/-; Hooghly Chinsura Relief Fund, through Rai J. N. Mukherji Bahadur, Chinsura, Rs. 3,100/-; Mr. Bhagwati Dayal, Advocate, Barabanki, Rs. 2,500/-; The Staff, B. N. Ry., through the Chief Auditor, Kidderpore, Rs. 2,450/-; The Bengal Galvanised Sheet Merchants' Association, Calcutta, Rs. 2,000/-; Secretary, Cyclone Relief Fund, Raipur, Rs. 2,000/-; Through the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Asansol, Rs. 1,767/-; Raja Radha Raman, Pilibhit, Rs. 1,200/-; Secretary, Cyclone Relief Committee, Jamshedpur, Rs. 1,200/-; Secretary, Cyclone Relief Committee, Deoghar, Rs. 1,100/-. Mr. R. D. Modi, Ahmedabad; Organisers, Cyclone Relief Fund, Patna, through Mr. S. N. Dutta, Patna; Messrs. K. and J. Cooper, Bombay; Secretary, Calcutta Balad Jute Association, Calcutta; Premchand Jute Mills, Ltd., Calcutta; A Friend, Calcutta:— Rs. 1,000/- each.

Through Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, Rs. 800/-; The Dramatic Club, E.I.Ry. Indian Institute, Katrasgarh, Rs. 777/9/3; Through the Ramakrishna Mission, Lahore, Rs. 700/-; Treasurer, Bilaspur Cyclone Relief Fund, Bilaspur, Rs. 650/-; Presidency College Union, Calcutta, Rs. 600/-; The Staff, E.I.Ry. Institute, Burdwan Division, through the Divisional Superintendent,

Rs. 586/-; The Delta Jute Mills, Ltd., through Mr. S. K. Banerjee, Calcutta, Rs. 562/8/-; Major A. C. Chatterjee, President, B.N.Ry. Indian Institute, Chakradharpur, Rs. 550/-; Through the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ranchi, Rs. 544/7/-; The Staff and Workers, National Tobacco Company of India, Ltd., 24-Parganas, Rs. 541/-; Staff and Distributors, Tide Water Oil, Co. (India), Ltd., Andrew Yule & Co., Rs. 540/-; The Staff of National Insurance Co., Ltd., and National Fire and General Insurance Co., Ltd., Calcutta, Rs. 501/-; Through the Manager, Ghatsila Raj, Ghatsila, Rs. 501/-. Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandir Cyclone Relief Fund; E.I.Ry. Indian Institute, Jamshedpur; Srimati Madhuri Gupta, Secunderabad; The Indian Mining Federation, Calcutta; Incorporated Law Society of Calcutta; Messrs. Jupiter General Insurance Co., Ltd., Calcutta; The China Bazar Association, Calcutta; A Friend, through Satyendra Nath Choudhury, Calcutta; B. B. Khory Esq., Calcutta; The Calcutta Yarn Merchants' Association, Calcutta; The Calcutta Iron Merchants' Association, Calcutta; Mr. Prabhat Chandra Choudhuri, Calcutta; The Officers and Staff, E. I. Railway, Lillooah; Mr. M. K. Mitra, Calcutta; The Staff of Howrah Division, E.I.Ry.:—Rs. 500/- each.

We convey our grateful thanks to the generous donors. Further contributions will be thankfully received and acknowledged by: (1) The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, P.O. Belur Math, Dt. Howrah. (2) The Advaita Ashrama, 4, Wellington Lane, Calcutta.

## THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION IN THE VILLAGES OF INDIA

'I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for. They pay for our education, they build our temples; but in return they get kicks. They are practically our slaves. If we want to regenerate India, we must work for them.' Such fiery sentiments can find a proper habitat in the burning heart of a socialist reformer. And yet they came from a most unexpected source, from the bruised heart of Swami Vivekananda, the patriot saint of India who felt for the masses as none but him could feel, who probed deep into the problem of their regeneration with an undivided attention which none else could command, and who prescribed the essential means for the amelioration of their hard lot with a clear understanding of the true Indian situation as none else could hope to possess. The one question that agitated the Swami's mind was: 'Can you give them back their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual nature?' For the Swamiji was convinced that all schemes of India's regeneration must have spirituality as their basis,—a spirituality that does not believe in spoon-feeding, but works for the awakening of the potentialities of every life. Second only to this was his solicitousness for raising the cultural level of the villagers through education understood in a wide sense. But stark poverty always stood in the way. And so the Swamiji wanted India to address herself first to the removal of poverty both in its acute and chronic forms. The scheme was ambitious. But nothing less than that could satisfy the Swami, and nothing short of this could really help the masses.

Circumstances have not materially changed since Swami Vivekananda adumbrated his scheme of national uplift, the only corollary of which was to make the would-be philanthropists more village-minded. Ninety per cent of the Indian population live in villages. It will not do, therefore, to concentrate our attention on the towns and cities alone. That this conclusion was readily accepted by the leaders of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission is evident from the fact that as early as 1897, Swami Akhandananda, a colleague and brother disciple of Swami Vivekananda, started the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama at Sargachhi, a petty village about ten miles away from the district town of Berhampore. The head-quarters of the Math and Mission came to be located at Belur, a village six miles away from Howrah. These glorious examples were enthusiastically copied by the other followers of the Swamiji. Thus the Ashrama at Mayavati came into existence in 1899; this was followed by the Nattarampalli Ashrama in North Arcot and the Baliati Math and Mis-

sion centre in Dacca in 1910. The Sonargaon Ashrama in Dacca, the Kishenpur Ashrama in Dehra Dun, the Chandipur Ashrama in Midnapur, the Vilangans Gurukula in Cochin State, the Shyamala Tal Ashrama in Almora, the Haripad Ashrama, the Tiruvella Ashrama, and the Quilandy Ashrama in Travancore were established between the years 1913 and 1916. The Ashrama at Jahndi in Faridpur was started in 1918. During 1920-21 were started the Ashramas at Bhuvaneswar in Puri, Sarisha in the 24-Perganas, and Jayrambati in Bankura. These were followed by the centres at Ponnampet in Coorg (1927), Ottapalam in British Malabar (1926), Perianaickenpalayam in Coimbatore (1930), Kaladi in Travancore (1936), and Taki in 24-Perganas (1938). Besides, the urban Math and Mission centres began to extend their activities increasingly in the rural areas around them. Thus quite a considerable number of village institutions has come into existence during the four decades following the Swamiji's passing away.

Strictly following the plan outlined by Swami Vivekananda, the Math and Mission centres take religion as the basis of all their rural works. But this religion is so broad-based that the philanthropic activities of these centres are by no means discriminative against any one on the score of caste or creed. The Hindu, the Mohammedan, the Christian, the untouchable—all are equally welcome to be benefited by the activities of these centres. As a result the monks of the Order are loved and accepted as their own by all and sundry. This has a steadying effect on the village life as a whole. Naturally, however, the purely religious Math centres are more in touch with the Hindu population, whereas the Mission centres have a wider scope of activity.

In the Math centres at morning and evening will he found flocking the simple village people with their children to attend the Pujâ in the temple, and join their voices in the common prayer. In the afternoon they will sit round the Swami in charge of the Math to hear him explain some religious text. During annual celebrations the villages all around will pour into the Ashrama precincts and will be sumptuously fed, after which there will be meetings addressed on some important aspect of Hindu religious and social life or communal amity and religious toleration by the Swamis and gentlemen of note coming from the towns. And in general the local Swami's devoted life will inspire them to a life of religion and service. Through such means, will thus percolate the liberal and life-transforming message of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, bringing new vitality and fresh activity into play.

Once the unhampered flow of the spiritual life of the country-side can be ensured, it becomes easy to start philanthropic institutions with the help of the villagers, though due to the extreme poverty of the villages, the necessary funds have very often to be raised from the more prosperous towns and cities.

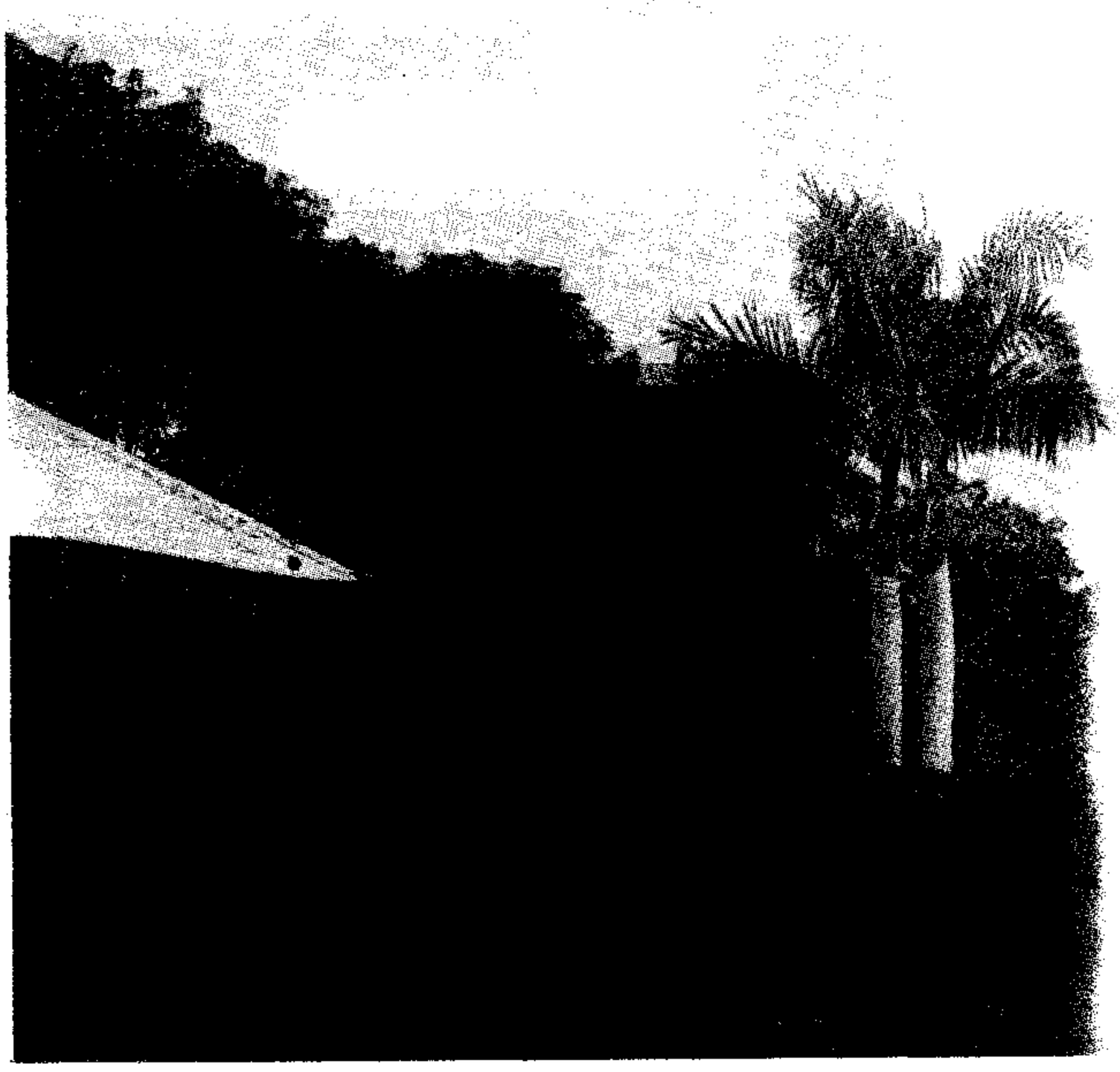
The works undertaken by the various institutions that have so far come into existence may be divided as follows for the convenience of treatment: (1) charitable dispensaries and hospitals, (2) educational institutions of various grades, (3) libraries and reading-rooms, and (4) miscellaneous works.

Of the rural hospitals, that at Mayavati with its 13 beds is by far the biggest and the most efficient. It draws to it people from a distance of fifty or sixty miles. The hospital at Taki is equally big; but it is still in its infancy and requires to be properly organized. The hospital at Shyamala Tal, though a small one, is doing valuable service.

The dispensaries are more numerous. In addition to the dispensaries attached to the above hospitals there are more than a dozen village dispensaries. All these treated more than 2,00,000 patients in 1942. Of these the dispensary at Sarisha had the highest record, having treated about 32,000 patients, and that at Bhuvaneswar closely followed it with its 26,500.

Of the educational institutions, that at Perianaickenpalayam is a residential High School. Kaladi has a Sanskrit School, while Cherrapunji in the Khasia and Jaintia Hills, the Vilangans near Trichur, and Sarisha have got Higher Secondary Schools. Sarisha has another Lower Secondary School for boys in addition to the Girl's School already mentioned. Manasadwip in Midnapore has an extended Middle English School. Besides, there are Lower Secondary English Schools at Shella in the Khasia and Jaintia Hills and at Agna in Sylhet.

The urban and rural centres of the Math and Mission conduct about fifty Primary and Night Schools for the benefit of the Indian villagers. The children get free



RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA AND MISSION SEVASHRAMA, SONARGAON

education and often get help in the form of books, slates, pencils, and noonday meals, etc.

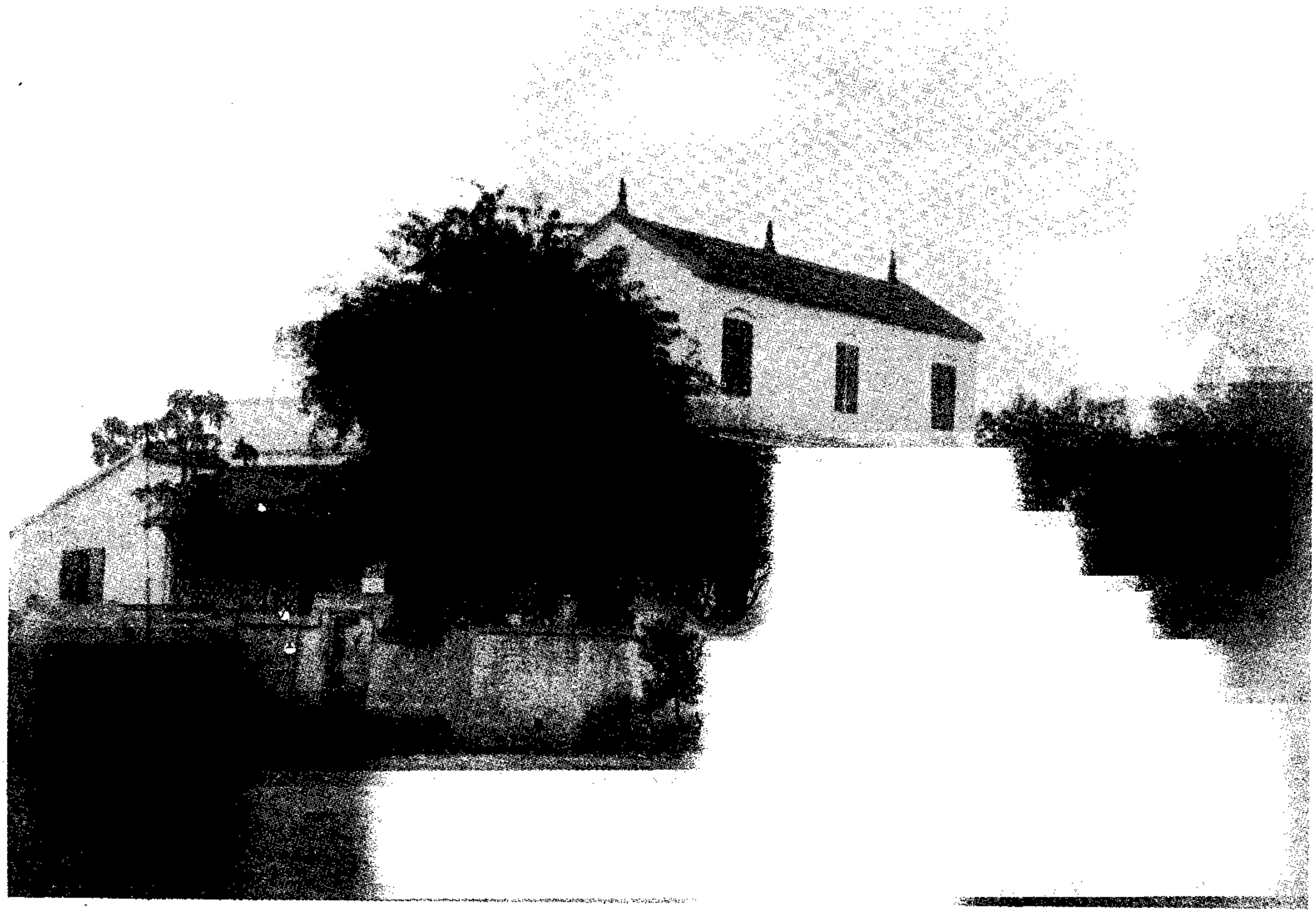
Of these schools many are meant specially for backward people and sometimes for untouchables, known nowadays as Harijans. The schools at Cherrapunji and Shella impart education to the hill tribes of Assam. The school near Trichur is primarily meant for the Harijan boys and girls of the Cochin

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, SARGACHHI

RAMAKRISHNA GURUKUL, TRICHUR: INDUSTRIAL SECTION FOR GIRLS

State. Moreover, there are schools for Bhils, Kukis, Patro-Khasis, and other aboriginal tribes, as well as for Muchis and other lower classes.

The schools at Sarisha, Manasadwip, and Taki have agricultural classes attached to them. The schools at Taki, Cherrapunji, and Agna have weaving sections. The school near Trichur imparts education in mat-making, knitting, and embroidery as well. Other village schools have similar arrangements, though on a more modest scale.



RAMAKRISHNA MATH, NATTARAMPALLI

HIGH SCHOOL, CHERRAPUNJI

The Sarisha Ashrama conducts a small home for college girls who are coached locally. The school near Trichur has separate 'Homes' for both boys and girls. There are also 'Homes' attached to the Cherrapunji school, the Perianaickenpalayam Vidyalaya and the Taki school.

It will be seen that the Math and Mission have been grappling with the problem of village education through a scheme varied according to local conditions. But libraries and reading-rooms, as well as the peripatetic magic lantern shows are further sources of adult education. There are libraries attached to almost all the above-mentioned rural institutions, to which the villagers have free access. The Swamis are always there to help the readers in their difficulties. With magic lanterns they will often be touring the neighbouring villages explaining to them hygienic rules, Indian history, and geography, and other similar topics that are at once interesting and calculated to widen their range of useful knowledge.

In addition to the works mentioned above which are more or

RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, BALIATI

BOYS AT CHERRAPUNJI

less of a permanent character, the village centres undertake various other miscellaneous works as occasions demand and opportunities vouchsafe. Pecuniary help is often rendered to indigent families. Monthly doles are sometimes in existence. Relief works are conducted on an extensive scale when fires, famines, flood, or epidemic diseases break out in the neighbourhood. Some centres undertake digging of wells and tanks and sinking of tube-wells for the public. Others lend a helping hand in organizing co-operative societies and establishing contact with larger Governmental schemes which are calculated to improve the lot of the villagers. One Swami at Ponnampet has done much in introducing bee-culture among the villagers, which has to a great extent solved the bread problem of the locality. Others in Sylhet are introducing cattle-farming, rope-making, and shoe-making, etc., among the Patro-Khasis and Muchis.

Thus the Math and Mission have been trying their level best to serve those classes and areas which have unfortunately fallen back culturally and educationally. They are conscious how inadequate their efforts and resources are in comparison with the huge task. But they have still the satisfaction that the lesson of these pioneering endeavours will not be totally lost on their countrymen.

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## *SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S BIRTHDAY*

The Birthday Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda falls on the 28th January, 1943.

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## FRONTISPIECE

This illustration drawn by the famous artist Sjt. Nandalal Bose depicts Shiva drinking poison. The story goes that the Devas and the Asuras churned the Ocean with the object of regaining their splendour and glory which seemed to be vanishing. As they churned, many great and splendid things came up out of it. Suddenly, to the horror of all, there rose the all-destroying poison, deadly in its effect and menacing in virulence. It began to envelop the world, bringing death to all created beings. Finding everyone helpless, Shiva stretched forth His hand and took the poison in His palm. He then drank it, willing to die in order to save the world. The poison did no harm to Him. It left only a blue stain in His throat. Thenceforth He was known as "Nilakantha" or the "blue-necked one". Shiva thus saved the world from utter destruction.

—*Mahabharata*