

Prabuddha Bharata

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

Katha Upa. I. iii. 4

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

—Swami Vivekananda.

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UNPUBLISHED NOTES OF CLASS TALKS BY THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

(*In Madras, 1892—1893.—VIII.*)

It is true that caste system becomes essential in the ordinary course of nature. Those that have aptitudes for a particular work form a class, but who is to settle the class of a particular individual? If a Brahman thinks that he has a special aptitude for spiritual culture, why should he be afraid to meet a Sudra in an open field. Will a horse be afraid of running a race with a jade?

Refer to the life of the author of *Krishna-karnamrita*, Vilwamangal—a devotee who plucked his eyes out because he could not see God. His life illustrates the principle that even misdirected love leads in the end to love proper.

Too early religious advancement of the Hindus and that superfineness in everything which made them cling to higher alternatives have reduced them to what they are. The Hindus have to learn a little bit of materialism from the West and teach them a little bit of spirituality.

Educate your women first and leave them to themselves; then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them. In matters concerning them, who are you?

Who reduced the *Bhangis* and the *Pariahs* to their present degraded condition? Heartlessness in our behaviour and at the same time preaching wonderful *Advaitism*—is it not adding insult to injury?

Form and formless are intertwined in this world. The formless can only be expressed in form, and form can only be thought with the formless. The world is a form of our thoughts. The idol is the expression of religion.

In God all natures are possible. But we can see him only through human nature. We can love him as we love a man, as father, son. The strongest love in the world is that between man and woman and that also when it is clandestine. This is typified in the love between Krishna and Radha.

Nowhere it is said in the Vedas that man is born a sinner. To say so is a damned libel on human nature.

It is not an easy task to reach the state of seeing the Reality face to face. The other day one could not find the hidden cat in a whole picture though it occupied the major portion of the picture.

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

THE cornerstone on which was built evidently the whole tradition of the ancient Hebrews was the coming of the Messiah. Abraham, the founder of the race, bore a life of twofold aspiration when he came to Palestine, and the whole history of the Jewish people flows out of these aspirations. One was his peculiar *Ishtam*, the God he worshipped; and the other was his peculiar belief that in his own line one day God will reveal Himself as man. Now both these sentiments were typically Vedic in their origin.

Remnants of historical record trace the original home of Abraham to a place called Ur, which in mediæval times when the sack of Samarkand by the famous Turkish hordes took place must have been known as Urgunj, a name of which mention is made in history. Geography lends unmistakable support to the view that Abraham originally belonged to a country where communities of Vedic Brahmans were still to be found. Linguists have sought in vain to explain the word 'Abraham' by Hebrew philology, and none of them cared to surmise that it is the corrupted form of a word so common in another ancient language. To crown all, analyse the conception of God which Abraham imported into Palestine, a country where the popular mind incapable of soaring to serener heights to form an idea of God used to mix Him up with tribal interests and traditions, with abnormal occurrences of physical nature. Imagine in such a country a man with a fiery soul feeding upon gigantic hopes, cast off from his own community of pastoral Brahmans by great vicissitudes of fortune to a distant land lying under his feet invitingly with promises of easily acquired power and peace, and now tending his flock in leisurely soli-

tude on a wild, undulating track that meets the glorious blue above in a fading horizon far, far away; and with eyes upturned on the heavens, he has his soul flooded with the old inspiration of a spiritual discipline which moulded the life of his ancestors and which is still represented and perpetuated through that famous *mantram* of the Vedas, तद्विष्णोः परमं पदं सदा पश्यन्ति सूरयः द्विवीच चक्षुराततं, That highest being of the all-pervading Deity, which the sages for all time see, with Eyes extending wide as the sky above.

Possessed of this Vedic spiritual inheritance, Abraham came to the pastoral west to find a new race of men superior far in spirituality to all the people who inhabited that part of Asia, and as the foundation of his hopes he had his wonderful faith in the possibility of Divine Incarnations, another unquestionable heritage from his Brahminical connections. We know how a whole race was bred up in this faith and how it bore ample fruit in their history. The operative principle which engrafted into the alien soil of Palestine brought about this historical unfoldment was nothing but the doctrine of Divine Incarnation. It was a peculiar outgrowth of the ancient Vedic culture. It was a unique development of the Vedic religious thought. Abraham's thoughts and beliefs must have been moulded under the influence of this doctrine. For even miracles require to be justified, and the miracle of the covenant must have occurred in response to Abraham's intensest faith. But to the Jewish people of later ages, the whole affair from end to end was a miracle and naturally enough was it so, as they were perfectly unacquainted with those Vedic ways of thought and belief by contact with which the faith in Divine Incar-

nation must have been instilled into Abraham's mind.

How did the doctrine of Divine Incarnation evolve in the history of Vedic culture? To this question we return now after having disposed of the only case in which this peculiar doctrine comes in view outside the pale of Indian history. Those who regard this doctrine as a sectarian religious belief bordering on the superstitious refer with evident relief its growth and development to that age of the most unphilosophical manipulation of philosophical truths which has been discovered and given the name of the Pouranic Age. They maintain that this theory of deifying man must have been started in an age of universal intellectual degradation, for no mention of any *Avatara* occurs either in the Vedas or in the Upanishads and the Darshanas. It is only when the minds of men, they argue, fall off from the purer or more philosophical conceptions of God that it becomes possible for them to be reconciled to such a belief as that of God taking birth as a man. Such a sad falling-off occurred in the religious history of India when the Puranas were written (!), and so we find this doctrine of incarnation offered by the Puranas as their peculiar gift to the superstitious. Even those who believe in the doctrine of the Avatâra as the outcome of a higher development of the Vedic religious consciousness wonder why the same had not been specifically elaborated earlier in Indian history than in the Pouranic literature.

So far as the spiritual culture of ancient India has to be studied and understood from all the literature that has come down to us, it is true that the doctrine of the Avatâra appears as a specific cult only in the Puranas of the different sects of worshippers. But it is wrong to argue from this fact that this doctrine developed only so late as the Pouranic period of history. The Puranas were

not purely the productions of the Pouranic age. Their contents were not all *written* in one particular period of our history. A mass of religious doctrines, historical facts and legends had been in the possession of the Sutas, Kathakas or minstrels from time immemorial. They had become divided among themselves into numerous sects and used to belong to different denominations of the Vedic religion. The antiquity of their minstrelsy extends to the age of the purely Vedic sacrifices and they claimed to have developed their Pouranic lore from earlier Gâthâs which must have antedated the Puranas. These Gâthâs we often find interspersed in Pouranic literature and they seem to point out how tradition used to preserve in prehistoric ages facts and legends of history in pithy laconic verses easily committed to memory. The aim of this Pouranic minstrelsy had always been to present to the people religious doctrines and principles in the most acceptable and popular form. There was a recognised style in this art of minstrelsy which consisted in beginning with the story of creation and proceeding downwards to common history, but the whole fabric was made to rest on, and illustrate throughout, the operation of particular religious principles and theories. In this way, through the minstrelsy of a particular race of Brahmanas who pursued the art and profession from generation to generation, a large floating mass of Pouranic literature gradually developed in ancient India. Though in every age additions and variations tended to become incorporated into this mass of literature, it is very difficult in most cases to correctly trace their dates; and in respect of such a fundamental doctrine of the Puranas as that of the Avatara it would be highly preposterous to contend that it was developed only in the later ages of Pouranic minstrelsy.

But then, if the doctrine of the Avatara be admitted to have risen in some of the earlier periods of our ancient history, why is there

no mention of it made in the Vedas or the Darshanas? In replying to this question, we have first to examine briefly the larger divisions of the history of the Vedic religion. In the first period of this history, we find the Vedic religion divided into two well-marked courses of pursuits, the path of renunciation and the path of desire, **निष्काममार्ग** and **सकाममार्ग**. Those who followed the second course used to worship the Devas who had special powers to fulfill special desires of men. It is idle to expect that Riks or *mantras* embodying such worship would speak of a self-incarnating God or of a theistic God, or of any conception of God, and cases of any such mention are bound to be of the nature of digressions. Those again who followed the path of Renunciation in that earliest age were purely concerned with a type of spiritual discipline which enabled man to attain Brahman and immortality (**अमृतत्वं**). In the earlier Upanishads we find spiritual aspirants concerned purely with the ascent of man to Godhood or Brahmanhood rather than with the descent of God to manhood. So the doctrine of Divine Incarnation was rather remote from the peculiar interest of the religious pursuits obtaining in the earlier periods of Vedic history. Then we come down to a later period when the worship of the Vedic Devas were slowly giving place to another order of religious worship, namely to Panchopâsanâ. In each of these five systems of worship God was conceived of, although through different names, as the supreme creator and ruler of the universe and also as the dispenser of final liberation, thus bridging the gulf to a great extent between the two-fold paths of spiritual pursuits existing more or less divergent in the earlier ages.

Now this doctrine of the Avatâra must have existed as an implication even in the spiritual culture of this period of Vedic history. The essential point in this doctrine is the descent of God on earth as a man. The

Aryan sages used to believe in the descent of superhuman beings into the mundane plane of existence, and when the Panchopâsanâ became prevalent, by an easy and inevitable extension of the same belief it was held that God himself descended on earth to fulfil some special purpose in his creation. The conception of Vishnu as the ruler of the universe in Panchopasana is specially adapted to support this theory of Divine descent, and therefore it is easy to infer that with the prevalence of Vishnu worship the doctrine of Divine Incarnation naturally came into prominence. For people who already believe in the incarnation as men of beings of a superior order, it is quite a spontaneous advance of thought to believe in the incarnation of God as man, directly they attain to a conception of one supreme God as the ruler of the whole universe. Such a conception is found to prevail in the particular period of Vedic history when the thirty-three Devatás are gradually yielding place to theistic conceptions of God, and it is safe to conclude that the doctrine of the Avatara spontaneously grew as a collateral development of such conceptions.

It is easy to make out why it is the Puranas and not the Darshanas which first took up this doctrine of the Avatara in ancient India. All the systems of ancient philosophy in India claim to have been evolved with one specific object in view, namely to lead men beyond the evils of Sansâra or life. This peculiar aim or Prayojana of ancient philosophy made it pre-eminently concerned and pre-occupied with the ascent of man to divinity rather than with the descent of God to manhood. So ancient philosophy interested itself wholly in describing and discussing the ascending stages or states through which man passes to become finally one with freedom or Brahman. It was no business of this philosophy to enquire or ascertain whether God ever became man in history or whether such incarnation is possible

or not; such enquiry or demonstration properly belonged to the province of ऐतिह्य or history. In philosophy we find only one instance where the question is discussed whether man by spiritual progress may attain to divinity in such sense as to be able to create rule or destroy the universe. But still the essential point here is not the question of God becoming man but man becoming God.

The doctrine of the Avatara need not naturally enough challenge thought in a system of culture of which the very cornerstone is the recognition of essential unity between God and man and in which the belief in the incarnation of higher beings as men on earth has been playing a well-recognised role from the very outset. In such a system of culture the recognition of a personal God is bound to be followed as a corollary by the acceptance of the doctrine of His incarnation. So if we once admit that the belief in the incarnation of higher beings as men is as old as Vedic culture itself, then, absolutely no room is left for us to wonder how the acceptance of Divine incarnation in Pouranic literature evoked no critical or apologetic response in the domain of ancient philosophy. In ancient India the belief in a personal God almost necessarily implied the belief in the possibility of His incarnation. But it is quite a different case in modern times. Modern religious culture in the West upholds the essential duality of God and man, and its peculiar conception of the metaphysical attributes of God makes it incapable of understanding the possibility of Divine incarnations. Western education has naturally developed the same attitude of thought in the minds of educated men in India and the doctrine of Divine incarnation is looked down upon by them as a relic of old superstitions.

If God is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent how is it possible for him to be-

come like a man? How can the unlimited appear like the limited? How can the infinite become the finite? Such questions rising in their minds seem to defy all solution. But the very questions themselves indicate how deep within the mind of the questioner lies the blind conviction of an indissoluble duality between the infinite and the finite, the unlimited and the limited. While opposing the infinite to the finite for the sake of logical expression, the mind fallaciously imposes this subjective antithesis on the plane of objective existence and indulges in a false idea of the infinite as placed outside of the finite, of the unlimited limited by the limited. This false idea of the infinite in knowledge, of the infinite in power, of the infinite in existence, places insuperable obstacles on the way of understanding the possibility of Divine incarnations. If once the infinite be properly conceived of as all-inclusive and if at the same time all space relations be eliminated from our conception of God as the Spirit, the Atman, then the whole difficulty disappears. Sri Ramakrishna used to explain the doctrine of the Avatara in a few words in his inimitable figurative way. The Ganges, he used to say, is a very big river flowing down for thousands of miles from the peaks of the Himalayas to the ocean, but still a man who uses a bathing *ghat* to take his bath in the river is said to have bathed in the Ganges. For him bathing in the Ganges does not mean plunging throughout the whole length of the stream. Similarly when we find the infinite God revealed through a human body, we need not argue how or whether we are to find the limitless being of God compressed within the limits of a man. It quite suffices if *there* we are brought face to face with Divine grace.

If our mind can hold fast on to the real idea of the infinite, then another illustration of Sri Ramakrishna will help us much in understanding the doctrine of the Avatara. When you have to obtain cow's milk, you have

to press her udder, and still it is milk of the cow and not of the udder, and you do not object that the whole cow does not yield cow's milk, but only her udder. So you cannot object in the case of an Avatara that divinity of God is being revealed in and through a man and not through God himself in his infinitude. When a man becomes perfectly a part and parcel of God, when the sense of separateness from God is destroyed in him, Divinity rushes out of him most

naturally. Such cases of perfect union with God are very rare, and if behind everything that happens we are justified in positing Divine consciousness and power, how highly are we justified in conceiving that behind the advent of a great man who attains perfect union with God in life, God makes the impulse of self-revelation work from within the inscrutable depths of his being. So if belief in a personal God is justifiable belief in his incarnation is not less so.



SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S PICTURE.

INTO places of worship and abode all over the world, the picture of Sri Ramakrishna is finding its way to-day, but does it occur to people who keep it that they impose upon themselves a duty when they take it into their homes or chapels? For in proportion as this self-imposed duty is ignored, the possession of Sri Ramakrishna's picture becomes useless.

Every picture, which we carefully hang up on the walls of our room or study or cloister, stands as a symbol to our mind, and we expect that a look at it should call up in us certain ideas. Do we try to clearly and adequately understand what the picture of Sri Ramakrishna symbolises to our mind? For that is the self-imposed task that devolves upon us directly we carry that picture into our home or chapel.

Every possessor of the picture is supposed to know that Sri Ramakrishna was a great saint who lived at Dakshineswar near Calcutta. But he would be a great loser indeed if his mind stops short of further enquiry about this saint. He should know that there are saints and saints. Some saints fulfil their mission, in carrying their life of spiritual endeavour to its ultimate success, while there may be few others who live to hold this success up as a blessing for every fellowman to participate in.

Some light up the fire of divinity within themselves so that they themselves pass away in glory, while there are few in whom the same fire blazes up to provide for all men a never-failing supply for lighting the sleeping fire within each soul. You bring your fuel and faggot into touch with the blaze and fire you obtain, without toiling at it hard and long—or probably in vain. Such saints yield themselves up through life and death to the needs of struggling men. Love for men makes of them and their spiritual acquisitions a sacrifice and oblation. They surrender their salvation as an earnest for the salvation of all, and by so doing become one with Him who is beyond all bondage and salvation.

This self-surrender in love is the most conspicuous feature in the life of the saint of Dakshineswar and it occupies the most prominent place in that memory of him which those who intimately mixed with him love to carry through life. How all aglow this love appeared beaming through his face, when tortured by the painful sore in the throat, unable even to quaff a cup of sago, he exclaimed, "Oh, how gladly would I take thousand births to live on sago simply, if one human being even I can help thereby"! This intensity of love for struggling humanity is the first point to be remembered in connec-

tion with the life of this great saint. In fact if we study his life we find that from a certain period in it, he seems to have been transfigured as it were into a blazing flame of the highest altruism. At this period we find him longing, with all the tremendous impetuosity of soul developed through years of the highest spiritual effort, to give himself away to mankind, and at every eventide as each day wore out and the temple bells announced one night more, he used to call out from his solitude in the bitterness of intense expectation for those hungry souls whose advent to him had been promised by the Mother. From this period, the one theme of his life is to constitute himself the constant medium through which Divine grace is to flow out to men, and while preserving a semblance of separate personality when moving in the ordinarily plane of consciousness, his own life he fully and constantly realised as the bodying forth of Divine Love. Therefore to those *who would take it from him*, he plainly said, "He who was Rama and who was Krishna has now become this Ramakrishna."

But reader, you need not go so far, for what is in a theory? So long as God is more or less a theory to us, His incarnation is bound to remain an inscrutable mystery, and if anybody then offers to us a God who became a man, we are justified in setting our face against what is apparently nothing but mystery-mongering. The God we seek is He who has given us a particular idea of Himself through our reason. Every other idea of Him I am bound to call either a mystery or a superstition. So let those to whom it is given to conceive of a God becoming man cling to a belief in Divine incarnation. Am I going to be a loser, if I am not one of them?

Well, the main issue is to derive spiritual benefit from the life and personality of a great saint, to respond to his call and come to him to get peace everlasting. It is a mere side issue as to whether or how God revealed Himself in him. Suffices it for a thirsty man

if drinking water jets out of a quadrant, and he will hold eagerly on to it for reviving himself from fatigue and death, be it made of brass or zinc. So here is a saint whom his great store of spirituality has made a saviour of men. Let me go and accept him as my guide, my leader in life. This is the main issue before me and should I allow a side issue to drive me away from it, I am a fool.

Therefore for every one who feels attracted towards the personality of Sri Ramakrishna, even to the extent of keeping in possession one of his pictures, the call is ringing clear and full to place his life under his spiritual guidance, for the yearning of his great love still endures and his direct ministration to our spiritual needs is still in force. The first demand on him therefore is to bring himself into relation with the great love which the picture of Sri Ramakrishna symbolises and which still broods over the whole of mankind.

The second demand on the possessor of Sri Ramakrishna's picture is to regard and realise it as the symbol of religious unity. Modern humanity is called upon to live up to one supreme Divine purpose and that is the solidarity of man. In the cauldron of modern life, the present war is an ebullition which is destined to drive off much dross, and when all this tumble and convulsion will subside, mankind will thirst and hunger after the ideals of peace and solidarity of man. And religion will ever remain the highest and the most powerful of all universal interests and concerns. So if religion is demonstrated and accepted as one, then of the fabric of human solidarity the very cornerstone is laid and made secure for ever. In the unfolding, therefore, of the Divine drama of human solidarity, the most important role is allotted to him who is to demonstrate and establish through his life the essential unity of religion, and Sri Ramakrishna came on earth to play this part.

India lives a life consecrated to the good of all mankind. A life of selfish advancement was never destined to be hers in any

age of history. Her patriotism is the starting-point for the highest cosmopolitanism possible for man. She puts her own house in order that it may become the temple universal to radiate the noblest influences and highest blessings to all mankind. And what is the mission which India has to fulfill now in view of the supreme need of modern man to realise his solidarity? Well, the mission of India to-day is to *collectively* do for the whole world what the greatest of her sons, Sri Ramakrishna, has *individually* done for the same, namely to constitute herself an object-lesson, for the whole world, of religious unity. It is in the act of fulfilling this mission, that an Indian nation is ordained to be born in modern times. So the life which Sri Ramakrishna lived laid in India the foundation for nation-building in modern times. In him religion manifested itself as one, and the collective life we have to upbuild in India is to reflect and reproduce that manifestation. Sri Ramakrishna has furnished us with the very keynote of our nationalism, the very inspiration of our patriotism, and miserably blind is he, blind to pitiful profanation, who seeks to derive from politics the inspiration of our patriotism and nation-building.

So the picture of Sri Ramakrishna is not only the God-revealed symbol of religious unity for all mankind, but also through that self-same fact it becomes the God-revealed symbol of national unity in India. When looking at his picture, therefore, let us remember that through him not only religion has become one, but through him India, so long self-divided, has at last become one. Through the symbol in the picture, a Hindu has become united to a Mahomedan, a Christian to a Hindu, a Mahomedan to a Christian. On the strength of that symbol in the picture, every man in this world professing any religion may call every other man his brother in religion. And what has been for the whole world a problem in religion has become providentially in India a problem in nation-building,

aye, the fundamental problem therein. The various religious faiths and creeds of mankind have found their way into India, creating this fundamental problem. For in India it is not the unity of political interest, but that of spiritual interest, which supplies the throne on which the nation is to sit in glory. And this unity of spiritual interest was assured to India when religion revealed itself as one in Sri Ramakrishna. So in the hand of every son of India, the picture of Sri Ramakrishna becomes fraught with an added significance, for it symbolises his national unity with all his countrymen. It is a picture which signifies to him the glory and the promise of his own spiritual salvation and the salvation of his country through nationalism.

This Symbol of Divine Love strong to save, of religious unity for all mankind and national unity for India deserves to be enshrined no doubt in every household and temple. And in proportion as this profound symbolism is brought home to all possessors of this picture, the prospect of our national welfare as well as that of the whole world becomes bright indeed.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA : THE GREAT MASTER.

FOREWARD AND THE ANCESTRAL ABODE AT DEREYPORE.

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THE student of Indian History is familiar with the fact, how during each transition period of the country, spiritual teachers of great importance have risen and guided the people to save their national inheritance, "the spiritual basis of collective life and conduct" on which they had been established from very early times by their Scriptures, the Vedas. The advent of Sri Krishna during a time when the dominant Kshatriya or military power of the country tried to subvert that basis by controlling the spiritual power exerted by

the Brahman teachers—the birth of Buddha at a time when the spirituality of the Brahman teachers had degenerated into mere elaborate observance of external sacrifices, rites and ceremonies—the rise of Sankara during the downfall of Buddhism are notable instances of the aforesaid fact which the tradition of the country holds before the view of the enquiring student of history.

Coming down to periods where history more fully illumines the path of the enquirer and he feels himself on more solid ground, we find the same principle working in history. We find that Ramanuja the great teacher of qualified monism appeared in 1150 A. D.—a period during which the great Moslem power had first entered the country and was struggling to establish itself there as a permanent factor; that Guru Nanak and Sri Chaitanya were contemporaries of Babar, the great Mogul who established himself on the throne of Delhi by winning the first battle of Panipat in 1426 A. D. against the Afghan Lodis and started a line of his own which for a period of about two and a half centuries ruled over the destinies of almost the whole of India.

During the time when India was overrun by the Mohanmedans the country had to pass through great transitions, for India became gradually conscious of the fact that the Mohammedan element had come to remain in the land and through peace and adversity, through friendship and enmity, was going to influence the habits, the character, the language and the literature, nay even the religious ideas of her people at large. She found out moreover that the gradual process of Aryanisation through which the Vedic religion was fusing together in one homogeneous whole, the various races and creeds that had come to dwell within her boundaries in the past ages, met with a check in the advent of that new ruling power, and that she would have not only to find out and adopt the way of assimilating the same, but to adjust herself in such a way that she could successfully preserve the hallowed ideals for which she had striven so long. Such were some of the problems during the Mohammedan occupation of the land, which its religious reformers had to solve for the benefit of the people, and that the country had been guided aright during those troublous times we gather from the fact of the fierce fanaticism of

the first Islamic invaders being toned down to a considerable degree as they settled down on the soil.

But India was destined to pass through a much greater transition in later times when the great empire of the Moguls fell into pieces after the third battle of Panipat in 1761 A. D. and the rule of the country gradually slipped into the hands of the British. For at this time came the avalanche of the materialistic ideas and principles of life which were so foreign to the land, and it looked for a time as if the very foundation of the collective spiritual life of the people was going to be undermined and destroyed by them. Never in the history of India did the prospect of such a ruin overshadow her people as during the time when it was decided by her British rulers that her people should have to receive the benefits of the Western methods of education through the medium of the English language. For whatever might be urged in praise of that great reform introduced into the country during the government of Lord W. C. Bentinck, 1828–1836 A. D.—and we are not slow to appreciate the great merits of the same,—it must also be said of it on the other hand that it spread a sort of baneful hypnotising influence over the people of the land. For judging from the results within a short time after its introduction, we find that the majority of the people educated on that line, lost all faith in their former religions beliefs and institutions and strove to model every thing Indian in the Western way.

None can say how far the country would have proceeded along this line of self-destruction by imitating Western methods without the attempt to assimilate them properly, had it not been for the strong check that it received from an opposing power coming from an unrecognised and unlooked-for quarter, namely, that sphere of life and thought where lay neglected the seemingly dead bones of the religion of the country. And the opposition set up by this new power came not, as ordinarily, in the shape of protest and condemnation, but in the positive, direct and the stronger way of building up a synthetic life and thought entirely by the application of old Indian ideals without any blind imitation of what the West could offer, and the patient, silent living of that life before the eyes of the people, to let them have the opportunity of realising for themselves the utility and the practicality of

the old, time-hallowed, methods.

Thus during the greatest of all her transition periods India has been saved again as in former times, by the birth of a Seer of the first order, and it is curious to note that he was born in the self-same year in which Lord Bentinck retired from the field completing his various benign reforms including the one on the education of Indian youths, and leaving Sir Charles Metcalfe in his place to carry out the same, namely the year 1836 A. D. But strange as has been the coincidence of the organised introduction of English education on the land with its hypnotic influence on the people and the advent of one whose life has been predestined as it were to oppose the evil influences of the same, it came all the same as a fulfilment of the promise of Sri Krishna to the people in the Bhagavad-Gita, that they should be blessed with guides like his own self whensoever necessity will arise for the same, and this we shall see presently from all the events of this wonderful life.

About the time when the British power had established itself permanently in Bengal and was trying to introduce its own administration into the land under the guidance of its first Governors-in-General, Lord Clive and Warren Hastings, a Brahman family belonging to the middle class in Hindu society, had been living in the village of Dereypore, situated a little to the east of the place where the extreme western portion of the Hoogly district juts into the adjoining districts of Midnapore and Bankura. This "Chatterjee" family was living there for several generations past and was esteemed highly by the people of the village on account of the truthfulness, charity and staunch religious principles of its members. Manik Ram the head of the family at the time was living in comparative opulence with his income from the fifty acres of cultivated fields which he had inherited from his predecessors. The rumours of the defeat of Seraj-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Bengal, in the battle of Plassey in 1757 and the transfer of the Dewani of the province to British hands in 1759 must have reached the village when Manik Ram was quite young. But the incident of the terrible famine that devastated Bengal in 1770 must have been fresh in his memory, for he was about twenty years old at the time and had a direct knowledge of the sufferings of his neighbours and of his own

family on account of it. But then of the compulsory abdication of the treacherous Nawab Mir Jaffer and the accession of his son-in-law to the throne of Murshidabad, the fall of Mir Kassim in the battle of Buxar in 1764 A. D., the depredations of the Bhonsla family of the Marhattas of Nagpore and the defeat which the Marhatta power had suffered in the field of Panipat in 1761 A. D.—and of all such events of the time, which had helped to change considerably the destiny of India, Manik Ram and his neighbours were perhaps perfectly ignorant. For sovereigns came and sovereigns went and the rulership of the country changed hands a hundred times from ages immemorial, but the mild, industrious, home-loving and obedient rural people of the Bengal villages always thought that they had nothing to do with such big concerns and remained occupied, in their blissful innocence, with their peaceful pursuits and their religious observances.

Be that as it may, Manik Ram must have married, as was customary with his people, sometime after he had passed his teens and became gradually the father of three sons and a daughter of whom the eldest was born probably in 1775 A. D. about five years after the terrible famine. The family following the Vaishnava cult had worshipped Sri Ramachandra as its tutelary God from long by-gone ages. So Manik Ram named all his children after that Deity. Thus the oldest born was named Khudi-Ram or the little Ram; the daughter who came next was called Ramsila or devoted to Ram; and the two sons who followed, were named Nidhi-Ram and Ram-kanai respectively.

The children of Manik Ram were all brought up in accordance with the best traditions of a Brahman family. They received their initiation in the three R's in the village Pathsala and were then sent to the neighbouring Chatuspathis or Toles to receive a knowledge of Sanskrit grammar, literature, Puranas, Smritis or Hindu laws and customs with perhaps a little of astronomy and astrology. The eldest of them Khudiram with whom we are most concerned here in this narrative got married after finishing his education at about the age of twenty-four. His sister Ramsila must have been married long before that event; for, as the readers know, Hindu girls used to be betrothed at a very early age, though they continued

to live with their parents until they came of age. So Ramsila was married at an early age to Bhagbat Banerjee of a well-to-do family of the village Selampur in the District of Midnapore.

Khudiram became the head of the family in course of time on the decease of his father and was held in great respect by his neighbours on account of his piety, uprightness, charity and strength of character. It is said that he had made pilgrimages even at that age to Ajodhya, and Brindaban, but of that we are not quite certain. It is true nevertheless that he had a great devotion for his family Deity, Bhagavan Ramchandra, and never in his life tasted food until after performing his daily worship of Him. He used to manage the affairs of the family with the help of his two younger brothers who also got married in time, and everything went on peacefully as it did during the time of his father.

It is a blessing to win the affection of a noble woman in this world. So Khudiram must have felt himself more than happy at this period of his life. For, Chandramoni, or as she was called generally by her friends and acquaintances—Chandrá, the wife of Khudiram, was indeed a noble woman. Loving and dutiful, she had the knack of forgetting herself entirely in the joy of helping others even from her tender youth. Thus she had endeared herself not only to her husband's family but was loved by all, who came across her path. To crown the happiness of the family she became the mother of a boy about the year 1805 A. D. and it made her feel henceforth as if she was the mother of all the children of the neighbourhood. The happy mother called her first-born by the name of Ram-Kumar or the child Rama.

Little as were the wants of this Brahman family those had been met more than sufficiently from their income on the produce of their fields. Thus they could not only afford to advance hospitality to their neighbours on festive occasions and help the stranger and poor at all times by supplying them with food and shelter for a few days, but were able to lay by something for their own use during all future contingencies, as for instance the days of draught and scarcity. Thus time rolled on for several years more in peace and plenty, and the even flow of their lives were seldom broken except on occasions of new members being added

to the family from time to time in the event of a boy or a girl being born, or on occasions of marriage or of some religious observances.

Chandrá the wife of Khudiram became the mother again of a girl about the year 1810 and named her Katyayani. And Ramsila the sister of Khudiram who had become the mother in turn of a boy and a girl some time ago and named them Ramchand and Hemangini respectively—gave the latter in marriage to Krishna Chandra Mukherji of the village of Sihar, a place situated a few miles to the north-west of Dereypore. It is said that Khudiram was very fond of this girl and so her marriage was celebrated at her uncle's home at Derey instead of her paternal residence at Selampore as it ought to have been.

The brightest day has its night, and the most peaceful life its dark days of adversity. And the cloud that hurled the thunderbolt and brought ruin on Khudiram's peaceful days arose now from an unlooked-for quarter of the horizon in about the year 1813 in the shape of a request from the landlord of the place, who had his abode in the adjoining village of Satberia. This zemindar was a most unscrupulous man who had never stopped from gaining his ends by fair means or foul. And woe to the tenant who roused his ire for just or unjust reasons, for he would then get himself embroiled in endless troubles and law-suits and in a short while find himself dispossessed of every thing that he had and ousted from the village in utter helplessness. Such a man was Ramananda Roy and numerous were the stories that people whispered in their fear to one another about his dark deeds. The man died without living any issue and the people in their relief saw the hand of God in it, but that was a long time after Ramananda out of an old grudge had picked up a quarrel with a neighbour of Khudiram and in order to secure his defeat in the suit that he got up against him had invited Khudiram to give false evidence on his own side. Khudiram met his proposal with intense disdain, with the result that he also was unfairly implicated in a protracted law-suit within a short time. Ramananda Roy won the suit in the end and honest Khudiram after meeting the expenses of the same found himself at about his fortieth year dispossessed of every vestige of property as well as all rights to his

ancestral house and fields. In their utter ruin the members of the Chatterjee family must have held a hurried council and it was decided that they should disband themselves and depart forever from the old village of their forefathers to keep themselves away from further revenge of the wicked Ramananda. Bitter indeed was the parting day when the two younger brothers left Dereypore to live with their father-in-law respectively and Khudiram and his devoted wife bade adieu to their ancestral abode and with their young boy and girl turned their reluctant steps eastward to a different village in response to the invitation of a kind friend. All that were left behind now to tell to future generations of the sad story of the Chatterjees were the temple of Siva and the big tank adjoining it—and these are known even to this day as the temple and the tank belonging to the Chatterjee family.

Swami Saradananda.

CREATION AS EXPLAINED IN THE TANTRA.

BY MR. JUSTICE J. G. WOODROFFE.

(Continued from page 41.)

In a certain class of Indian images you will see the Lord with a diminutive female figure on His lap. The makers and worshippers of those images thought of Shakti as being in the subordinate position which some persons consider a Hindu wife should occupy. This is however not the conception of Tantra according to which She is not a handmaid of the Lord but the Lord Himself, being but the name for that aspect of His in which He is the Mother and Nourisher of the worlds. As Shiva is the transcendent, Shakti is the immanent aspect of the one Brahman who is Shiva-Shakti. Being Its aspect, it is not different from, but one with It. In the Kulachudamani Nigama the Bhairavi addressing Bharava says "Thou art the Guru of all, I entered into Thy body (as Shakti) and thereby Thou didst become the Lord (Prabhu). There is none but Myself who is the Mother to create (Karyavibhavini). Therefore it is that when creation takes place sonship is in Thee. Thou

alone art the Father who wills what I do (Karyavibhavaka; that is She is the vessel which receives the nectar which flows from Nityananda). By the union of Shiva and Shakti creation comes (Shiva-Shaktisamayogat jayate srishtikalpana). As all in the universe is both Shiva and Shakti (Shivashaktimaya) therefore Oh Maheshvara Thou art in every place and I am in every place. Thou art in all and I am in all." The creative Word thus sows Its seed in its own womb.

Such being the nature of Shakti the next question is whether Maya as Shanghara affirms is Avastu. It is to be remembered that according to his empirical method it is taken as real but transcendently it is alleged to be an eternal unreality because the object of the latter method is to explain away the world altogether so as to secure the pure unity of the Brahman. The Tantra is however not concerned with any such purpose. It is an Upasana Shastra in which the world substance and its Lord have reality. There cannot be Sadhana in an unreal world by an unreal Sadhaka of unreal Lord. The Tantra replies to Mayavada:—If it be said that Maya is in some unexplained way Avastu, yet it is admitted that there is something, however unreal it may be alleged to be, which is yet admittedly eternal and in association whether manifest or unmanifest with the Brahman. According to Shanghara Maya exists as the mere potentiality of some future world-dream which shall rise on the ripening of Adrishta which Maya is. But in the Mahanirvana Tantra, Shiva says to Devi "Thou art Thyself the Para Prakriti of the Paramatma." (Ch. IV. v. 10). That is Maya, in the sense of Mulaprakriti, which is admittedly eternal, is not Avastu but exists in the Brahman as one of two principles the other of which is Chit. In Nishkala Shiva, Maya lies inactive. It manifests on and as creation though Chit thus appearing with the three Gunas is neither exhausted nor affected thereby. We thus find Ishvari addressed in the Tantra both as Sachchidanandarupini and Trigunatmika referring to the two real Principles which form part of the one Brahman substance. The philosophical difference between the two expositions appears to lie in this. Shanghara says that there are no distinctions in Brahman of either of the three kinds: svagata bheda, that is distinction of parts within one unit; svajatiya bheda or distinction

between units of one class; or vijatiya bheda or distinction between units of different classes. Bharati, however, the Commentator on the Mahanirvana (Ch. II, v. 34) says that Advaita there mentioned means devoid of the last two classes of distinction. There is therefore for the purposes of Tantra a svagata bheda in the Brahman Itself namely the two aspects according to which the Brahman is on the one hand, Being, Spirit, Chit; and on the other the principle of Becoming (Ahit) which manifests as nature. In, however, a mysterious way there is an union of these two principles (Bhavayoga) which thus exist without derogation from the partless unity of the Brahman which they are. In short the Brahman may be conceived as having twin aspects in one of which It is the cause of the world and appears to change and in the other of which It is the unchanging Soul of the world. Whilst the Brahman Svarupa or Chit is itself immutable, it is yet the efficient cause of change in the sense that by the association of Chit with the Mayik principle in the Brahman substance Prakriti creates the world.

But what then is "real", a term not always correctly understood? According to Indian notions the real is that which ever was, is and will be (Kalatraya Sattavan); in the words of the Christian liturgy "as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." Therefore that which changes, which was not, but is, and then ceases to be, is according to this definition unreal, however much from a practical point of view it may appear real to us. Now Mayavada calls Mulaprakriti, the material cause of the world, unreal (Avastu). The Tantra says that the Principle, whence all becoming comes, exists as a real substratum, so to speak, below the world of names and forms. This maya is an eternal reality: what is unreal are these names and forms (Avidya), that is the changing worlds (asattriloki-sadbhanang-svarupang Brahmanah smritang. Chap. III, v. 7 Mahanirvana Tantra). These are unreal for they are not permanent but come and go. The body is called Sharira which comes from the root "Shri" "to decay;" for it is dissolving and being renewed at every moment until death. Again, however real it may seem to us, the world is unreal in the sense that it is something other than what it seems to be. This thing which I now hold in my hands seems

to me to be paper, which is white, smooth and so forth, yet we are told that it really is something different namely a number of extraordinarily rapid vibrations of etheric substance producing the false appearance of scientific "matter." In the same way (as those who worship yantras know) all nature is the appearance produced by various forms of motion in Prakritic substance. The real is the Brahman which all things are (sarvva khalvidam Brahman), that is spirit, and that associated primordial Substance which in a way unknown to us exists in It but without derogation from Its partless spiritual unity. That this is not perceived is due to Avidya or those limitations which are inherent in our nature as created beings (Jiva). The Brahman whether in Its Chit or Maya aspect eternally and changelessly endures but Avidya or Sangskara appears to break up Its undivided unity into the unreal, that is, the changing manifold world of name and form which are imputed to it.

It follows from the above that as Maya is the body of Ishvara, the Ishvara-body is in Tantra eternal, though in dissolution (pralaya) it exists in a latent potential state. Whilst the phenomenal world is unreal the world-principle or body of the Lord is an eternal reality. Ishvara is not therefore in the terms of the Paravidya of Shankara a transitory appearance of the Brahman viewed through the veil. As the reality of Mulaprakriti is affirmed the theory is in this sense dualistic (Dvaitavada). But again it is monistic (Advaitavada) for as Sangkara points out (Comm. Svetasvatara Up. 1. 2) Devatmashakti, the cause of the world, is not separate from the Paramatma as Sangkhya alleges its Pradhana to be. And thus it is that Shiva in the Kularnava Tantra (1. 110) says "some desire dualism (Dvaitavada), others monism (Advaitavada). Such however know not My truth, which is beyond both monism and dualism (dvaitadvaitavivarjitam)." This saying may doubtless mean that to the "knower" (Jnani) the arguments of philosophical systems are of no account as is indeed the case. It has also a more literal meaning as above explained. The Shastra in fact makes high claims for itself. The Tantra it has been said takes into its arms, as if they were its two children, both dualism and monism, affording by its practical method (Sadhana) and the spiritual knowledge generated thereby the means by which their antinomies are resolved and

harmonised. Its purpose is to give liberation to the Jiva by a method according to which monistic truth is reached through the dualistic world; immersing its Sadhakas in the current of Divine Bliss by changing duality into unity and then evolving from the latter a dualistic play thus proclaiming the wonderful glory of the Spouse of Paramashiva in the love embrace of Matter (Jada) and spirit (Chaitanya). It therefore says that those who have realised this, move and yet remain unsoiled in the mud of worldly actions which led others upon the downward path. It claims therefore that its practical method (Sadhana) is more specially fruitful than any other. Its practical method is an application of the general principles above described. In fact one of its Acharas which has led to abuse is an attempt to put into full practice the theory of Advaitavada. Shangkara has in his transcendental method dealt with the subject as part of the Jnana Kanda. Though the exponent of the Mayavada is esteemed to be a Mahapurusha, this method is not in favour with the Tantrik Sadhaka who attributes much of the practical atheism which is to be found in this country as elsewhere to the transcendental doctrines of Mayavada. There is some truth in this charge for, as had been well said, the vulgarization of Shangkara's "Higher Science" which is by its nature an esoteric doctrine destined for a small minority must be reckoned a misfortune in so far as it has in the language of the Gita induced many people to take to another's Dharma instead of to their own which is the "Lower Science" of the great Vedantin followed in all Shastras of worship. Such a Shastra must necessarily affirm God as a real object of worship. Dionysius the Areopagite, the chief of the line of all Christian mystics, said that we could only speak "apophatically" of the Supreme as It existed in Itself that is other than as It displays Itself to us. Of It nothing can be affirmed but that It is not this and not that. Here he followed the "neti neti" of the Vedanta. Ishvari is not less real than the things with which we are concerned every day. She is for the Indian Sadhaka the highest reality and what may or may not be the state of Videha Mukti has for him, as the Tantra says, no practical concern. Those only who have attained it will know whether Shangkara is right or not; not that they will think about this

or any other subject; but in the sense that when the Brahman is known all is known. A friend, from whom I quote, writes that he had once occasion to learn to what ridiculous haughtiness some of the modern "adepts" of Sri Sangkara's school are apt to let themselves be carried away when one of them spoke to him of the personal Ishvara as being a "pitiable creature." The truth is that such so-called "adepts" are no adepts at all being without the attainment and far from the spirit of Shangkara whose devotion and powers made him seem to be to his followers an incarnation of Shiva Himself. Such a remark betrays a radical misunderstanding of the Vedanta. Some of those who to-day discuss his Vedanta from a merely literary standpoint have neither his nor indeed any faith. What some would do is to dismiss the faith and practice of Sangkara as idle superstition and to adopt his philosophy. What is the intrinsic value of a philosophy which emanates from a mind which is so ignorant as to be superstitious? Shangkara however has said that faith and Sadhana are the preliminaries for competency (Adhikara) for the Jnanakanda. He alone is competent (Adhikari) who possesses all good moral and intellectual qualities, faith (Shraddha), capacity for the higher contemplation (Samadhi) the Sangkhyan discrimination (Viveka) absence of all desire for anything in this world or the next, and an ardent longing of liberation. There are few indeed who can claim even imperfectly all such qualifications. But what of the rest? There is no Vaidik Karmakanda in operation in the present age but there are other Shastras of worship which is either Vaidik Tantrik or Pauranik. These provide for those who are still, as are most, on the path of desire. The Tantra affirms that nothing of worth can be achieved without Sadhana. Mere speculation is without result. This principle is entirely sound whatever may be thought of the mode in which it is sought to be applied. Those to whom the questions here discussed are not mere matters for intellectual business or recreation will recall that Shangkara has said that liberation is attained not merely by the discussion of and pondering upon revealed truth (Vichara) for which few only are competent, but by the grace of God (Ishvara anugraha) through the worship of the Mother and Father from whom all creation springs. Such wor-

ship produces knowledge. In the *Kulachudamani* the Devi says:—"O all-knowing One if Thou knowest Me then of what use are the Amnayas (revealed teachings) and Yajanam (ritual). If thou knowest Me not then of what use again are they?" But neither are without their uses for thereby the Sadhaka becomes qualified for some form of *Urddhvamnaya* in which there are no rites (Karma).

With this short exposition of the nature of *Shakti-tattva* according to Tantra I pass to an equally brief account of its manifestation as the Universe. There are some apparent varieties of detail in the various Tantras. Our present knowledge of this little known *Shastra* is so small that it would be hazardous (even were it possible which is by no means certain) to construct a scheme with claims to represent their combined teachings. Nor is it necessary for the present purpose to do so. It is sufficient to deal with the main lines of the doctrine without going into their very great accompanying detail. I here follow on the main theme the account given in the celebrated *Sharada Tilaka* a work written by *Lakshmanacharyya* the Guru of *Abhinava Gupta* the great Kashmirian Tantrik about the commencement of the eleventh century and its Commentary by the learned Tantrik Pandit *Raghava Bhatta* which is dated 1454 A. D.

Why creation takes place cannot in an ultimate sense be explained. It is the play (*Lila*) of the Mother. Could this be done the Brahman would be subject to the law of causality which governs the Universe but which its Cause necessarily transcends.

The Tantra however in common with other Indian *Shastras* recognises *Adrishta Srishti* or the doctrine that the impulse to creation is proximately caused by the *Adrishta* or Karma of Jiva. But Karma is eternal and itself requires explanation. Karma comes from *Sangskara* and *Sangskara* from Karma. The process of creation, maintenance and dissolution according to this view unceasingly recurs as an eternal rhythm of cosmic life and death which is Mother's play (*Lila*). And so it is beautifully said of Her in the *Lalita Sahasranama* that "the series of universes appear and disappear with the opening and shutting of Her Eyes." The existence of Karma implies the will to cosmic life. We produce it as the result of such will. And when produced it becomes itself the cause of it.

In the aggregate of Karma, which will at one period or another ripen, there is at any particular time some which are ripe and others which are not so. For the fruition of the former only creation takes place. When this seed ripens and the time therefore approaches for the creation of another universe the Brahman manifests in its *vishvarupa* aspect so that the Jiva may enjoy or suffer therein the fruits of his Karma and (unless liberation be attained) accumulate fresh Karma which will involve the creation of future worlds. When the unripened actions which are absorbed in *Maya* become in course of time ripe, the *Vritti* of *Maya* or *Shakti* in the form of desire for creation arises in *Paramashiva* for the bestowal of the fruit of this Karma. This state of *Maya* is variously called by *Shruti* *Ikshana*, *Ichchha*, *Kama*, *Vichikirsha*.

It is when the Brahman "saw" "desired" or "thought" "May I be many" that there takes place what is known in Tantra as *Sadrisha parinama* in which the Supreme *Vindu* appears. This in its triple aspect is known as *Kamakala* a manifestation of *Shakti* whence in the manner hereafter described the Universe emanates. This *Kamakala* is the *Mula* or root of all *Mantra*. Though creation takes place in order that Karma may be suffered and enjoyed, yet in the aggregate of Karma which will at one time or another ripen, there is at any particular period some which are ripe and others which are not so. For the fruition of the former only creation takes place. As creation will serve no purpose in the case of Karma which is not ripe, there is after the exhaustion by fruition of the ripe Karma a dissolution (*Pralaya*). Then the Universe is again merged in *Maya* which thus abides until the ripening of the remaining actions. Karma like everything else re-enters the Brahman and remains there in a hidden potential state as if it were a seed. When the seed ripens creation again takes place.

With *Ikshana* or the manifestation of creative will creation is really instantaneous. When the "Word" went forth "Let there be light" there was light for the ideation of *Ishvara* in creative. Our mind by its constitution is however led to think of creation as a gradual process. The *Sangkhya* starts with the oscillation of the *Gunas* (*Gunakshobha*) upon which the *Vikritis* immediately appear. But just as it explains its real *Parinama* in terms of

successive emanations so the Tantra describes a Sadrisha Parinama in the body of Ishvara their cause. This development is not a real Parinama but a resolution of like to like, that is there is no actual change in the nature of the entity dealt with, the various stages of such Parinama being but names for the multiple aspects to us of the same unchanging unity.

(To be continued).

THE PANAMA CANAL: ITS OPENING CELEBRATION.

(*Concluded from page 45.*)

Within four months of this treaty work was begun under U. S. A. control on May 4th, 1904. What challenged the pluck and perseverance of the whole organisation most, and what practically baffled the same of the earlier organisations was the slides and breaks closing up excavated areas and upsetting excavating arrangements. Some idea of the magnitude of these slides may be formed from the fact that out of 14,921,750 cubic yards excavated and removed during the final year 1910, 2,649,000 cubic yards, or 18 per cent. were from slides or breaks that had previously existed or developed during that year.

The other most difficult problem tackled by the United States was "how to make the Canal Zone healthful. This strip of land from ocean to ocean abounded in disease-breeding swamps and filthy habitations unfit for human beings. The death rate was appalling and the labour conditions terrible." So the American government had to do here what may perhaps be described as the greatest achievement of modern sanitary engineering. It was no easy method of sprinkling kerosine or distributing quinine. The whole length of the Canal Zone had to be transformed in its topographical features, what with clearing lands and what with draining and filling pools and swamps for the extermination of mosquitoes. Healthy settlements were established in various places with big reservoirs, pavements and modern roads. "Over 2000 buildings were constructed besides the remodelling of 1500 buildings turned over by the French company." The greatest number employed at any time was 45000 of which 5000 only were Americans, and for these

thousands, an adequate food supply had to be maintained, and hotels, messes and kitchens provided. Hospitals and suitable quarantine quarters were established in the settlements for the care of the sick and injured. Thus the hygienic success achieved was so reassuring that work on the canal became popular even in Europe.

The canal traverses the Isthmus of Panama from Colon on the north to Panama on the south, from northwest to southeast, the Pacific terminus being twenty two miles east of the Atlantic entrance. The total length of the canal from deep water in the Caribbean Sea, an arm of the Atlantic, 41 foot depth at mean tide, to deep water in the Pacific, 45 foot depth at mean tide, is practically 50 miles, 15 miles of which are at sea level. "The approach from the Atlantic is via a channel, 500 ft. wide and 41 ft. deep at mean tide, through Limon Bay to the Gatun Locks, about seven miles long. Here at the Gatun Locks, vessels are lifted 85 feet by a series of three locks in flight to the level of Gatun Lake, an artificial sheet of fresh water 171 square miles in area. Through this lake for about 23 miles to Bas Obispo the channel is from 500 to 1000 ft. wide and 45 to 85 feet deep, defined by range lighthouses and navigable at full speed. From Bas Obispo to Pedro Miguel, about 9 miles through the Culebra Cut, the channel has a bottom width of 300 feet and a depth of 45 ft. At Pedro Miguel vessels are lowered 30 feet to the level of Miraflores Lake, through which they pass for 1½ miles to the Miraflores Locks, there to be lowered in two stages or flights 55 feet to the mean sea level of the Pacific Ocean. From these locks to deep water in the Pacific the channel is 500 ft. wide and 45 ft. deep at mean tide," and about 9 miles in length.

In the canal there are six pairs of locks: the three pairs at Gatun, the one pair at Pedro Miguel and the two pairs at Miraflores. The lock gates are of steel and each is 7 ft. thick and 65 ft. broad, the height varying from 47 to 82 ft. In all there are 92 leaves weighing 57000 tons. To operate these gates and to tow vessels into, through and from the locks by electric locomotives running on cog-wheels, electric power generated from the head created by the Gatun Dam and actuating water turbines will be employed. The average time required to pass a ship through the locks is esti-

mated at 3 hours and the passages from deep water to deep water at from 9 to 12 hours.

At Bas Obispo, a place mentioned above, River Chagres meets the canal which then runs through the Culebra Cut up to the Pedro Miguel Locks. The river flows the other way, till it is separated from the canal and the Gatun Lake near Gatun. But it is here intercepted in its course by the great Gatun Dam, "a veritable hill—7500 feet overall, 2100 feet wide at the base, 298 ft. through at the water surface, and 100 ft. wide at the top, which is 115 feet above sea level. This dam contains about 21,000,000 cubic yards of stone, concrete and miscellaneous material mostly composed of dirt, 'a thing before unheard of.' Fluctuations in the water level of the Gatun Lake are controlled by an immense spillway dam in the parent dam permitting a discharge, through 14 openings in the form of an arc of a circle 740 ft. in length, of 140,000 cubic ft. per second. The water discharged will flow through the old bed of Chagres River to the sea, generating the electric power necessary for operating the locks.

In the whole canal there are 22 angles or coarse changes, but 1000 foot ships can navigate through them all easily and safely.

The Panama Canal is thus one of the greatest monuments of human engineering ability and no less of the science of hygienic sanitation. The great financial outlay which a nation has made to win this great victory for scientific organisation of human labour recalls the Sanskrit verse which thus "defines a lion among kings":

यः काकिन्यप्यथप्रपन्नां
समुद्रेत्रिष्कसहस्रतुल्यां
काले च कोटिष्यपि मुक्तहस्तः
तं राजसिंहं न जहाति लक्ष्मीः ।

He who saves a broken cowrie from being wasted as if it were a thousand gold mohurs, but, when occasion arises, from whose hands millions of money flow freely out as it were, this lion among Kings the Goddess of wealth never forsakes. It is not only wealth and learning, but also the wonderful power of organisation that could bring this herculean task to accomplishment. The opening of the Panama Canal is no doubt a great event whose significance should not escape the notice of mankind, too much occupied to-day with the

great war in Europe. It is an event which shows that civilisation in the West has both its benignant and malignant aspects, and the greatest problem for mankind is to discover that they are not necessarily implied in each other, so that the latter may well be eliminated to leave the former to rise resplendent on the basis of a spiritual scheme of life.

ON THE CONNING TOWER.

IS the Advaitism of the Tantras different from the Advaitism of Sankarácárya? Few thoughts on this question may not be out of place here, seeing that the learned paper on the Tantric theory of creation which we are enabled to publish through the courtesy of the writer seems plainly to involve a reply to it in the affirmative. In July last year while discussing the evolution of the Tantra-worship we sought to prove that the Tantras constitute a legitimate restatement of the whole Vedic culture with a view to meet new problems and new difficulties in the social and religious history of India. If Advaitavada as understood by Sankara be the crowning glory of that Vedic culture, is it likely that the Tantras which seeks to restate that culture through new forms of spiritual discipline and ritualism would strike a note of dissent against the very essentials of the doctrine? Possibly not.

Even in the practice of a religion of which the Advaita is the goal, it is mostly necessary to accept dualism provisionally; and it is often naturally found that *sadhakas* or worshippers, in such provisional stages of progress, and teachers while describing Tantrik doctrines from the standpoint of such stages, are seeking to reconcile as far as possible a dualistic view with the monastic goal set before them all. Instances of such attempt may very well be found in the literature of the Tantras, and the recognition of *svagata veda* (or distinction of parts within one unit) in Brahman may just be one of them. But it would be belying our own experiences of Tantrik worship and discipline to admit that the Tantras do not uphold the conception of a Brahman, *nishkála*, *niravayaba*, *ekarasa*, that is, *one* beyond any type of organic unity. In fact, the truest position is to hold that the Tantras

as much incorporate into themselves the monism of Sankara as other types of qualified monism or even dualism, reflecting in this respect that harmony of such doctrines which, we maintain, is a marvellous feature of the ancient Vedic culture.

Shakti-worship may of course be admitted to be a special feature developed and emphasised in the Tantras a good deal. The doctrine of Mulaprakriti has therefore a more important bearing and a greater significance in Tantrik expositions of spiritual life and progress. But the Tantras need not, and in fact do not, maintain the absolute reality of Mulaprakriti at the expense of the absolute unity of Brahman, for they almost invariably make the Mulaprakriti perfectly identical with Brahman in the absolute or Nirguna state. If the absolute you agree to regard as beyond all distinctions, *svagata* or otherwise, it matters nothing at all whether you call it the Brahman or Mulaprakriti or anything else. If you want to maintain to the last the reality of Shakti, you may say without any prejudice to Sankara's monism that ultimately Shakti remains as Brahman indistinguishable from it. Sankara says that Maya or Shakti we find empirically to exist as a separate entity, but transcendently we do not find it to exist as such, therefore Maya is *sadasadanirvachaniya*, i. e. incapable of being characterised either as real or unreal. Coming down from the Absolute State, when we find the Creator united to Maya as creation is on the point of coming to exist, Sankara still describes Maya as *tattvanyatvavyang anirvachaniye namarupe avyâkrite vyachikirshite*.* So in the very first impulse of Becoming, Maya exists, but beyond that there is Absolute Oneness as the only Reality. You may call that Brahman or Shakti as you like, but it is not Brahman or Shakti, that is, a duality in any sense.

To make the position clear, let us analyse our conception of Vastu or a reality and its Shakti, How do we get our ideal of Shakti? When we see

* Name and form, which can be defined neither as identical with Brahman (as Creator or Ikshita) nor as different from it, unevolved but about to be evolved.—Dr. Thibaut's translation (Vide. The Vyasa Sutra, Part 1, Chap. 1, Sutra 5.).

fire burning anything brought into contact with it, we say fire has the Shakti to burn. That is to say, when some change is produced we say that this object or that has the power or Shakti of bringing about that change. So our experience of a change produced by an object abides with us as the recognition of a corresponding Shakti in that object, and as long as the change is real to us, the Shakti must be real too. Similarly, we cannot but postulate a Mayashakti when we find that a change has been produced in or superimposed on the Absolute One without a second, in the shape of this creation. So long as this change is real to us we are bound to postulate a Mayasakti. So long as we have to recognise or think of this change, we have also to recognise in Brahman a Mayasakti: we can never transcend this intellectual necessity. But when change becomes unreal to us, when there is no perception of change, when it is all the consciousness of One Absolute Reality, there cannot rise at that time even the *prasanga* or question of a Mayashakti. All we can say therefore at present is that considered transcendently Mayashakti is perfectly *aveda* or one with Brahman and has no transcendental existence as an entity in any sense separate from Brahman. If Sankara maintains the transcendental unreality of Maya, he does so in the sense that Maya ceases to exist there, as it does here i. e. to the empirical reason, as a separate entity. But the Tantras maintain on the other hand the transcendental reality of Maya in the other sense that Maya exists there as Brahman. These two views are perfectly in harmony, and this harmony we find fully represented in the teachings and tenets of Sri Ramakrishna, the greatest Tantrik as well as the Advaitin of the modern age.

How often Sri Ramakrishna used to reiterate that truth realised by him that "ब्रह्म ओ शक्ति अभेद," "Brahman and Shakti are one"! He used to say that Kali when *nirguna* or absolute is Brahman, and when Brahman is *saguna*, it is Kali. He used to speak of this Nirguna and Saguna aspects of the same Kali, his Mother. Here we find Tantrikism absorbing fully into itself the Advaitavada of Sankara. This may of course imply a higher conception of Kali or Maya than what the Sankhya or some other ancient philosophies are found to recognise, in as much as Prakriti is spoken of as

being beyond the Gunas in her transcendental aspect, but all the same so far as the Tantras are concerned, we find that in them the highest Advaitavada has been incorporated by laying on the ultimate identification of Maya with Brahman an emphasis which Sankara had no philosophical interest to lay, but for which he may even be said to have supplied the cue by the Brahmakāranavada he maintains in some of his commentaries. There we find him very often speaking of Brahman in the same way as the Tantras speak of Mulaprakriti. And this is nothing to wonder at simply because, as Sri Ramakrishna the man of realisation at the present age used to impress upon us, Brahman and Shakti are one and the same reality,—a truth we have been enjoined upon by the great Master never to lose sight of, whatever be the stage of spiritual progress we may be travelling through for the while.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANNIVERSARY

(SUMMARISED REPORTS)

AT THE MATH, BELUR.

THE eightieth birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna Deva was celebrated on Sunday, the 21st Feb. last at the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order and Mission with all the pomp and enthusiasm with which such celebration there is annually attended. The Tithipuja had come off there on Tuesday the previous week, and the usual ceremonies of worship and the great feast given on that occasion made the whole monastery wear an aspect of thrilling blessedness. On Sunday, the Math, as well as the extensive grounds abutting on the sacred river, was splendidly decorated and the life-like portrait of the Great Master was displayed at the head of the lawn in an artificial grove of evergreens and flowers under a beautiful canopy in a temple temporised for the purpose. From morning up to eight at night steamers belonging to the Hoare Miller & Co began to ply from Calcutta, and by railway, boat and carriage and on foot, more than 60000 people poured in from all directions. The sight of this huge concourse of people was as much stimulating to the mind, as the incessant music of devotees joining in parties of Sankirtana was inspiring to the soul. The soul-stirring tunes from concert parties and the highly devotional entertainments provided by Kali-Kirtan parties constituted most attractive features of the day, while the distribution of Prasad and

banquets spread on enclosed fields filled the hearts of thousands of visitors with pious gladness from forenoon to evening. Crowds moved about from place to place the whole day as if in an elysian fair or Mela where the only thing to be hoarded is blessed joy in the name of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. And what suffused the whole celebration with added grace and attraction was the presence in the monastery of the Holy Mother and of His Holiness the Swami Brahmananda. The fact that the huge gathering was representative of almost every race and creed indicated the approaching dawn of true nationalism in India round the rising orb of our great spiritual leader, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

AT MADRAS.

THE anniversary of the nativity of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was celebrated on Sunday, the 21st February last, in a spacious pandal specially erected in the compound of the Ramakrishna Home, Brodie's Road, Mylapore. The celebration which extended over the whole day was very largely attended. The day opened with a Bhajana. As usual several thousands of the poor, irrespective of caste or creed, were fed in the forenoon, the food being served by the boys of the Ramakrishna Student's Home and a number of students of the local colleges who specially came to take part in this grand and noble work. In the afternoon there was religious discourse by Mr. M. K. Tatachiar B. A., on "the Life of Buddha." At 5-30 in the evening there was a public meeting under the presidency of the Hon'ble Mr. C. V. Kumarswamy Sastriar, Judge, Madras High Court. Mr. G. Venkataranga Rao, M. A., Secretary to the Madars Landholders' Association, read a suggestive and thoughtful paper on "the Mission of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa."—Vedanta Kesari.

AT BANGALORE.

ON Sunday the 21st February, the eightieth birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna, was celebrated by his disciples and devotees at the Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Basvangudi. The Bhajana parties from various parts of the City and Cantonment arrived at the Mutt at 10-30 a. m. At the Anjeneya Temple, Basvangudi, nearly two thousand poor people were fed between noon and 2 p. m. Brahmasri Yelhanka Venkannadas gave a Hari-katha performance in a shamiana that had been pitched in front of the Ashrama. Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, B. A. B. L., High Court Vakil, Madras, delivered an inspiring speech on Sri Ramakrishna and the New Indian Polity, when Mr. H. V. Nanjundiah, M. A. M. L. C. I. E., First Member of the Council presided. The Maha Bhagavathar of Kurthkote spoke in Kanarese about the life of Sri Ramakrishna. After Mangalarathi and the distribution of Prasad the function came to a close.

AT SIVAGANGA.

THE birthday anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was celebrated here with great eclat under the auspices of the local Rk.—V. Vedanta Sangham. The Tithipuja was formally celebrated on the 16th February. There was Veda-parayanam and Aratrika in the morning and in the evening there was a lecture on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna by Pandit V. Desikachariar Avergal. The public celebration was conducted on Sunday the 21st February. The proceeding began with Aradhanam about 8 a. m. and the chanting of Swami Abhedananda's Sri Ramakrishna Avatara Stotra a chorus and the distribution of Prasadam. Between 12 and 3 p. m., about 500 poor people were fed. The public meeting began about 4. p. m. M. R. Ry. M. K. Srinivasar, B. A., L. T., delivered a lecture on the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Brahma-Sri Subramanya Sastrigal of Pudukotta lectured in Tamil on portions of the Bhagavata Purana. The President M. R. Ry. M. G. Govindavarada Iyengar Avergal gave useful advice regarding the work and purpose of the Rk.—V. Vedanta Sangham. And the chanting of the Ramakrishna Avatara Stotra closed the public meeting. There was a Harikatha in the night by a member of the Sangham which wound up the proceedings of the day.

AT PARLAKIMIDI.

THE Birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated here on Sunday the 21st February with great enthusiasm. Early morning Rudrabhishekam was performed in the Dhavalaswara Swami's Temple, accompanied by the recitation of Vedic hymns. In the noon about 800 poor were sumptuously fed. In the evening a public meeting was convened at 4 p. m., in the spacious hall and court-yard of the Radhakanta Mutt. Brahasri V. S. Narayana Sastri Garu, Junior Telugu Pandit, treated the audience to a lucid and learned discourse on the teachings of the Paramahansa. Then followed in Uriya the eloquent lectures of Babus Balabhadras Doss and Appana Panda Guru on the life and teachings of the great Swamiji. Brahasri B. Mailayya Sastri Garu, Senior Sanskrit Pandit of the college, entertained the audience with a Harikatha Kalakshepam of the life of the Paramahansa. In the night at 8 p. m., a Sankirtan composed of the leading members of the several Chaitanya Mutts of this town was started at the Radhakanta Mutt going through the town till 1 a. m.

AT BENARES.

At the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama on the same date the celebration was held according to the following programme: at 11 a. m., feasts to more than hundred Sadhus and to more than 100 poor people; from 2 p. m. to 4 p. m. a

musical discourse on Krishnalila to an audience composed of about 500 people; in the evening a lecture on the harmony of all religions Sri Ramakrishna effected and his eagerness to bestow on all the precious fruits of his Sadhana: music from 6 p. m. to 8 p. m.

AT ALLAHABAD.

HERE the celebration on that day consisted of Puja from 9 to 11 in the morning, Bhajana from 12 to 1 at noon, feast to the poor from 1 to 2 p. m. and distribution of Prasadam from 3 to 6 p. m.

AT BARISAL.

THE Barisal Ramkrishna Mission celebrated the anniversary as follows: from 7 to 9 a. m., readings, music and feast to the poor patients of the local hospital and from 8 to 5-30 p. m. music and addresses at the hall of the Dharmarakshini Sabha and the same programme at the Mission premises from 6-30 to 8-30 p. m., followed by light refreshment.

AT DACCA.

THE celebration was held here at the late Monini Babu's house. The Ramkrishna Mission arranged a varied programme of music, readings, musical discourses on Sri Krishna's and Sri Ramakrishna's Lila and a dramatic performance of Joydeva.

AT RANGOON.

UNDER the combined auspices of the Ramakrishna Society and the Ramakrishna Sevak-Samiti the celebration was performed here on the 21st Feb. at the premises of the Social club. 500 poor people affected by a recent fire were given a feast and quantities of clothing. Lectures in Hindi, English and Bengali were delivered from 4 to 6 p. m. in a meeting presided over by Mr. P. C. Sen, the Administrator General of Burma.

AT LUCKNOW.

THE Local Ramakrishna Sevashrama celebrated the anniversary here by forming a party of Sankirtan through some of the streets of the town, by feeding the poor (400 in number) from 2 to 4 p. m. and arranging for lectures in the evening delivered by Babu Upendranath Bal M. A. and Srijut Sundar Ram Iyer.

ON the 28th Feb. the anniversary was celebrated at Ranchi with an interesting programme for the whole day. H. H. Swami Sivananda from the Belur Math having graced the occasion by his presence. At Midnapore on the same date the celebration was held with H. H. Swami Subodhananda from the Belur Math to preside over the proceedings. Besides these places, Kankhal, Brindaban, Sargachi-Murshidabad and other localities report the celebration of the anniversary.