

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

Awakened India



वसिष्ठ ज्ञानं प्राप्य वराहविषयम्।

Katha Upan. I. 10. 4.

Vol. XXI, No. 237, APRIL, 1916.

CONTENTS:

Conversations and Dialogues of Swami Vivekananda.—II	...	...	61
Occasional Notes	...	...	63
Sri Ramakrishna and the Spiritual Ideal	...	...	65
Epistles of Swami Vivekananda. —LXXXIV—LXXXVII	...	...	69
Sri Ramakrishna: The Great Master, <i>by the Swami Saradananda</i>	...	...	70
The Vairagya-Satakam or the Hundred Verses on Renunciation by Bhartrihari. (Translated into English)	...	...	73
A Sanskrit Hymn., <i>by the Swami Vivekananda</i> , (Translated)	...	...	74
On The Conning Tower: The Problem of Self-government	...	...	75
Famine Relief Work of the Ramkrishna Mission, Bankura	...	...	76
Sri Ramakrishna Anniversary	...	...	77
News and Miscellanies	...	...	80
The Mayavati Charitable Dispensary	...	...	ii

Mayavati: Almora, (Himalayas).

London: E. HAMMOND, 30 PARK ROAD, WIMBLEDON, S. W.

New York: S. E. WALDO, 249 MONROE STREET, BROOKLYN.

Kuala Lumpur: SECK, THE VIVEKANANDA READING HALL.

Indian annually

Re. 1-8.

Single copy Rs. 3.

1916.

Foreign annually

45. or \$ 1.

Single copy 4d. or 8 cents.

Prabuddha Bharata

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

Katha Upa. I. iii. 4

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

—Swami Vivekananda.

VOL. XXI]

APRIL 1916

[No. 237

CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(RECORDED BY A DISCIPLE.)

II.

[Place : *On the way from Calcutta to Kashipur and in the garden of the late Gopal Lal Seal.*

Year : 1897.

Subjects : *The sign of life : capacity for the struggle of existence ; the same law applies in the case of any human race when examining their vitality ; the cause of India's inertness,—to think herself powerless ; within every one exists the Self, the fountain of infinite power ; the sages come to show that and make that understood.]*

To-day Swamiji was taking rest at noon in the house of Srijut Girish Chandra Ghosh.* The disciple reaching there saluted him and found that Swamiji was then ready to go to the garden-house of Gopal Lal Seal. A carriage was waiting outside. He said to the disciple, "Well, come with me." The disciple agreeing, Swamiji got up with him into the carriage and it started. When it drove up the Chitpur road, on seeing the Ganges, Swamiji broke forth in a chant, self-involved : गंगातरङ्ग-रमणीय-जटाकलापं etc. The disciple listened in charmed silence to that wave of music, when after a short while seeing a railway engine going towards the Chitpur

Hydraulic bridge,—Swamiji told the disciple, "Do just see, how it goes like a Singi fish." The disciple replied, "But that is inert matter. Behind it there is the intelligence of man working, and hence it moves. In moving thus, what credit is there for it?"

Swamiji— Well, say then, what is the sign of consciousness.

Disciple— Why sir, that indeed is conscious which acts through intelligence.

Swamiji— Everything is conscious which rebels against nature : there, consciousness is manifested. Just go to kill a little ant, even it will once resist to save its life. Where there is struggle, where there is rebellion, there is the sign of life ; there consciousness is manifested.

* Girish Chandra Ghosh, the famous actor and dramatist of Bengal and a foremost devotee of Sri Ramakrishna.

Disciple— Sir, can that test be applied also in the case of man and of nations?

Swamiji— Just read the history of the world and see whether it is applicable. You will find, that excepting yours it is true in the case of all other nations. It is you only who are in this world lying prostrate to-day like inert matter. You have been hypnotised. From very old times, others have said to you, “you are weak, you have no power,” and you also, accepting that, for thousand years have gone on thinking, “we are wretched, we are good for nothing.” (Pointing to his own body, he said), this body also is born from the soil of your country; but I never thought like that. And hence don't you see, how through His will, those who always think us low and weak, even they have done and are still doing me honour as to a being superior to man. If you can think that infinite power, infinite knowledge and indomitable energy lie within you and if you can bring out that power within, you also become like me.

Disciple— Where is the capacity for thinking that way, sir? Where is the teacher or preceptor who from our childhood speaks thus before us and makes us understand? Now-a-days, what we have heard and have learnt from all is that the object of having an education is to secure some good job.

Swamiji— For that reason is it that we have come forward with quite another precept and example. Learn that truth from us, understand it and realise it; and then spread that idea broadcast, in cities, in towns and in villages. Go and preach to all, “Arise, awake, sleep no more; within each of you there is the power to remove all wants and all miseries. Believe this, and that power will be manifested.” Teach this to all and with that, spread among the masses in plain language the central truths of science, philosophy, history and geography. I have a plan to open a centre with the unmarried youths; first of all, I shall teach them, and

then carry on the work through them.

Disciple— But sir, to carry that out requires a good deal of money. Where will you get this money?

Swamiji— What do you talk! Man is it that makes money. Where did you ever hear money making man? If you can make your mind and word perfectly at one, if you can, I say, make yourself one in speech and action, money will pour in at your feet of itself like water.

Disciple— Well sir, I take for granted, however, that money would come, and you would begin that good work. But what would that matter? Before this, also, many great men carried out many good deeds. But where are they now? To be sure, the same fate awaits the work to be accomplished by you. Then, what is the good of such an endeavour?

Swamiji— He who always speculates as to what awaits him in future, by him no work can be accomplished. What you have understood as true and good, just do that at once. What's the good of calculating what may or may not befall in future? The span of life is so, so short,—can anything be accomplished in it if you go on forecasting and computing results? God is the only disposer of results and leave it to Him to do all that. What have you got to do with it? Don't look that way, but go on working.

While he was thus going on, the cab reached the garden-house. Many people from Calcutta came to the garden that day to see Swamiji. Swamiji got down from the carriage, and walking into the house sat down and began conversation with them all. Mr. Goodwin, a western disciple of Swamiji was standing near by like the embodiment, as it were, of service. Ere this, the disciple had made his acquaintance; so he came to him and both engaged in a variety of talk about Swamiji.

(To be continued).

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA was born on earth with the birth of vernal joy and the springtide moon; and as we celebrate the anniversary of that event every year, the rejuvenescence of nature outside becomes intensely symbolical, and we enjoy it as seldom it was enjoyed before by man. We rejoice in all the soul-stirring heraldries of the spring with the joy of a deeper spiritual revival, the waves of which solemnly beat upon the shores of modern human life. The dreary winter of disbelief is being rung out from the world by all the awakened voices of the spring that is setting in on all sides. Already the vernal breeze of a new spiritual grace has given the murmur of green leaves to many a nude tree and the appearance of foliage in others cannot be too long in coming. This symbolism repeated every year along with the Ramakrishna celebrations has been wrought into the vernal rebirth of nature by the great wave of a spiritual revival on which the whole world is slowly and imperceptibly rising.

There is no mistaking the signs. The refined secularism of a rebel culture that called itself modern is bleeding itself out on the battlefields of Europe. The haughty self-complacency of a political civilisation is gasping for breath in the throes of warfare. The atmosphere is being disinfected and cleared for a world-wide acceptance of the spiritual ideal of life, both individual and collective. He that had the eye to see and ear to hear, and wandered as the Hindu monk of Chicago fame through the scenes that reek now with human blood and powder fumes, had prophesied this volcanic outburst. He clearly saw that the deep canker of materialism would soon come to a head and burst, and again and again in his lectures*

to his own countrymen he insisted that they must be prepared one day to carry the great remedy even to the doors of all the nations of the world. And for this great remedy, this balm of spirituality, we have not been left in doubt to ransack and rummage the archives of the past or to run at present after whatever tickles our sense of the miraculous, being dangled before us by foolish credulity born of impotence. The core of our spiritual life and evolution in India has revealed itself before us in flesh and blood, and we have only to look at it to recognise it as such. No esoteric namby-pamby, no sectional bias in the name of reforming our spiritual inheritance. The very life in its integrity, as an organic whole, which India has been living in the spirit has come out focussed in Sri Ramakrishna, and the wonderful alchemy of his life has put us in possession of the only balm that shall soothe the festering wounds of modern humanity.

This is no sectarianism. It is a patent, universal fact to which nobody has any greater right of access than another. And then again, you cannot hide yourself in a dark corner with a blazing torchlight in your hand, for if you accept the leading of Sri Ramakrishna, you cannot but accept all the faiths of the world as true; and thus you find yourself ruled out of all sectarianism. Even if you are wedded to a sect or a party formed round a spiritual rallying-point which is not Sri Ramakrishna, still as the most tangible set-off against all sectarian spirit and as the most positive link to connect you with all sects and faiths, you are bound to accept him, if you sincerely study his life. For you cannot afford to remain as the frog in his own little well, when the whole world outside is being flooded with the new

* Vide "Lectures from Colombo to Almora."

light of human solidarity,—when touched and nurtured by that light a new type of manhood is growing all around which transcends once for all the narrow idea of each faith or sect living merely for itself. The coming epoch demands that this new standpoint of universalism in spiritual sympathy and co-operation should be planted at the very heart of every sect and faith, and remember, this standpoint can never be a matter of mere intellectual belief, for over things of the spirit nothing can have real authority and power except it be a spiritual revelation. So in respect of this universalistic standpoint to which every sect and every votary thereof are called upon to rise to-day, it was necessary that a new Revelation should come, a revelation through highest spiritual experiences of the Unity of Religion, however much expressing itself through apparently conflicting creeds and sects. Who can deny that Sri Ramakrishna was just this revelation for all of us?

But, if it is real sleep, you can call me up, but if it is feigned, you cannot. Nothing except deep-rooted selfishness can prevent people from awakening to the great fact of Sri Ramakrishna's life and mission. Sterling sincerity is a gift of the gods, no human preaching can give it to you and me. In the interest of his own creed, everybody now-a-days seeks to argue out before others a universal aspect of that creed; but had he been sincere in his longing to bind all fellowmen together in a religious universality or unity, he would have been the first to admit that this noble and indispensable task is beyond all mere argument and would have therefore spontaneously rallied round the most tangible symbol of religious unity as revealed by God in Sri Ramakrishna. But people have their own axes to grind, and even they may therefore take all talk about Ramakrishna to proceed out of similar axe-grinding! So by

the bane of my selfishness I may turn my greatest good to evil. But there is a soul of goodness in men and things which forms the fulcrum for the subtle inspiration of God-men to move the world by their spirituality. Their task they perform in life and in death, and in ways inscrutable to us. And all the work that we profess to do for their sake as servants serves only to chasten our souls; that is the psychology of our preaching. The prophets work through transformation in facts, while we work through conflict in ideas. Their life in the spirit rings changes on fundamental facts,—changes that are bound to work themselves out on the surface of human ideas and ideals; while the ideas we impinge on that surface take all manner of chances.

So what we began by saying,—namely the surrender of the whole future of our spiritual evolution as symbolised in the breaking forth of springtime to the inspiration of Sri Ramakrishna,—is a fact independent of any efforts we may make to bring it about. The birds that sing or chirp around do not bring forth but merely voice forth the coming spring. They squeak out their gladness, but do not quarrel with the delaying sprouts and blossoms. So our part is only to sing the glory that is unmistakably dawning on the life of man both as a unit of his nation and of humanity. Nationalism all over the world is going to put off its brutal scales of political selfishness. The organisation of collective life which it implies will gradually adopt the spiritual ideal as its governing end, and no country in this world is in a position by virtue of its life-history and its preordained mission to set the example except India. This great opportunity India will be able to realise only if all our present-day organising efforts are given the basis of a spiritual scheme of life, a scheme which comes out in vivid contrast when we find Sri Ramakrishna condemning the "*Adhunik*," i. e. everything which the

modern political scheme of life implies. Besides this new nationalism, the life of Sri Ramakrishna embodies the only principle of solidarity for all mankind. Humanity can never be welded into oneness by the fickle bond of any superficial interest. Political or economic interests do not unite mankind but

divide it. Culture lends itself to conflicting interpretations, so long as secular interests command its uses. Nothing but religion, when revealing itself beyond all argument as a unity, can serve as the only principle of human solidarity operating from beyond the diversified surface of secular interests.



SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE SPIRITUAL IDEAL.

IF we examine for a moment the attitude of men towards religion, we find, they may be roughly divided into three classes. One class of men do not make any conscious efforts towards religion, except, perhaps, under very exceptional circumstances. These men may be called the indifferent set. Another class of men accept religion merely as one of the many concerns of life. They stow it away for occasional or daily use in one of the many compartments of their thought and activity. This class may be called the pigeon-holing set. There is still a third class of men, forming really the spiritual set, who strive to make religion the governing end in all the pursuits of their life.

Religion as it is preached in this world assumes that it is necessary for all men entering its threshold to belong to the last class. But in practice, all people cannot satisfy this assumption, for many are too much taken up inwardly with the pursuit of other ends in life to surrender such pursuit to the absolute guidance of religion. So they are obliged to make their life a stream of many currents, at least on its conscious surface. In such a life-stream, it is natural that the religious current may be brought into all degrees of interaction with other currents, ranging from an almost isolated course to a course of perfect subserviency to one, many or all of the other currents. But we should remember that spirituality just begins to dawn upon our nature only when religion be-

comes that maincurrent in our life-stream to which every other current constantly yields itself up. So long as religion remains a feeder pursuit to any or many other pursuits in life, however much deepened or widened its current might be, our life is not yet spiritualised, or in other words, we have not yet attained any real spirituality. However advanced we may be in the practice of religion as a means to some end lurking deep within our heart as a subtle desire, however endowed we may be with miraculous powers as a result of such practice, we are not yet spiritual in the real sense of the term.

Spirituality takes root therefore in this absolute surrender of all pursuits and desires to religion and its guidance. And such a demand for unqualified self-surrender is not at all preposterous on the part of religion, for religion is nothing if it is not the foundation of the life we live. It can never belong to the surface of our life, for it pertains to our inmost being. As such, it can only constitute the centre round which all the interests of life should revolve. It can only be this sun, and never a planet or a satellite. The moment you seek to move it along the orbit of any other interest or desire in life, you really have no hold on religion or spirituality, but on something else which mimics it. Now what tends to dislodge religion from its proper, central, governing position in our life is the force of desire, and this force of desire can only be counteracted and

annulled by the spirit of renunciation, or in one word, selflessness, *Tyaga*,—a natural indifference to self-gratification in any gross or subtle form. This purity of *Tyaga* is therefore the precondition of all spirituality. It gives the real spiritual direction to all progress in religion. It is the determining factor and the criterion of that progress, whatever may be the path along which that progress may initially lie, whether Jnana, Bhakti or Karma.

This *Tyaga* forms the backbone of the spiritual ideal which Sri Ramakrishna embodied for us, and in this matter he really reinstated in modern times in all its purity what is called the Indian spirituality. For in India the name given to religion is *Paramârtha*, or the Supreme End, and this very name implies not a mere gradation of all the possible ends of human life at the top of which is placed religion, but really a system of these ends all governed by and subordinated to religion. Such a system is compulsory not only for the individual but also for the nation, and directly any human desire, or in other words, our attachment to any end in life other than religion tends to dislodge the latter from its supreme governing position in the system, whether in individual or in national life, we fall off from what is called the Indian spirituality. It is easy to see that the tendency to oppose or exploit the supremacy of religion whether in the individual or in the nation comes from inordinate desire. So *Tyaga* forms the backbone of the spiritual ideal which India lives to realise and preach to mankind.

It was the greatest need of the present age that the spiritual ideal be restated for men. For ages and ages it was being thickly encrusted with the subtle precipitates of human desire. The word 'spiritual' comes from the substantive 'spirit,' and as it is very rare in this world to find all ideas of self eliminated from the conception of the spirit, the ordinary spiritual ideal has always a taint

of self attached to it. But self and desire are mutually implied facts. They may be perfectly harmless only in the case of those who, having realised Absolute Being, can put on selfhood and desire as assumed roles, as it were. For all others, perfect non-attachment to desire is an impossibility so long as they have the idea of self implied in their idea of the spirit. The spiritual ideal therefore is constantly exposed to contamination from human desire. For instance, however uplifting may be the doctrine of life in a heaven, it tends to provide a loophole for human desire, and such spiritual virtues as holiness, love, non-attachment imperceptibly lose their character as ends unto themselves when life in heaven inspires human mind as the spiritual goal. For however much *religious* may be our desires, they are bound to divert our mind to attainable objects outside, from such verities as Jnana, Bhakti or *Tyaga* i. e. knowledge, love or purity.

This is one reason why Sri Ramakrishna used to insist that we should always keep the Advaita ideal secure in our possession whatever path of spiritual practice we might be treading, for the Advaita ideal implies absolute *inwardness* of spiritual achievement, their being nothing objective in the ultimate goal to keep the desire principle active in us. In this highest spiritual goal, the illumination of Jnana, the ecstasy of Bhakti and the purity of *Tyaga* merge into one another as one homogeneous experience, and so long as we set before ourselves this experience as the real ideal to be ultimately realised, we are strong to prevent any side-issue, such as life in some heavenly sphere, from proving harmful to the practice of Jnana for Jnana's sake, or of Bhakti for Bhakti's sake.

Advaitism, therefore, as realised by Sri Ramakrishna, acts as a perpetual proviso to keep the spiritual ideal which he has left to us free from any future degeneration through taints of human desire. But it also serves as the key to understand that very ideal.

One fundamental doctrine of Sri Ramakrishna's gospel is that religion is one. This is, as it were, the corner-stone in the edifice of his spiritual ideal. But how can we see for ourselves this unity of religion? It is his realisation no doubt, but it is good for us to know how this truth of inspiration is also a truth of reason. Now if we examine the ideas of spiritual progress which all sects hold up in our view, we find that these ideas are uniform in one respect but at variance in another. Progress means in every religious sect a growing depth of wisdom, love and holiness on the one hand and a deepening communion on the other hand with Divinity conceived of under particular forms. Of these two features of religious progress as understood by every sect, the first is universal and uniform while the second varies with regard to the nature of its contents. Now all the difference therefore between one sect and another consists purely in this variation in the conception of Divinity and consequently in the methods followed in approaching It. But beyond these methods implying varying rituals and symbols, there lies the inward psychological process through which each sect equally succeeds in developing knowledge, love and holiness. This common aspect, however, does not receive any adequate emphasis at the hands of every sect which is almost fully preoccupied with its dogmas about Divinity and the symbols arising from them. Advaitism alone seeks to re-adjust this confused emphasis. It points out that the essential characteristic of spirituality is the development of knowledge, love and holiness, while all the objective paraphernalia of religious life, such as ideas about God, dogmas, rituals and symbols, form non-essentials, being mere objective stimuli for opening up the subjective spiritual depths in man. But when this subjective development of knowledge, love and holiness becomes intensified to its utmost, leading thereby to that Unity of absolute experience, called Brahman, the ob-

jective fact also of a sectarian God with the implied system of dogmas and rituals disappears and resolves itself into the same experience.

So if the spiritual ideal keeps up in our view this ultimate resolution of all these objective conditions of spiritual development such as particular conceptions of God and ritualism, we cannot but cease to quarrel over the *choice* of such objective conditions emphasizing only the uniform inwardness of the results produced in every case by whatever conditions each sect stands for. Such a spiritual ideal embodying Advaita as its apex sifts for us the essentials from the non-essentials of spiritual progress, proving how the sects have been quarrelling over the non-essentials, while all along they have been evolving the same religious life of man in all its essentials. It constantly reveals to us Religion in its unity and paves the way for a science of religion such as the Swami Vivekananda preached to the world in his lectures on the four-fold Yoga.

Neither can it be complained that this spiritual ideal centred in Advaita practically explains away all the dualistic faiths and their symbols; for one fact may be said to antagonise another only when they occupy the same plain of experience. But if my experience in one plane admits of being taken up and differently reconstructed by you from a higher plane, I do not complain that you contradict my experience; I simply say that you resolve my truth into a higher truth. So a dualistic faith with its peculiar realisation of God and dependent verities may be *the whole truth* for a dualist, and the spiritual ideal embodied by Sri Ramakrishna fully admits that in the case of every phase of dualistic religion. But when the possibility of rising beyond all these conflicting dualistic phases to the Advaitic unity of religion was actually verified and testified to before our very eyes by this harmoniser of all creeds, with what face can we deny a plane of higher

truth wherein the experiences of dualistic religion become reconstructed and reconciled? So there is no room for complaint that the truth of dualistic religion is put in jeopardy by the spiritual ideal based on Advaita. All that truth in its integrity as realised by saints and prophets is maintained in tact; only a higher truth so long vaguely deduced from the experiences of saints and prophets is being offered to us as pre-eminently *the* revelation for the present age and as transcending all dualistic revelations while restating and reconciling them.

Besides thus combining into the unity of a simple system all the various aspects of religious progress as yet revealed to man, the spiritual ideal embodied by Sri Ramakrishna discriminates for us what is essential from what is non-essential in the practice of religion. We have already seen how this spiritual ideal defines spirituality itself. The essence of spirituality, we have said, is selflessness,—the giving up of all desires on which the ego in one form or other is fed and nurtured. This definition of spirituality gives us the real direction which religious progress should take in every individual. But in ascertaining any degree of spiritual progress, we should not only know the direction but also the content of the spiritual progress made. And herein another fundamental precept of Sri Ramakrishna's gospel gives us the clue. It says that religion is realisation. Religious truths are thus clearly characterised as matters of solid experience,—not mere subjects for the intellect to comprehend and the sentiment to play upon. Religion has lost much of its reality and authority in modern times, simply because it has been smuggled out of the sphere of direct experience into that of intellect and sentiment, and modern culture with its blind partiality for human reason and human senses is responsible for this degradation of religion. In science, it limits experience to the range of the senses; in philosophy and religion, it con-

cerns itself more with what one says and how one says it than with what he realises, what he really is. Religious truths are hawked about throughout the modern world as the shining products of intellect and sentiment,—of mere philosophy and poetry. And these truths of illegitimate extraction claim to have exploded older theories of religious life, which created all sorts of short-sighted antagonisms as between the flesh and the spirit, between God and the world! Are not the poets showing us how their sentiment sips the honey of an ideal God from within the flowers of sensuous experience? Are not the rationalists proving to us how the Absolute Brahman is lying implied in all the richness of the relative? While still clinging to the concrete manifold of experience, the poets are actually becoming exalted into Rishis and the rationalists into Brahmajnanis! So all the old religious talk about renouncing the flesh or the world is fool's prattle or worse.

Modern culture has fallen into this self-delusion about religion, simply because it has forgotten that religion is *realisation*, and not any intellectual or sentimental grasp of facts about God. Every religious truth is a testimony which religion proper gives of itself, and not at all a testimony which the intellect or sentiment gives of religion. Religion signifies going beyond that intellect and sentiment which reasons and feels about all our ordinary sensuous experience. So long as we wander in this realm of intellect and sentiment, we do not realise religion, however much we may be eloquent on religious truths. So let him only speak with authority about religion and its truths who has gone beyond this intellect and sentiment, and if you and I have not yet gone beyond them, we should content ourselves with representing to others what those in real authority have already preached. This will clear up the present-day confusion about religious ideals.

As for those who practice religion, it will give them the surest clue to judge of their

own religious progress if they remember that religion denotes realising—this going beyond the experiences which the senses gather and the intellect and sentiment interpret for us. Directly we succeed in intensifying our knowledge, love and holiness to the extent of transcending by their means the ordinary range of these experiences, we enter the threshold of religion. Without such realisation, no amount of talking or poetizing about religion, no end of rationalising by argument, would give us the real access into religion. The spiritual ideal left to us by Sri Ramakrishna sounds forth this warning to all,—this call to realisation.

EPISTLES OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

LXXXIV.

New York,
June, 20th, 1900.

Dear—

* * * *

Well, Mother seems to be kind again and the wheel is slowly rising up.

* * * *

Yours etc.

Vivekananda.

LXXXV.

New York,
July, 2nd, 1900.

Dear—

* * * *

Mother knows, as I always say. Pray to Mother. It is hard work to be a leader—one must crush all his own self under the feet of the community.

* * * *

Yours etc.

Vivekananda.

LXXXVI.

Paris,
August, 28th, 1900.

Dear—

Such is life,—grind, grind ; and yet what else are we to do? Grind, grind ! Something will come—some way will be opened. If it does not, as it would probably never—then, then,—what then? All our efforts are only to stave off the great climax—for a season—death ! Oh, what would the world do without you, Death ! Thou great healer !

The world as it is, is not real, is not eternal, thank the Lord !! What can the future be any better? That must be the effect of this one—at least like this if not worse !

Dreams, oh dreams ! Dream on ! Dream, the magic of dream, is the cause of this life, it is also the remedy. Dream, dream, only dream ! Kill dream by dream !

I am trying to learn French. Talking to — here. Some are very appreciative already—to talk. Talk to all the world—of the eternal riddle, the eternal spool of fate—whose thread end no one finds and everyone seems to find, at least to his own satisfaction, at least for a time,—to fool himself a moment, is it ?

Well now, great things are to be done—who cares for great things? Why not do small things as well? One is as good as the other. The greatness of little things, that is what the Gita teaches, bless the old book !! * * *

I had not much time to think of the body. So it must be well. Nothing is ever well here. We forget them at times and that is being well and doing well. * * *

We play our parts here—good or bad. When the dream is finished, we have left the stage, we will have a hearty laugh at all this,—of this only I am sure.

Yours etc.

Vivekananda.

LXXXVII.

The Math, Belur, Howrah,
19th Dec. 1900.

Dear—

Just a voice across the continents to say, how do you do? Are you not surprised? Verily I am a bird of passage. Gay and busy Paris, grim old Constantinople, sparkling little Athens, and pyramedal Cairo, are left behind, and here I am writing in my room on the Ganges, in the Math. It is so quiet and still! The broad river is dancing in the bright sunshine, only now and then an occasional cargo boat breaking the silence with the splashing of the oars. It is the cold season here, but the middle of the day is warm and bright everyday. But it is the winter of Southern California. Everything is green and gold and the grass is like velvet, yet the air is cold and crisp and delightful.

Yours etc.

Vivekananda.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: THE GREAT MASTER.

(Chapter VI.—continued)

THE EARLY DAYS OF GADADHARA.

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THE sensitive nature of Gadadhara was deeply affected by the incident of his father's death. For, he had already begun to appreciate the greatness of his father's character by comparing it with that of others in his own way even at this early age. It is natural therefore that the great void that he felt in his heart by the event made him think as deeply as he could at the time on the problem of life and death. His fondness for frequenting solitary places increased and he passed many an hour in the lonely fields and on the cremation ground by the side of the little rivulet close to his place, (known to this day

as the Bhuter Khal or the canal of the departed spirits), and in the adjacent mangoe grove planted by the Raja Manick. He felt himself drawn, besides, more than ever, to the study of religious literature, for therein he found the teaching about the transitory nature of human life, a truth which had come home to him with such force quite recently. And we can well imagine how he used to spend many hours of the day in studying them by himself or in company with his mother to soothe her aching heart. For child as he still was he could yet find that life had lost all its former sweetness for his mother on account of the sad event.

Strange as it may appear to us, the boy came to have at this time a great fascination for the life of those who had renounced the world. He began to frequent the *dharmasala* or the shelter erected for the use of the pilgrims and the poor wayfarers by the Zamindar of the village, and cultivate the acquaintance of the itinerant monks, who used to rest here for a few days on their way to and from the pilgrimage of Puri or Jagannath. It so happened that a band of such monks stopped here for some weeks at the time on account of illness of some of their number and Gadadhara found his opportunity. He tried to gain their hearts by doing little things for them, and bringing them presents of food articles at times from his own family. The sadhus, greatly pleased with the kindness and devotion of the boy, told him many a story of their travels in return, and taught him the ways of meditation and also how to lead the higher life sanctioned by the scriptures. And the child became gradually so fond of them that he began to spend all his leisure hours in their company, watching them as they performed their daily worship, or cooked their simple meal to offer to the Deity, or sat in meditation before the sacred fire at nightfall, or chanted hymns in praise of the Lord. The story runs in the family that his fondness for them increased so much that he dressed himself one day like them and came to his mother to show her how well he looked in that garb. The mother, pleased at first with this strange fancy of her boy, grew anxious afterwards on his account. For was not the belief current in the village that the wandering monks often swelled their ranks by enticing away youths, and sometimes

boys also of his age? Little Gadadhar tried to persuade her to give up such ideas by telling her that the Sadhus were God-fearing holy men and could never do such mean things. But the mother-heart of Chandra knew no rest from that day until the time came when the Sadhus left the village for good after blessing her boy.

The monotonous round of life at the village used to be broken many a time during the year by religious festivals, celebrating the anniversary of various village-gods. In March, for instance, there was the celebration of the anniversary of *Siva* known as the *Charak-puja*; in May or June, the chanting of the name of Hari or Vishnu continuously for three successive days and nights, called the *Chabbis-prahariya*; in July there was the Car Festival—also of Vishnu. Then there were days for worshipping the goddess *Manasā*, the god *Dharma*, and also Lakshmi the goddess of wealth, by placing her in a heap of newly-grown paddy in the field at about the hour of dusk, for did not the paddy fields form the principal source of income to the people of the place? Besides, there was the national religious festival of India, celebrated with special eclat everywhere in Bengal, namely the worship of the Divine Mother, Durga. In this way, the village appeared brisk and cheerful on many a little occasion. Each one of those celebrations had its own speciality with certain characteristics which were common to them all. Athletics and staff-playing, for instance, formed an invariable part of the Siva-festival of *Charak-puja*, as the special observance of a tender regard for all living creatures formed that of every Vishnu-festival, although the performance of religious dramas in the open and without the help of a stage and its paraphernalia—called the *Yatras*, was held alike in both kinds of festivities. The sensitive devotional nature of Gadadhara felt a special thrill during all those festive occasions. But the feature in them all which delighted him most was to hear the musical performances or *Yatras*. His study of the religious literature gave him an especial aptitude to understand them and the poet and musician in him found himself transported for the time into the dreamland of unspeakable beauty, harmony and ecstasy. A deep appreciation of the bright and the dark passions that control human life and its fitful events, thus came

to Gadadhara early in life through the help of these musical performances. But his intense imagination combined with his constant brooding over such things brought forth an unforeseen development in his mind of which we shall speak presently.

Little over a mile to the north of Kamarpukur there stands the little sanctuary of the goddess *Vishd lakshi*, (lit. one with large eyes), in the village of Anur. The name of the goddess has been held in deep veneration in the villages around from very old times. And the simple village people flocked to her for help, to get themselves free from incurable diseases, as well as for the fulfilment of their heart's desire in many little things. The number of female votaries, of course, had always been greater than that of men. And as the villages of rural Bengal had never been subjected to the strict rules of the *Pardah*, women of every rank could be seen to travel alone or in company with others of their age, to the place from a distance of ten or more miles even.

Gadadhara who was eight years old by this time, had one day joined such a party of worshippers going to visit the sanctuary. The party was made up mostly of ladies whom he knew; and Prasanna the widowed daughter of the Zamindar of Kamarpukur who was very fond of him was also one of it. So the boy felt quite at home and entertained them with songs of the Divine Mother and with reciting stories from the Puranas at their request. Thus each one of the little party felt a great fervour of religious feeling as they wended their way cheerfully through the lonely fields.

But an unexpected turn of events filled their hearts with fear and anxiety as they neared the place of their destination. For Gadadhara suddenly lost all outward consciousness and fell into a deep trance. The ladies, who had never experienced such a thing before, took his case for a sun-stroke and some ran to the neighbouring pond for water and others began to fan him after placing him under the cool shade of a tree. But they were all surprised to find that the boy's face was radiant with a heavenly smile, and the calm dignity and self-possession of it inspired awe in their simple hearts! Then the suggestion came from one amongst them,—might it not be that the Divine Mother, whom they were

going to worship, had deigned to manifest Herself in Her inscrutable ways through the pure body and mind of Gadadhara to bless them all? Else why did the boy instead of looking miserable seem thus to be full of ecstasy appearing quite like one possessed by a supernatural Being?

Thoughts as these, held up to ridicule by the iconoclastic agnosticism of the present day, appeared as self-evident truths to their modest and faithful hearts. They sat round the boy and began to chant the name of the Mother with deep devotion. And before they had proceeded long in this way Gadadhara became his ordinary self again! The delighted ladies then asked the boy what had made him so strange—and he told them in reply that he hardly knew, but it seemed as if his mind suddenly getting concentrated on the thought of the beauty of the Divine Mother while he was chanting Her name lost all its outer bearings and its movements became finally confined to an indescribable vision of beauty and delight. And strange as it may appear to us, Gadadhara did not feel any physical weakness after the experience and was able to go to the sanctuary and returned home with the ladies as if nothing had happened!

And now came the time when Gadadhara must undergo the ceremony necessary for adopting the sacred thread, so that he might be initiated into the study of the Vedas as far as possible, and above all that he might worship and realise the Supreme Being in himself and the universe by entering into the spirit of the central mystery contained in them. The occasion had been looked upon as a memorable one from time immemorial; for had not the boy to bind himself on the day to give up for ever life in the flesh and live for purity, light and truth alone in accordance with the principles laid down in the Vedas? And had he not to promise to be truthful in thought, word and deed, abstemious in his habits, obedient and faithful to his teacher and to live the life of plain-living and high thinking from the day? Thus it was looked upon as the occasion on which the boy had to undergo a new birth in a higher plane of existence, and naturally the term *Dvija* or the twice-born was applied to the class who received the initiation. And as a part of it grew the custom that an elderly woman of equal rank to the mother of the boy should have the privilege of looking

after his simple wants from the day of his entrance into the higher life by pouring the first dole of rice as alms in his newly acquired begging-bowl.*

Now the daughter of the blacksmith, Dhani, who had long been a great friend of the family and who indeed had been the nurse of Gadadhara since the day he was born, when she heard that her sweet little protege was going to have the sacred thread of the twice-born, yearned in her heart to have the privilege of giving him the first dole of alms on the occasion. She knew it well that she would not be supported in this by the custom of the family. Yet fondly as she loved the boy she could not give up the idea and her heart became heavy with grief. The quick perception of Gadadhara, who was no less fond of this poor woman, soon found out the cause of her sorrow and he formed in his mind the resolve of making her happy by fulfilling her desire. The story runs in the family how in spite of stern protests from his elders he remained so firm in his purpose that they had ultimately to change their minds and allow poor Dhani to give him the first dole of alms on the occasion; and all this occurred while the boy was only nine years old.

Gadadhara was now allowed the privilege of worshipping and serving the family diety Raghubira and he did so with perfect willingness. For he had long been familiar with the accounts of the wonderful way in which his father found the image in a dream, of how the family had been blessed since in every way, and how his parents had often had the good fortune to be favoured with supersensuous visions and perceptions through serving the Lord. No wonder then that he proceeded to his new task with all the ardour and devotion that his nature was able to bring to the occasion with the sure expectation that he also will be favoured ere long with such visions and experiences. This does not mean, however, that he began to lead a visionary life from this time forward. He went to the school, led his playmates in everything that they all did, pursued his studies of the sacred literature, practised the arts of painting and clay-modelling at leisure and did everything as he used to do before. But in the hours that he spent in worshipping the image, his strong

* Lit, Begging-sack.

imagination combined with his natural power of concentrating his mind made him rise to such heights of meditation that he lost consciousness of all his surroundings and his unfettered and untrammelled mind lived and moved for the time with the living ideal which the image always stood for. And ere many months had passed his mind became accustomed to soar to those higher regions of peace and silence which the worldly-minded dread to enter in their dreams even, and began to see light where they could only see darkness piled upon darkness with the help of their poor imagination. The events which followed go to prove what has been stated above.

Swami Saradananda.

THE VAIRAGYA-SATAKAM

OR THE HUNDRED VERSES ON RENUNCIATION BY BHAKTRIHARI.

(Continued from page 52).

वैराग्यशतकम् ।

कौपीनं शतखण्डजर्जरतरं कन्था पुनस्तादृशी
 नैश्चिन्त्यं निरपेक्षमैक्ष्मशनं निद्रा श्मशाने वने ।
 स्वातन्त्र्येण निरङ्कुशं विहरणं स्वान्तं प्रशान्तं
 सदा
 स्थैर्यं योगमहोत्सवेऽपि च यदि त्रैलोक्यराज्येन
 किम् ॥६१॥

91. If there is a *koupina* (even) worn out and shredded hundred times and a wrapper also of the same condition, if one is free from all disquieting thought, if food there is, obtained unconditionally from begging, and sleep on a cremation ground or in the forest, if one wanders alone without any let or hindrance, if the mind is always calm, and if one is steadfast in the festive joy of Yoga, what is then worth the rulership of the three worlds?

ब्रह्माण्डं मण्डलीमात्रं किं लोभाय मनस्विनः ।
 शफरीस्फुरितेनाविधः श्रुब्धो न खलु जायते ॥६२॥

92. Can this universe which is but a mere reflection, engender greed in wise men? The ocean surely does not become agitated by the movement of a little fish.

[Just as a fish cannot set up a swaying of the ocean, so this universe, a mere image in pure consciousness, cannot move the latter, with which wise men become identified, to any sentiment of covetousness.]

मातर्लक्ष्मि भजस्व कंचिदपरं मत्काङ्क्षिणी मा
 स्म भू-
 भोगेषु स्पृहयालवस्तव वशे का निःस्पृहाणामसि।
 सद्यःस्यूतपलाशपत्रपुटिकापात्रे पवित्रीकृतै-
 भिक्षावस्तुभिरेव संप्रति वयं वृत्तिं समीहामहे ॥६३॥

93. O mother Lakshmi (Goddess of wealth), serve (thou) some one else, do not be longing for me. Those who desire enjoyment are subject to thee, but what art thou to us who are free from desires? Now we wish to live upon food articles obtained from begging and placed, (conformably to its) being sanctified, in a receptacle of Palásha leaves pieced together on the spot.

महाशय्या पृथ्वी विपुलमुपधानं भुजलता
 वितानं चाकाशं व्यजनमनुकूलोऽयमनिलः ।
 शरच्चन्द्रो दीपो विरतिवनितासङ्गमुदितः
 सुखी शान्तः शेते मुनिरतनुभूतिर्नृप इव ॥६४॥

94. The earth is his high bed, the arms his ample pillow, the sky is his canopy, the genial breeze his fan, the autumnal moon is his lamp, and rejoicing in the company of abnegation as his wife, the sage lies down happily and peacefully, like a monarch of undiminished glory.

भिक्षाशी जनमध्यसङ्गरहितः स्वायत्तचेष्टः सदा
 हानादानविरक्तमार्गनिरतः कश्चित्तपस्वी स्थितः ।
 रथ्याकीर्णविशीर्णजीर्णवसनः संप्राप्तकन्थासनो
 निर्मानो निरहंकृतिः शमसुखाभोगैकबद्धस्पृहः ॥६५॥

95. There lives the real ascetic who feeds himself on alms, unattached to the society

of men, always free in his efforts (i. e. without obligation or restraint from outside) and pursuing a path of indifference as regards what to give up or what to take; his worn-out garment is made up of rags cast away in the streets, and for seat he has with him a blanket; he is devoid of pride and egoism and he is concerned only in enjoying the happiness arising from the control of mind.

(To be continued).

A SANSKRIT HYMN.

(By the Swami Vivekananda.)

[When all the first letters of the three lines in each stanza are put together, we get ॐ नमो भगवते रामकृष्णाय, i. e. Om, salutation to the Divine Ramakrishna. This form of composition is well-known in Sanskrit poetry.]

ॐ ह्रीं ऋतं त्वमचलो गुणजित् गुणोद्भयः ।
नक्तन्दिवं सकरुणं तव पादपद्मं ।
मोहदुष्पं बहुकृतं न भजे यतोऽहं
तस्मात्त्वमेव शरणं मम दीनवन्धो ॥१॥

भक्तिर्भगश्च भजनं भवभेदकारि ।
गच्छन्त्यलं सुविपुलं गमनाय तत्त्वं ।
वक्त्रोद्धृतन्तु हृदि मे न च भाति किञ्चि-
त्तस्मात्त्वमेव शरणं मम दीनवन्धो ॥२॥

तेजस्तरन्ति तरसा त्वयि तृप्ततृष्णाः ।
रागे कृते ऋतपथे त्वयि रामकृष्णो ।
मर्त्यामृतं तव पदं मरणोर्मिनाशं
तस्मात्त्वमेव शरणं मम दीनवन्धो ॥३॥

कृत्यं करोति कलुषं कुहकान्तकारि ।
षणान्तं शिवं सुविमलं तव नाम नाथ ।
यस्मादहं त्वशरणो जगदेकगम्य
तस्मात्त्वमेव शरणं मम दीनवन्धो ॥४॥

1. ह्रीं—a sacred word-symbol like the ॐ, called the लज्जावीजं in Tantra. ऋतं—occurs frequently in Vedic Mantras, where Sayana often makes it equivalent to 'sacrifice,' 'sun' or 'water.' But in a deeper sense, it is taken to denote 'the Divine Law or Truth.' गुणजित् गुणोद्भयः—conquerer of the three Gunas, सत्त्व, रजः and तमः and yet adored for possessing virtues.

Om! Hring! Thou art the True, the Imperturbable One, transcending the three Gunas and yet adored for thy virtues! Inasmuch as I do not worship day and night with yearning thy adorable lotus-feet which destroy all ignorance, therefore, oh, thou friend of the lowly, thou art my only refuge.

2. भगः—the six well-known spiritual acquisitions such as renunciation, wisdom, heroism etc. भवभेदकारि—which pierce through the Bhava or the unbounded illusion of birth, life and death. अलं गच्छन्ति, quite suffice.

Spiritual powers, reverence and worship which burst the illusive show of Becoming are enough indeed to lead to the greatest truth. But this while finding utterance through the mouth is not at all being brought home to my heart. Therefore, oh, thou friend of the lowly, thou art my only refuge.

3. तेजः—Rajas and all that it implies.

If devotion is directed to thee, Oh Ramakrishna, the way of Divine Truth, then with desires all fulfilled in thee, we forthwith cross over this sea of *rajas*; for thy feet, the immortalising joy for mortals, quell the waves of death. Therefore, oh, thou friend of the lowly, thou art my only refuge.

4. कृत्यं करोति—converts to righteousness. षणान्तं—having the letter षण at the end.

Thy name, ending in "shua" and full of sanctity and good, destroys Maya and converts sinfulness to purity. Because, oh, the only goal of all beings, shelter have I none, thou art, oh friend of the lowly, my only refuge.

ON THE CONNING TOWER.

MANY circumstances have conspired to bring the idea of self-government foremost, for some time, in the mind of what is called the educated public in India. The main interest in the last congress centered round this topic, and even the latest event to engage the deep attention of that public, namely the farewell speech in the Supreme Council of the departing Viceroy, His Excellency Lord Hardinge, smites the same chord above all others in the golden harp of public thought and enthusiasm. This one-pointed tension of thought and aspiration in educated men is a great opportunity indeed, for we cannot grasp, much less solve, any important problem of our country unless our collective thought rises to some degree of such concentration on that problem.

Now the problem that has brought about to-day comparatively the highest degree of such concentration is that of self-government; and it behoves every scribe, who wields his pen in the country sincerely in the service of his fellow-countrymen, not to lose sight of the idea which for the moment forms such a rallying-point of their collective thought. This question of self-government mooted before the country from all quarters does not practically divide opinion so far as self-government is an ideal, a goal, to be achieved, but great divergence in views asserts itself on the issue of fitness or unfitness for self-government. Some people, markedly those in administrative authority, would like to dismiss the question with a verdict of unfitness. Others quote history to prove that the standard of fitness actually varies, and that a swimmer learns his art only after being allowed to swim. They contend that if the people here are not fit to swim yet, that is because during their probation of more than a century of British rule, they have really been tied down to dry land.

But regarding this point of controversy, some sincere words in the farewell speech of His Excellency the departing Viceroy seem to be clinching. Without meaning it perhaps, he has given a very practical definition of the word "fitness" on which the controversy is evidently pivoted. Let us first quote his words:—"A study of the history of the

Dominions would show that the development of their self-governing institutions had been achieved not by any sudden stroke of statesmanship but by a process of steady and patient evolution which has gradually united and raised all classes of the community to the level of their enhanced responsibilities." According to His Excellency, therefore, India would be fit for self-government when all classes of her community are united and raised to the level of those enhanced responsibilities which self-government implies. Now there are two factors which should operate to unite and raise all classes of the Indian community to this proposed level; first, Government help, consisting mainly in conceding to the people an increasing share of administrative responsibilities, secondly, the self-help of the people themselves directed towards developing more and more widely and deeply a sense of responsibility in general for the welfare and progress of their country.

Therefore the most fundamental question regarding the problem of fitness for self-government is this: whether or not these two factors have operated so long with any degree of solid, steady success? The answer is in the negative. The Government has been pitchforking, say, a growing number of our able countrymen into high offices of responsibility, while many other men have been receiving for more than a century subordinate administrative appointments. But these facts fail to redound to the steady growth of a sense of responsibility in all classes of the Indian community. By sharing its administrative responsibilities with the recruits from all such classes, the Government does not succeed in "uniting and raising" these classes to any higher level of patriotic responsibilities. The evident reason is that there is something wrong in these recruits for Government service. They do not bring back to the community at large any heightened sense of patriotic responsibility, because they do not go to the service and continue there with any such central and all-important sentiment. As regards the other factor for developing fitness in our people for self-government, namely to inspire by our own efforts a deep sense of national responsibility in the minds of our own countrymen, solid success is just stationary amongst an almost fixed minority of men, Westernised in culture.

This is far from what is meant by uniting and raising all classes of the community to the level of enhanced responsibilities.

Naturally we ask ourselves : what is the remedy ? How can we steadily and inalienably grow all over the country into that profound sense of responsibility which is bound to prove when acquired the open sesame for self-government ? Yes, *a sense of responsibility*, we have seen, is the central theme on which our whole discussion has revolved, and this responsibility implies a sincere feeling that I have to answer before the bar of my deepest and highest self for how I behave towards my country in every moment of my life. And evidently this feeling in me can be something real, positive and exacting without fail, only when I am sure every moment as to what my country expects from me. This clear idea as to how my country stands to me and how I should stand to it is at the very root of every real sense of responsibility for my country. In other words, I must know *the real self* of my country, and then only the burden of my responsibility for it can be real. I can never feel really responsible for something which is a mere image of my fancy. Every people who have struggled on with success to an achievement of self-government had a clear conception of their country's self from the very outset. Had their national self-consciousness erred in this respect, they could have never risen to a real sense of national responsibility.

This is therefore the real crux of the whole problem of our self-government : have we awakened to our real national self-consciousness ? Or are we still merely imitating the national self-consciousness of other peoples in the world ? And how can we, or, for the matter of that, our Government, unite and raise all classes of our countrymen to a higher level of our national responsibilities, unless and until we constantly appeal to that real national self-consciousness in which all our countrymen are united and raised beyond their life of individualistic responsibilities ? Every country does not possess the same type of selfhood, that is to say, the same type of collective life to realise in its history. So national self-consciousness in the case of the Boers or the Australians or the Canadians may not mean exactly what national self-

consciousness in our case may mean. The successful growth of national responsibility will not therefore proceed on the same lines in the case of all peoples on earth. We cannot grow self-conscious and self-possessed exactly in the same way they grew to be so, for their country's self is essentially different from our country's self. Their country demanded a political point of view in developing their feeling of united and exalted responsibilities, while our country for the self-same development demands of us a spiritual stand-point from which all other interests have to be defined, valued and pursued. This spiritual standpoint we have been explaining again and again in our columns, and as we watch to-day the celebrations of the Sri Ramakrishna anniversary all over the country, the prayer comes forth from the depths of our heart that as Sri Ramakrishna's life brought back Swami Vivekananda to his spiritual standpoint in patriotism, so may it rally to the same standpoint all our educated countrymen in no distant future.

FAMINE RELIEF WORK OF THE RAMKRISHNA MISSION, BANKURA.

Since the publication of our last report on the 3rd instant, the condition of all classes of people of the Bankura District is growing more miserable. As days are wearing on grim starvation instead of loosening its mortal grip is tightening it. The condition of the district has assumed such a serious aspect that the Government is going to declare it a famine area from the 1st of April next. Bankura is mainly a rice-producing district. For the last three consecutive years nothing has grown for want of rain. So the labouring class which forms the majority was the first to be affected as it became impossible for them to earn their livelihood owing to non-cultivation. For this their condition has become so deplorable that either the charitable bodies should help them to sustain themselves or should have to leave them to face the severe penalty of starvation.

Moreover the labourers who went to the adjacent districts during the harvest season are now unable to maintain themselves there as that season is over and are coming back daily in thousands to bewail and share the fate of their fellow brethren. Thus they also are swelling the number of sufferers.

The middle class who had somehow so long maintained themselves have now fallen into a hope-

less condition. It is in one respect more serious, as out of self-respect they cannot apply freely for help to public bodies though they are suffering from want of food.

To add to all this, nearly all the reservoirs of drinking water have dried up owing to failure of rain. Many are falling a prey to diseases by drinking dirty water, and if the atmospheric condition continues in this way for some days longer even this dirty water will be scarce. So we have decided in spite of limited means at our disposal, to cut open the dried wells in our area which may somewhat relieve the water-scarcity and at the same time help to assuage the condition of the poor by giving them labour. If the public help us with sufficient funds we have a mind to extend this work beyond our areas.

Such is the condition of the people. They are suffering from food scarcity as well as from water scarcity. If any one visits the district he will meet thousands of famished people with bony cheeks, drooping eyes and with helpless resignation imprinted on their faces, moving hither and thither for help. Besides the areas where the private parties and the government are working, there are still large areas where the people need urgent help. If the generous public supply us with funds we have the mind to work in those places also by opening new centres.

Will not our generous countrymen come forward to help their fellow brothers and sisters out of their deepest miseries? This is the highest occasion for all rich and poor to exercise charity, which is an inborn instinct with the Indian public. So we appeal to all to spare a small fraction of their own means to put a morsel of food into the famished throats of their own countrymen. We earnestly expect that our kind-hearted public will encourage us by sufficient contributions in this urgent work of saving human lives.

We append below a brief table of weekly rice distribution from the 4th till the 17th instant. Temporary helps are also included in the table.

Names of Centres	No. of Villages	No. of Recipients	Amount of Rice	
			Mds.	Srs.
Koniamara	41	741	38	0
Do. (next week)	41	762	38	30
Do. ...	41	773	39	0
Bankura ...	15	76	4	0
Do. (next week)	15	78	4	20
Do. ...	21	120	6	20
Indpur ...	95	1080	45	0
Do. (next week)	95	1027	55	0
Do. ...	95	1030	55	0
Sonamukhi ...	40	478	24	30
Do. (next week)	41	570	29	10
Do. ...	41	510	26	30

The condition of the people in all the centres specially in Indpur has become worst conceivable. Besides the enlisted recipients there are many who want urgent help but for sufficient funds we are unable to reach them.

Our hearty thanks are due to the following gentlemen for contributions noted against their names:

Messrs. Chourasta & Co., Calcutta, for 733 pieces of new cloth. Govt. Tanti Relief Community, Bankura 53 pieces of new cloth. A gentleman, Calcutta 200 pieces of new cloth. Secy. the Famine Relief Fund, Bombay for Rs. 750 and 50 bags of rice (second instalments). Mr. Jiban K. Mitra, Calcutta, for 49 bottles of Malaria mixture and Messrs. Jannadas Podder, Nagpur for contributions towards clearing a tank at Indpur.

Contributions, however small, either in cloth or in money, for the famine-stricken people of Bankura, will be thankfully received and acknowledged on being sent to the following addresses:

(1) Swami Brahmananda, President Ramkrishna Mission, Belur, P. O., Dist. Howrah.

(2) Manager, 'Udbodhan' Office, 1, Mukherjee Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta.

Saradananda,
Secy. R.-K. Mission.

Calcutta. 24-3-16.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANNIVERSARY.

AT THE BELUR MATH.

ON the 6th of March came off those highly significant ceremonies by which the Nativity of Sri Ramakrishna is specially observed at the Belur Math. The whole Math wore a solemn, festive appearance with the busy workers wonderfully energised by the great inspiration of the occasion and with many hundreds of guests moving about on a wave, as it were, of spiritual enthusiasm. Within the sanctuary, in the holy presence of monks and devotees, a ceaseless flow of worship went on from morning to evening and from evening to the next morn, during which among all the Adorable Ones of our spiritual tradition, Christ and Mahomet, Moses and Zoroaster, and other great founders of religious sects received, according to Vedic and Tantrik rites, the homage of the worshippers.

The congregation of Sannyasins brought about by the Tithipuja was made the occasion for an important function of the Monastic Order. At the close of the memorable ceremonies of worship carried on so solemnly during the whole day, twelve Brahmacharins, who had been preparing themselves with fasting and other observances, gathered round the *Homa* fire in the presence ex-

clusively of the Sannyasins presided over by His Holiness the Swami Brahmananda, and after going through all the lofty *mantras* and oblations with which the initiation into Sannyasa has been solemnised in India from the Vedic ages, obtained from His Holiness the first *gerrua* robe of the Sannyasin.

In the evening of the 6th of March also, the Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held this year, under the presidency of His Holiness the Swami Brahmananda. The reports from all the centres in India and abroad were read and some points discussed. The election of new members and the affiliation of new centres formed items in the programme for the meeting.

The public celebration of the birthday anniversary took place on the next Sunday, the 12th of March. The whole Math grounds were well bedecked with flags, evergreens, pictures and Durbar tents. From early morning, crowds began to pour in from Calcutta and the adjoining country, using all sorts of conveyances, including special steamer service, and on foot. By noon, the extensive meadows and all conceivable spaces round about the monastery presented the soul-stirring sight of a dense, seething mass of rejoicing men, representing all classes of society and profession. On the open pavement of the monastery, protected by tents from the sun, the Kali-kirtan party of Andul was pouring forth highly devotional music such as inebriated multitudes of men. Bands after bands of singing and dancing devotees kept the extensive grassy meadows, shaded with tents, reverberating with the soul-enchanting names of God. The concert parties with up-to-date instruments and solemn music drew in some other places admiring audiences and kept them spell-bound for a while. Contrasted to such modern developments in devotional music, the old rural *Kaviwallahs* and *Bauls* were entertaining elsewhere eager audiences. At the remote end of this vast, moving, diversified, joyous congregation, a large enthusiastic audience was found for three most successful lectures on Jnana, Bhakti, and Karma delivered respectively by three well-renowned Pundits of Bengal, namely Mahamahopadhyaya Pramatha Nath Tarkabhushana, Prabhupada Atul Krishna Goswami and Adhyapaka Sitikantha Bachaspati.

Along with this regaling feast of devotional and intellectual entertainments, from 12 noon to 5-30 p. m. more than a thousand men *each time* in long rows were sitting in continuous succession to a happy repast of blessed Prasad along that boundary line of the Math grounds which is remote from the river-banks, and the hand to hand distribution of Prasad was going on, besides, from special enclosures at the same time.

The vast number of volunteer workers had their headquarters this year in the newly completed building erected towards the southern extremity

of the Math grounds in memory of two of the foremost devotees of Sri Ramakrishna Deva, the late Babus Girish Chandra Ghose and Kalipada Ghosh. No small part of the wonderful success of this vast festive gathering is due to the enthusiasm and efficient management of these volunteer workers. During the day, the whole locality resounding with solemn rejoicings was interspersed with stalls from which books and pictures, refreshments, fruits and cooling draughts were sold to the visitors by outsiders representing such trades. At nightfall the festivities were brought to a close by the display of fireworks by an enterprising firm of pyrotechnics who provide every year an interesting programme free of charge.

AT THE MYLAPORE MATH, MADRAS

The Eighty-first Birthday Anniversary of the Bhagavan was celebrated with usual joy and devotion at the Ramakrishna Mission compound, Brodies Road, Mylapore, on Sunday the 12th instant. A life-size portrait of Bhagavan was placed on a throne-like high seat and was well decorated with flowers and ferns, under a big *Pandal* specially erected for the purpose. In the morning, devotees and admirers assembled from all parts of the town in a large number, and Bhajana began from 8-30 a. m. and went on with unusual devotional fervour till noon. In the Bhasyam Iyengar's market, nearly 7,000 poor people were fed, and it is glorious to note that many young students, Professors, Vakils and other gentries of the town took great delight in serving them personally. In the afternoon a Harikatha was performed on Nakulapakhyanam by Mr. M. K. Tatacharya B. A., in his usual lucid way. At 5 p. m. a public meeting was held under the presidentship of the Hon'ble Mr. R. V. Narasimha Iyer of Salem, when Mr. V. C. Seshachariar, B.A., B.L., delivered a stirring lecture on the "Message of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa."

The Chairman in winding up the proceedings remarked that if one thing was demonstrated most forcibly of all by the life of Sri Ramakrishna, it was his utmost sincerity of purpose and intense spiritual practicality. Now-a-days people talk much but do little. He deplored that people had given up even the performance of Sandhya Upasana which was so simple, yet so profound and helpful for the upbuilding of the spiritual life. The life and message of Sri Ramakrishna should always be kept before us as the beacon-light to lead us on to spiritual realisation.

The functions of the day terminated with Aratrikam and distribution of Prasad.

The whole celebration looked to an on-looker as a splendid demonstration of that grand synthesis of Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Yoga, for which stands the life-message of Sri Ramakrishna.

—The Vedanta Kesari.

AT MERCARA, COORG.

The eighty-first birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna Dev was celebrated under the auspices of the local Vivekananda Sangam on Sunday, the 20th Feb. 1916 at the Vonkareshwara Temple Hall with much enthusiasm. On Sunday, the Hall, as well as the grounds abutting on the beautiful temple tank, was splendidly decorated and the life-like portrait of the Great Master was displayed at the head of the verandah in an artificial grove of leaves and flowers. Not many in number, but loyally earnest, the students and gentlemen of the place assembled in the hall for a continuous service of five hours, from 1 to 6 o'clock in the evening. The service consisted of music, singing and reading, with two lectures, the subjects being "Sri Ramakrishna—the Divine incarnation," and, "The Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna." The readings of the day were selected from "The Life and Teachings of Swami Vivekananda and "The Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa." Surely the life and teachings of the God-inspired Master introduce one intimately to the way of peace and blessedness, and to a devotion so deep and solemn that their study and the hearing thereof are themselves holy.

The rest of the programme opened with the feeding of the poor. In the noon from 2 to 3-30 p. m. about 500 poor were sumptuously fed, irrespective of caste and creed. Then the Bhajana began, and the incessant music of the devotees joining in parties of Sankirtana was inspiring to the soul. Afterwards, Mr. M. Shankaranarayana Rao read a suggestive and thoughtful paper on "The Life and the Mission of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa."

At 4-30 in the evening there was a public meeting under the presidency of Mr. Ramiah Punjah, Subjudge (retired), Coorg. Mr. Kalammayya, Supervisor, treated the audience to a lucid and learned discourse on the teachings of the Great Master.

After Mangalarathi and the distribution of Prasad the functions came to a close.

AT LUCKNOW.

The 81st birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva was celebrated by the Ramakrishna Sevashrama, Lucknow, on the 12th March. In the morning, the workers of the Home of Service went into the city, singing songs of the Lord with some musical instruments. A tent was erected over the outlying grounds of the Ashrama. It was richly decorated, and two big pictures of Sri Paramahansa Deva and Swami Vivekananda were placed in one side with garlands of flowers and flags. From 12 a. m. to 4 p. m. hundreds of poor people of all castes were fed very hospitably and sumptuously.

A large number of visitors from the local city as well as from other places were present during daytime. Among those were two well-known ladies Miss J. MacLeod and Mrs. Geddes. From 5 p. m. to 6-30 p. m. there were Bhajana and Sankirtana. Great enthusiasm prevailed when the public meeting was commenced at 6-30 p. m. Lectures on the life and teachings of Paramahansa Deva were delivered under the able presidentship of Thakur Suraj Baksh Singh Sahab of Kasmanda. The following gentlemen spoke on the occasion:—Mr. Ranga Iyer, Editor, 'The Advocate' Lucknow; Prof. U. N. Bull, M. A.; Mr. Narain Swamy, disciple of Swami Ram Tirtha. Brahmachari Pravash of the Ramakrishna Mission; Dr. A. K. Sen and others.

There was then an inspiring Sankirtan and the anniversary came to a close late in the night with the distribution of Prasad and an appeal to help the institution. It may be noted in this connection that Maharaja Manindra Ch. Nandi of Cossimbazar, Rai Kanahija Lal Bahadur, Judicial Commissioner, Oudh, and Thakur Suraj Baksh Singh Sahab of Kasmanda have kindly contributed Rs. 50 each to the institution.

AT SIVAGANGA.

The birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was celebrated with great eclat for the 3rd time under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Vedanta Sangam. The Tithipuja was performed on the 6th March with Vedic chantings. About 600 poor people mostly Panchamas were fed on that day and more than 2 dozens of Panchama school boys were clothed. The public celebration was held on the following Sunday the 12th inst. M. R. Ry. T. V. Krishna Nair Avl. B.A., B.L., Additional Dt. Munsif, presiding.

In the morning there was the usual Aradhana accompanied with the chanting of the Taittiriya Upanishad, the 15th chapter of the Gita, the Dakshinamurti Stotra of Sankaracharya and Mukunda Mala, and extracts were also read from the Light of Asia, the Bible, the Imitation of Christ, the Inspired Talks and Kali the Mother. The recitations from the Tamil Saints: Appar, Sundara, Gnana Sambandha, Manikya Vachakar, Namalwar and Tayumana Swami followed. The chanting of the Ramakrishna Avatara Stotra of Swami Abhedananda closed the Aradhanam. The distribution of Prasad then finished the programme for the morning. At 2 p. m. Bhajana was continued for an hour or more and then there was the distribution of Prasad. The public meeting began about 4-30 p. m. M. R. Ry. V. Venkataramani Iyer B.A., B.L., Pleader read an instructive paper in English full of anecdotes and rich with the beautiful stories and illustrations of Sri Ramakrishna Deva and Brahmasri V. Desikachariaral

delivered a felicitous lecture indicating in detail from the life and career of the Master how he was the last though not the least of the messengers of God that have come now and again to fulfil the promise of the Blessed Lord in the Gita and how his life and teachings were in consonance with the spirit of the Hindu Shastras. The president then spoke briefly on the beneficent work that the Order of Ramakrishna was doing all over the world and referred incidentally to the greatness of the chief disciple Vivekananda. There was a Katha performance the same night between 8-30 p. m. and 11-30 p. m. on 'Ramakrishna Vijayam' by a member of the Sangham. The proceedings throughout the day were marked by great enthusiasm.

AT KANKHAL.

On the 12th of March, the anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna Deva's birthday was celebrated at the Kankhal Sevashrama of the Ramakrishna Mission with usual devotion and rejoicings. In the hall of the adjacent Ashrama, the pictures of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna and the great Swamiji were conspicuously placed and tastefully decorated. The main entrance into the Sevashrama was also most attractively adorned with bunting, evergreens and flowers. Many of the holy Sadhus and local gentry joined in the festivities of the day. Brahmachari Surendranath of the Sevashrama made a fervent speech in Hindi on the life and teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. He was followed by some Sadhus present at the meeting. Very enjoyable music vocal and instrumental formed a part of the proceedings, at the close of which a sumptuous feast was provided for the Sadhus and others present. Food was also distributed to many poor people who gathered on the occasion.

AT TRICHUR.

The 81st birthday anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was celebrated at Trichur on Sunday the 12th March by the local Vivekodayam Samaj. The day dawned with the resoundings of the Harinama Sankirtanam sung by the Bhajana party. At 8 a. m. the usual meeting was held when Messrs. D. Geeran and Ukkhanda Menon delivered lectures on "The Saintliness of Ramakrishna" and "Life after Death." Then at 12 noon began the interesting item of feeding the poor. 800 poor souls were sumptuously fed with Kanchi and curry. Then came the public meeting at 4 p.m. with H.H. the Rama Varma, 9th Prince of Cochin in the chair. Dr. V. K. Nair delivered a lecture on "Our Duties towards God." The meeting was well attended. The next item was the procession through the town with Paramahansa Deva's photo accompanied by the sweet and divine

music of Nagaswaram. The last item was the Harikatha Kalakshepam at 8 p. m. by Mr. Seetharama Bhagavathar of Puthucode, a favourite student of the famous Lakshmana Achariar.

In all respects the celebration was quite successful and it really strengthened the bond of co-operation and sympathy between the public and the Satmajam.

AT OTHER PLACES.

At the time of our going to press, reports of the anniversary had not reached from such important centres as Bangalore, Benares etc. Besides such places from which reports are expected to come every year, celebrations are held in many a city and village from which no reports are received.

NEWS AND MISCELLANIES.

THE latest monthly report, namely that of February 1916, of the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Brindaban, shows that in the indoor department there were 10 old cases and 2 newly admitted cases of which 13 were discharged cured, 21 died, 2 left treatment, and 14 are still under treatment at the end of the month. There were 2050 out-door cases of which 406 were new and 1644 repeated numbers. Five persons were treated in their own houses with medicines and doctor's visits free of charge. The subscriptions and donations during the month amounted to Rs. 116-8-0 and the donations to the Building Fund to 1462-0-0, and the expenses incurred for the Sevashrama were Rs. 188-5-6 and for building works Rs. 834-10-6.

THE Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama at Kankhal appeals to the public for contributions to construct the projected General Ward on the newly acquired land adjoining the Sevashrama. The Rani of Searsole in Bengal has kindly promised Rs. 1250 towards the expenses of this construction, and with this as the nucleus the building funds for this important ward and the outdoor dispensary should reach the required amount, Rs. 8000, as estimated in the last Annual Report, if the generous public commence contributing to them at once. Perhaps our readers remember that this new General Ward is intended to accommodate indoor patients belonging to the general public and the large number of pilgrims visiting Hardwar, as the existing General Ward is exclusively meant for Sadhus. The new Dispensary also, built more conspicuously on the roadside, will leave the accommodation of the present dispensary to the school for the depressed classes which now sits in a verandah exposed to wind and weather. We hope the public will readily contribute towards the removal of these urgent needs of the Sevashrama.