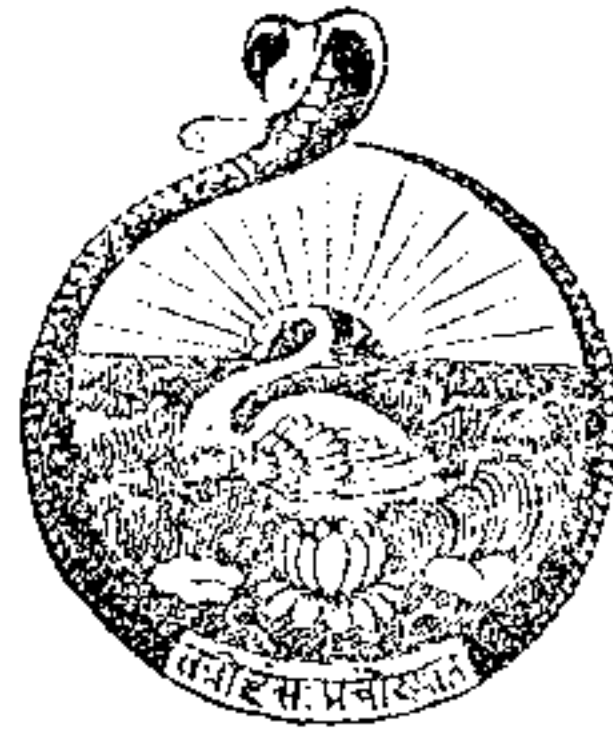


Prabuddha Bharata

OR

Awakened India



सतिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।

Katha Upa. I. iii. 4.

Vol. XXI, No. 239, JUNE, 1916.

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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]

JUNE 1916

[No. 238

CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(RECORDED BY A DISCIPLE.)

III.

[Place: *Kashipur*; at the garden of the late *Gopal Lal Seal*. Year: 1897.

Subjects: *Manifestation of wonderful power in Swamiji. The famous upcountry Pundits residing at Barabazar in Calcutta came to see Swamiji—Swamiji's talk in Sanskrit on the Shastras with the Pundits—the opinion of the Pundits about Swamiji—the love of his brother-disciples for Swamiji.*]

After his first return from the West, Swamiji resided for a few days at the garden of the late Gopal Lal Seal at Kashipur. The disciple at that time used to go there every day. Not the disciple alone, but many energetic youngmen, with a mind to see Swamiji, frequented the place in crowds. Miss Muller, coming with Swamiji, lived in this place at first. Mr. Goodwin, our brother-disciple, used to live with him in this garden.

Swamiji's fame echoed at that time from one end of India to the other. So naturally many would come to see him, some out of their zeal, some in quest of truth and again others to test the depth of his learning.

The disciple marked that those who would

ask questions became charmed with Swamiji's exposition of the Shastras and great thinkers and well-known professors of Universities would remain speechless before the unfoldment of his genius. As if the Goddess Saraswati made her abode in Swamiji's tongue! While he was living in this garden his miraculous insight of Yoga was in evidence from time to time.*

Many Pundits lived at Barabazar in Calcutta, their maintenance being provided by

* While Swamiji was living in this garden he saw one day the severed head of a ghost. It was, as if in plaintive voice, begging for life from the jaws of immediate death. By enquiry, Swamiji could afterwards learn that in fact a Brahmin had died in that garden from a gruesome accident. This event he afterwards related before his own brother-disciples.

the rich Marwari merchants. Those Pundits, versed in philosophy and the Vedas, came to know of the fame of Swamiji at that time. Some famous Pundits from among them came to the garden one day with a view to hold a disputation with him. The disciple was present there on the occasion.

All the Pundits that came there could speak in Sanskrit fluently. They came and greeting Swamiji who sat surrounded by a circle of visitors began their conversation in Sanskrit. Swamiji also responded to them in Sanskrit. The disciple cannot remember now the subject on which the Pundits argued with him that day. But this far he remembers that the Pundits almost all in one strident voice, were rapping out to Swamiji in Sanskrit obscure questions of philosophy, and he in a dignified serious mood, giving out to them calmly his own well-argued conclusions about those questions. This also he remembers clearly that Swamiji's Sanskrit was more melodious and pleasing to the ear than that of the Pundits. The Pundits too admitted this afterwards.

Finding Swamiji talking so fluently in Sanskrit, his brother-disciples were also very much astonished that day. For everyone knew that he had not found much occasion for practice of Sanskrit during his sojourn for the last six years in Europe and America. It was brought home to all that day by his disputation with the Pundits versed in the Shastras, that wonderful powers had been evolved in Swamiji. In the party of that day, their holinesses Swamis Ramakrishnananda, Yogananda, Nirmalananda, Turiyananda and Shivananda were present.

In the discussion with the Pundits Swamiji represented the side of the Siddhanta or conclusions to be established, while the Pundits represented that of the Purvapaksha, or objections to be raised. The disciple remembers that, while arguing, Swamiji wrongly used in one place the word *Asti* instead of

Swasti, which made the Pundits laugh out. At this Swamiji at once submitted : **पण्डितानां दासोऽहं क्षन्तव्यमेतत् स्खलनं**—“I am but a servant of the Pundits, please excuse this mistake.” The Pundits also were charmed at this humility of Swamiji. After a long dispute the Pundits at last admitted that the conclusions of the Siddhanta side were adequate and preparing to depart, they made their greetings to Swamiji. They were then followed out of the room by two or three visitors who asked them, “Sirs, what do you think of Swamiji?” In reply, the Pundit who was oldest in age said, “Though he is not deeply versed in grammar, Swamiji is a seer of the hidden mysteries of the Shastras and peerless in establishing conclusions. He has displayed wonderful learning in refuting the opponents through his own genius.”

What a wonderful love for Swamiji was conspicuous in his brother-disciples! When the dispute between Swamiji and the Pundits reached a climax, the disciple found Swami Ramakrishnananda counting on his beads in a side-room to the north of the hall; and when the Pundits had departed, the disciple asking him the reason for that was informed that he had been praying with concentration of mind at the lotus-feet of **Tbukur** for victory to Swamiji!

After the Pundits had left, the disciple learnt from Swamiji that these Pundits who took the side of the Purvapaksha were well versed in the Purva-Mimamsa Shastras. Swamiji advocated the philosophy of the Uttara-Mimamsa and proved to them the superiority of the path of knowledge, and they were obliged to accept his conclusion.

About the way the Pundits laughed at Swamiji, picking up one grammatical mistake, he said that what accounts for this error of his was the fact of his not having spoken in Sanskrit continually for many

years. He did not blame the Pundits a bit for all that. But he pointed out in this connection, that in the West it would imply a great incivility on the part of an opponent to point out any such slip in language, deviating from the real issue of dispute. A civilised society in such cases would accept the idea taking no notice of the language. "But in your country, all the fighting is going

on round the husk, no body searches for the grain within." So saying, Swamiji began to talk with the disciple in Sanskrit. The disciple also gave answers in broken Sanskrit. Yet he praised him for the sake of encouragement. From that day, at the request of Swamiji, the disciple used to speak with him in Sanskrit off and on.

(To be continued).



OCCASIONAL NOTES.

TWO—thousand—five—hundred—and—forty years ago, this very day of this lunar month—the fullmoon day—, the small kingdom of Kapilavastu acquired immortal fame by providing Bhagavan Buddha his cradle of birth,—him, who "was born and brought up and lived and died a Hindu" (Rhys Davids); and into the very soul of the Vedic religion, he was received as an Avatâra of God,—he from whom came the last blow to pull down for ever the old, tottering ritualism, which encrusted too long that soul of that religion. But history is unconscionably slow in reading into facts their truest meaning, and Buddha has been so long understood to be the first Buddhist among men and the greatest opponent of the Vedas.

For did not Buddha preach a new system or 'wheel of Dhamma,' which nowhere admits the authority of the Vedas, and did he not extend his glorious ministry to peoples whom the Vedas looked upon as spiritually outcasted? How can one be still regarded as a "Hindu," when from his life and teachings a new cult emanated to carry on the fiercest struggle with contemporaneous Hinduism and practically to overthrow its strongest citadels of orthodoxy? How can one be yet regarded as a "Hindu," when he still lends his own name to millions and millions of his followers in countries other than India so that they

proudly distinguish themselves from the Hindus as a different sect of religionists? How can the Buddha of the Buddhists be an Avatâr of Hinduism unless we suppose that the latter was forced in spite of itself to concede this honour partly as an admission of its discomfiture and partly as the price of a mutual compromise?

And the whole issue has been further complicated by Puranic interpretations which account for all the glory and greatness of Buddha as an Avatar either by pointing out the way he deluded the non-Vedic peoples into a false creed as a punishment they deserved or by extolling simply his compassion for the beasts killed in Vedic sacrifice! Very cheap and questionable achievements indeed, by which to merit the high distinction of an Avatâr! Perhaps a better justification for this high distinction would have come from the widespread custom among Hindus of worshipping Buddha under the name and style of God Dharma, prevalent in north-east India much later than the age of those Pundit minstrels or Kathakas who evidently supplimented the task, devolving on them for many centuries, of conserving the ancient Puranas, by the creation of legendary theories and explanations for traditions of which time had obscured the true significance. In any case, we find neither tradition nor history

bequeathing to us any satisfactory justification for that high hosanna of thanksgiving which is implied in this recognition of Buddha as an Avatâr by the profound genius of Hinduism.

So let us go back for a short while into the facts of pre-Buddhistic history, still available to us. More than twenty centuries had rolled by since the destruction of the ancient Kshatriya dynasties on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, before the Blessed One of the Sakya race appeared on earth; for we can safely set aside the short-sighted calculation of dates by modern chronologists, who rejecting religiously preserved traditions on this point, have naturally to confess to a sense of treading on air when they seek to penetrate beyond the Buddhistic ages. Considering how slowly changes* are wrought into the modes and methods of social life in India, even twenty centuries would not be found enough for all that profound transformation which Indian society underwent from the age of the Kurukshetra to that of Buddha. To whichever social feature we turn,—ways of home-life, religious ideas, language, court life etc.—we find the picture of a new India reflected in the accounts transmitted to us of Buddha's life and activities. What were those factors which operated to create this new India out of the materials partly supplied by the wreck of Kurukshetra and partly derived from alien elements of social life

* This rate of change has been abnormally accelerated of course in modern times by circumstances which never existed in past history,—circumstances created by the advent in India, in a form however much mitigated, of the Western state-socialism. Never in the India of our past history any political state could indirectly assert so much moulding influence on the social life of the people, and this has been the case now chiefly because of the hopeless depth of self-oblivion into which we sank in modern times.

forced upon India by the constant inrush of foreign invasions?

Within a few centuries after the disappearance of the ancient Kshatriyas who had mounted guard both on the frontiers and the inland centres of the purely Vedic civilisation in India, we find new dynasties of kings cropping up all over India, trying to trace their descent, as an apology, from ancient kings of the Kurukshetra era. But in fact the whole arena of social life in India had been flooded even by that time with new racial elements starting up into prominence from within and peering forth across the frontiers. The old centres of Vedic orthodoxy were being swamped from all sides, and had gradually to lead a sort of migratory and scattered existence, seeking the ægis of such orthodox kings as upheld Vedic rites and customs. It was this migrating orthodoxy of Vedic ritualism which helped to trace a new geography of India dividing her into the five Gourhas (पञ्चगौड़) and the five Dravirhas (पञ्चद्राविड़). It was during this period of its scattered life of ever-multiplying vicissitudes that the Vedic orthodoxy almost exclusively lived upon the ancient traditions of spiritual wisdom and social life. We may distinguish this period as the long epoch of the Sutras, the Smritis and the Dharma-shastras, both the latter taking up threads of work done in former ages but developing quite a new literature. This development of a vast literature of mnemonic aphorisms and extensive codes bearing on spiritual, social and ritualistic conduct practically ceased altogether after the rise of Buddhism which finally knocked down the pivot of Vedic ritualism on which the whole body of social and ritualistic injunctions rested.

From the very beginning of this period of the Sutras, Smritis and Dharmashastras, the great institution of Rishihood had been fall-

ing into virtual desuetude. A Rishi had been defined to be one who was a seer of the Vedic Mantra. But after the final compilation† of the Vedas by Vyasa, no Brahmin was allowed to add to the Vedic Mantras, only one exception being made, on a plea which brings out the uniqueness of the case, in favour of one Yajnavalkya who was the seer of Mantras embodied in Shuklajajurveda. Thus the essential function of a Rishi having disappeared, the institution itself disintegrated. And what hastened this dissolution was the gradual disappearance of the ancient type of political sovereignty for which the constant guidance of Rishis was indispensable to efficiency. The new kings of the post-Vedic ages seldom sought out the guidance of forest Rishis. So these forest Rishis became gradually divided into householder Brahmins, themselves seeking the patronage of kings in cities, and forest anchorites cut off from the political and social life of cities. This important schism in the spiritual body which formed the very basis and regulative centre of Vedic culture and civilisation explains much of the history of the post-Vedic ages which ushered in the Kaliyuga. In the first place, it amounted to a cleft between the Jnanakanda and the Karmakanda, or in other words "the knowledge-portion" and "the work-portion" of the Vedas, both of which aspects of Vedic wisdom the Rishi was supposed to combine in himself in the Vedic ages, his life being a sort of link between the householder and the Atyâshramis or monastics.

This important schism proved a great disadvantage both to the social life of the post-Vedic ages and the forest life of monasticism; for the former, like a ship without a pilot, had to drift along the course of circumstances without the creative and adaptive insight of Jnanakanka, and the latter losing touch in

most cases with a Karmakanda and a social life that embodied Vedic tradition and authority exposed itself to the gradual loss of its original Vedic character. As an inevitable consequence, we find the rise, on one hand, of a blind Vedic orthodoxy exercising authority over Vedic society, and the multiplication of monastic institutions, many of which had cut adrift from the moorings of Upanishadic wisdom. From evidences we may collect now mostly from literature, it is clear that these monastic institutions covered a scattered array of numerous sects, the majority of which in pre-Buddhistic ages became completely dissociated from a Upanishadic foundation, while a small number had maintained the authority of the Vedas, most of these developing new Upanishads and at least one or two carrying on among them in its purest form the tradition of the Advaitic basis of Vedic ritualism. The great importance of these two divisions of the Upanishadic monasticism has received quite a poor, inadequate recognition from our historians, all their attention being too much rivetted by the pomp and glare of the Buddhist and Jain upheaval.

For in the post-Vedic ages, the development of the inherited culture of the Vedas went on broadly from two centres,—the society and the forest, the former being concerned with the Sutras and Shastras that dealt with the various aspects of social life and the latter with the Upanishads and Sutras dealing with the spiritual or supra-social phases of life. It was the forest Sannyasins of these ages that developed the Bhikshu-sutras, the Yoga-sutras, the Sankhya-sutras and the many Upanishads some of which directly derived from the older Upanishads, and Brahmanas in some cases, the five cults specially, known as Panchopâsanâ. Of the sects developing the many Bhikshu-sutras, only a few sects who preserved the Brahma-sutras continued to maintain, perhaps, their

† We would take the post-Vedic era to begin after this event.

separate existence. Of those sects who developed some special Upanishads on Yoga or lived chiefly upon the Sankhya and Yoga sutras, the majority drifted away from Vedic authority and tradition and developed many new features in their theory and practice. These independent sects of Yogis shared with the Jains in the later pre-Buddhistic ages a noted pre-eminence in the forests of the greater part of northern India. The Arhats of the Vedic ages also, with the gradual elaboration of a new philosophy and disciplinary code, developed into the Jain sects. And lastly, there were some new Vedic sects of Sannyasins who, while recognising the Advaita basis of Vedic wisdom, developed, mainly out of the doctrine of Pranava, the five cults of worship (Panchopásaná) and their corresponding Upanishads.

Of these four classes of Sadhus, the first two, by virtue of the essentially ultra-social character of their philosophy and practice, had to live peculiarly isolated from the social life in India of those ages, while the last two classes are found to have carried their doctrines out of the forest gradually into the very heart of that social life. And indeed a very keen and persistent demand was arising from the many new, evolving communities all over India for religious dispensations to come out of the forest. These spreading and multiplying communities were the products of a social amalgamation that was going on, as we have said before, all over the country, and which the Vedic orthodoxy was powerless to keep under control. For it had not the inspiration of that larger wisdom of Juanakanda which would have enabled it to preserve its Vedic inheritance even while allowing the society all possible flexibility of movement. Confronted, therefore, with the universal phenomenon of social revolution, this Vedic orthodoxy, like a tortoise at the sight of danger, withdrew all its powers of initiative within the hard shell of social

restrictions. When undertaking religious ministry over individuals or any class of people, it insisted, as a rule, on Vedic standards of caste purity, namely those of pure Vedic Traivarnya. But pressure of circumstances rendered it impossible not to relax this policy of social isolation, first, in favour of upstart kingly conquerors who had to be classified as good Kshatriyas in exchange for patronage and protection, and gradually in favour of every powerful patron and protector. Still this stringent social policy evidently left quite a large majority of the people, who represented either social compromises in the older caste divisions or new racial products, perfectly outside the fold of the Vedic orthodoxy. And a considerable section of this majority offered a large ready field for the spiritual ministrations of monastic sects like those of Jainism and those who developed the five cults,—the worship of the Sun, the Devi, Vishnu, Shiva and Ganapati.

So in pre-Buddhistic India, we find the whole population divided into four broad sections. First, there was the proud minority of orthodox Vedic communities, practically confined to a few scattered centres. Secondly, there was a large proportion of semi-Vedic communities, unostentatiously practising in the outskirts of the Vedic orthodoxy the five cults of worship claiming a Vedic origin. Thirdly, there were the many communities professing Jainism, hardly distinguishable from the semi-Vedic communities, but much less solicitous about any Vedic character in their social and religious life. And fourthly, an ever-increasing proportion of new products of racial evolution, in many cases settling down into non-Vedic communities, left unabsorbed under any Vedic or semi-Vedic schemes of religious life. The first two sections of the whole population, owning a common Vedic source and authority for religious ideas and beliefs, tended to gradually overlap each other through the progressive inter-

course of such ideas and beliefs, and ritualistic orthodoxy existed in its Vedic purity only as that apex of a common communal life, to which its semi-Vedic mediocrity was not allowed to reach out. Thus the large body of this Vedic communal life covered by Sun-worshippers, Bhagavats, Shaivas, Shaktas and Ganapatyas, distinguished more for facility of classification, embodied in itself the first phase of a Tantrik restatement of the whole Vedic culture transmitted through the post-Vedic ages. This silent but extensive process of restatement, started by Sannyasins who came out of their forests with new Upanishads to *Vedicise* racial heterodoxies excluded from Vedic ritualism, was fraught with wonderful potentialities, as was proved after the rise of Buddhism.

But though we have been using, rather freely, the term "Vedic" in characterising the communities that populated India of the pre-Buddhistic ages, this term came to bear a quite restricted meaning in those very ages. When the Gita calls the Vedas **त्रैगुण्यविषयाः** or that which deals only with the things of the manifested universe as opposed to the Reality lying beyond manifestation, we come to know that it was not unusual to restrict, even in those early ages, the denotation of the term 'Vedas' to their Karmakanda,—to that part of them, that is to say, with which the generality of men was concerned. So it is easy to understand how after the pursuit of Karmakanda became divorced from that of Jnanakanda in the post-Vedic ages, the term "Vedas" gradually came to bear the stereotyped sense of Vedic ritualism. This degradation of meaning persisted throughout the Buddhistic ages, and when a new powerful monasticism arose later on to re-instate the post-Buddhist India on the eternal basis of Vedic culture and authority, it preferred the term 'Shruti' to the much abused one of 'Veda,' intending to convey by the former an emphasis on Jnanakanda as the real per-

manent aspect of the Vedic wisdom. So if in the pre-Buddhistic ages the word 'Veda' was synonymous with Vedic ritualism, every religious propagandist whose work lay among people perfectly excluded from the orthodoxy of Vedic ritualism was justified in avoiding everything that may be easily construed into an appeal in the name of the Vedas. Secondly, among many monastic sects prevalent in pre-Buddhistic India and practising and teaching various forms of Yoga, it became quite out of vogue to appeal to Vedic authority or to take pains to trace any Vedic source for their doctrines and practices.

For, as we have already pointed out, the more the Jnanakanda of the Vedas became isolated from the Karmakanda which gradually sought to maintain a monopoly of the Vedic name and character, the less was the interest evinced by most of the Sannyasin sects, with some exceptions indicated before, in keeping up useless pretensions of Vedic authority and source,—useless, because they had to live and work out of all touch with the Vedic orthodoxy to which alone such pretensions would have counted. As only the crowning institution of all such prevalent sects, the monasticism which Bhagavan Buddha founded naturally followed the vogue among all such sects and felt no special call in those days to clothe itself with Vedic authority. In addition to this fact, which ought to be clearly understood, the Buddhism of Buddha, unlike the fivefold cult of worship preached in those ages by many Sannyasins, was exclusively a monastic faith bearing close affinity and likeness to the many monastic faiths which evolved out of the Yoga and Sankhya philosophy and which have been characterised by us before as purely ultra-social. And had not this ultra-social faith broken in upon society, it would have decidedly and easily fallen into line with the many ramifications of monastic religion developed from the Yoga and Sankhya sys-

tems. But unlike all these forest faiths which might be called in a sense its prototypes, Buddhism stepped out of forest seclusion to work out its world-redeeming career of varied self-adaptations.

Some centuries ago Jainism had done exactly the same thing. It was also originally a monastic creed of the ultra-social type. But as the Vedic orthodoxy increasingly failed to minister to the spiritual needs of a growing multitude of householders, Jainism developed its new feature of accepting Shrâvakas or votaries from householders. It is reasonable to suppose that in this respect Jainism followed the example of the Sannyasins of the fivefold Vedic cult, although it had not the same advantage as the latter had of professing doctrines suitable both to the life of a Sannyasin and a householder. So we find that both Buddhism and Jainism arose out of an ultra-social type of monastic religion and had to descend into the arena of social life by developing under compulsion new subordinate features. In the first phase of such development, the new features were directly derived from the almost common ethical foundation of all monastic sects. But as religion in social life cannot live too long on the bare sustenance of merely ethical codes, in the later phase of development, other features had to be added both to Buddhism and Jainism which threw the door open and wide to the symbolism of worship. It was in this field of action, while developing this later phase, that religious creeds purely monastic in character and origin found themselves succumbing to the absorbing power of Vedic spiritual culture.

We have seen that Buddhism would have never earned a name for antagonism to Vedic religion, had it not broken in upon society and met the orthodoxy of Vedic ritualism face to face. It is only in relation to this orthodoxy that a positive hostile attitude is

found to have been developed in Buddhism, and the Buddhistic doctrine that specially called forth this attitude, viz. the doctrine of non-killing, was not peculiar to Buddhism, but was a universal doctrine among sects of monastic Yoga. And if Buddha came out of the forest in those days to stand against the soulless formalism of orthodox Vedic rituals in which the non-essentials such as the killing of animals were being made much of at the expense of the essentials, he really voiced forth the protest of the Vedic Jnanakanda, which had remained silent too long in its forest exile. This Vedic Jnanakanda had already propounded new Upanishads and had started through them the all-important process of restating and readjusting the Vedic religion. It was necessary for this process of restatement that the hollow pretensions of a lifeless ritualism should be silenced and its aristocratic exclusiveness should be smashed for ever. The Vedic Jnanakanda was not in a position to fulfil this necessity in the name of Vedic authority, for its new developments were post-Vedic in time and were represented in society by classes who had accepted social inferiority. So Bhagavan Buddha came forward to fulfil this necessity on behalf of the great work of restatement, which was gathering stupendous force behind the scene.

Verily this restatement of the whole Vedic spiritual culture, originating with the many cults of worship that had already begun to bear the name of "Tantras," potentially held within itself the whole future of India; and Bhagavan Buddha not only rendered it the important service of knocking down the aristocracy of Vedic ritualism, but also brought within its zone of operation all those vast racial elements which it had so long failed to absorb under its semi-Vedic social scheme and which therefore stood out as a fatal danger to the eventual success of its all-important process. Buddhism succeeded in

capturing not only the topmost stratum of society in which the lingering life of Vedic orthodoxy, in many cases, managed to be centred, but sucked into its spiritual ferment all those non-Aryan races, the social absorption of which had proved a despair to all the religious cults evolved in the post-Vedic ages. And Buddhism did this not by pitting against that social economy of the Vedic or semi-Vedic cults which proved so inadequate a new social creed of its own, not by positively dealing any destructive blow to their weak struggling social fabrics shaking before the inrush of the growing mass of unabsorbed racial elements, but by the silent negative process of throwing its monastic order and spiritual ministry open before all races and communities that inhabited India. The Aryanising of non-Aryan races constituted the very crux of the whole problem of self-preservation for Vedic spiritual culture, and could there be anything more profoundly Aryanising in its influence on the deepest springs of human thought and sentiment than that lustre and force with which Buddha's renunciation and self-possession fell on the life of the many non-Aryan races and communities between whom and the core of Vedic culture, represented as Nirvana in his language, the Bhagavan stretched himself out as the bridge, as it were, of Divine atonement?

And all this could never have been achieved in those days from within any sphere of thought that characterised itself as Vedic. For the ritualistic orthodoxy that called only itself Vedic, and was on all hands considered to be so, had already become something like a gilded husk out of which all the grain had been extracted and assimilated by the new movement growing patiently so long in its outskirts, that began as a semi-Vedic development and used to reckon its Tantras half whisperingly in the category of the Shrutis, Smritis and Puranas. So it was impossible

for this crackly porcelain receptacle of ritualistic orthodoxy to hold the majestic oak of Buddha's achievement. But suppose this oak had grown from the soil of the new movement of Tantrik re-statement which had been, for some ages past, silently undergoing its first phase of Vedic assimilation! Not that even, for the supposition is untenable. The great task of dealing the death-blow to orthodox Vedic ritualism on one hand and of bringing all sorts of non-Aryan races into one fold of religion on the other could have been undertaken by this new movement only by declaring a revolt from that Vedic authority under the shadow of which it had been so long finding its fullest nourishment of Vedic culture. This revolt against a doctrine which brought it all that it possessed and the cruel attempt on the ebbing life of an orthodoxy which had to make a will, as it were, in its favour, would have created a much greater confusion in the history of Vedic culture than what the silent, and in most cases benevolent, indifference of Buddha towards what passed current as Vedic, served to create for the later ages.

So the Time-spirit chalked out its own new path for solving the mighty problems that clouded the future of the Eternal Religion of the Vedas. And the very genius of this Religion made itself manifest outside the sphere of all its contemporaneous developments to work out from a detached platform those peculiar problems which were incapable of solution from within. As a result we find within a few centuries all the seething mass of unabsorbed racial elements thrown into a wonderful crucible of Aryanising process and the great obstacle of a Vedic orthodoxy eliminated from the operation. The ground was fully prepared in this way for a Tantrik restatement of the whole Vedic culture to rush forth in a tremendous wave of new-born energy and sweep over the whole field with its wonderful creative impulses. The first

impact of this wave with Buddhism in its second phase of symbolistic development brought forth the marvellous Mahayana which ushered into the new movement the creative spirit of the Vedic religion to symbolise the whole of Buddhism back into its own fold. History records how this symbolising process went on for some centuries, very often with a mistaken vigour,—how Buddhism was gradually digested and assimilated into the body of the Vedic religion as rejuvenated in a Tantrik form and how the whole process overreached itself, drifting off from the Vedic foundation in many cases, till the revelations of two Avatárs were again put into requisition* to restore to the whole movement the basis of Vedic thought and Vedic sentiment.

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Throughout all this history, not only was the fundamental problem of self-preservation solved for the Vedic religion, but it was enabled also to expand itself and occupy the whole area of a nascent Indian life. At the very basis of this mighty achievement lies the life and divine compassion of Bhagavan Buddha. "One who realises Brahman

* Vide 'Occasional Notes,' page 84, P. B. of May, 1915.

becomes Brahman and *his* words are Vedas," otherwise "the Vedas are of no avail to one who knew not Brahman." This is the great Vedic truth which Bhagavan Buddha came to embody amongst us of India, and he is to us the embodiment of the Vedas first and anything else afterwards. For he is the prophet of the Unspeakable Beyond of Avidya and Vasana (Desire) which must be identical under any name you give it,—Nirvana or Brahman; and the same Vedic psychology of spiritual progress has been described by him in different terms to suit differences in emphasis. Embodying the Vedas in the most real sense as opposed to intellectual advocacy (which was not in vogue amongst monastic institutions he passed through in life), he did for the Vedas what the Vedas could not have done for themselves, namely the saving of their spiritual culture from the imminent fate of being stifled to death. So the Buddha Avatár lives to-day in every man who strives after the highest Vedic ideal of renunciation and realisation, and as the real Buddhism of Buddha was the precursor and sponsor of modern Hinduism, every Hindu is a Buddhist before he is a Hindu and every Hindu monastery is primarily a Vihára.



VEDANTA IN AMERICA.

IN the "Lectures from Colombo to Almora," which embody in a special sense the whole message which Swami Vivekananda strove to deliver to his countrymen, we find him returning often and again to the important topic of nation-building in India. In this connection, he made a deeply significant pronouncement.

He said that every nation has a foreign policy and India has her own too. The pursuit of its foreign policy is the most effective remedy every country relies upon in case

of distracting internal quarrels. And it is a law of national life that every country which ceases to give to others outside what it earns for humanity is bound to drift along the sure path of decay. So India must have her own foreign policy and that is to carry the message of Vedanta to every creek and corner of the world.

Swamiji's Vedanta, it should be remembered, is the name for that Spiritual Ideal, the wisdom of the Upanishads, which is capable of holding in synthesis all the aspects and

sections of Indian life and thought, and his nationalism consists in putting this synthesis in working order.

Therefore the important point to bear in mind is that Swamiji regarded his scheme of Vedantic mission to other countries not as a sectarian or sectional affair, but as the pursuit by modern India of her foreign policy. What he revived and inaugurated was really an important feature of our national life as a whole.

So it goes without saying that every son of India bears towards this Vedantic mission a relation of privilege as well as responsibility. It is surely a business of his to make enquiries and suggestions as to the working of this mission, but at the same time it is equally his duty to do his best towards efficiency and success in that working.

And in this matter, the monastic order founded by Swami Vivekananda considers itself something like an accredited agent for the whole nation, for no Sannyasins would have any vested interests of their own, purely individual, in any such work or organisation. No monastic institution would work in society for its own sake,—nor even for any national sake, if nationhood be not for a country, as it is only for India, the stepping-stone for the eternal service of all mankind.

It is in the light of these facts that we have to strike a correct balance of credit and debit so as to determine what a Vedantic mission working abroad owes to us or what we owe to it. But though the whole country, specially the Ramkrishna Mission, feels grateful to Lala Lajpat Rai and Prof. Benoy Kumar Sirkar for having brought up this very question,—and that not a moment too soon,—before the bar of public discussion, we regret to point out that they have not taken this correct point of view.

For if you first dissociate in your mind the Vedanta movement in America from the collective life you represent, and then judge of

the former's defects and shortcomings, you naturally do not lay the blame or responsibility either on the collective life or on yourself, but on somebody else who just happens to run that movement at present. Not that the Ramkrishna Mission is not ready to take the whole blame upon itself, if the matter could end there; but does the whole matter really rest there?

For instance, what is the central defect in in the present Vedanta movement in America on which both the distinguished travellers from India laid their finger? It is that the Swamis in America are not as good representatives of the modern spiritual India as we would like to have in a foreign land. The Swamis themselves would be the first to plead guilty to this charge, for they cherish the memory of Swami Vivekananda too deeply and vividly in their hearts to forget so soon what it really means to represent Indian spirituality in the West. And nobody is so painfully conscious of this defect which our tourist brothers have pointed out than the Ramkrishna Mission itself.

But what is the remedy? Does not our country itself form that ultimate source from which the Ramkrishna Mission has to draw its supply of such able workers as would make efficient representatives in the West of our collective spiritual culture? And if there is something wrong at present in this very source of supply, no manufactory can turn out the required type of products. And as it is a problem not only for the Ramkrishna Mission but for all our countrymen, we earnestly invite the thoughtful attention of every Indian who feels interested in the matter to the present condition of this source of supply.

In the first place, there is something wrong in the very patriotism which tends to monopolise at present the mental energies of educated people in India. Patriotism is no doubt the greatest inspiration that we require

in the service of our fallen and famished country; and Swami Vivekananda, in order to infuse that inspiration, uttered these memorable words: "For the next fifty years this alone shall be our keynote, this, our great Mother India. Let all other vain Gods disappear for that time from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race, everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears, He covers everything. All other Gods are sleeping. What vain Gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the God that we see all around us, the *Virāt*? When we have worshipped this, we shall be able to worship all other Gods." So who would deny that a great wave of patriotism has become absolutely necessary? But shall we, for that reason, import into our country the Western type of patriotism which is only another name for selfish worldliness on a big national scale? Love and service of one's country should only be a stepping-stone to love and service of humanity. True patriotism should come out from one country as a perpetual blessing to every other constituting like the former a limb of humanity. In the West, the rise of such a patriotism is proving itself to be a despair. But why should we in India affect blindness with our eyes open, and run after this most disastrous type of collective life and enthusiasm? In every type of collective life, of course, there would be some political interests to pursue and protect, but why should we go mad to *build* on them? Why should we make the common political interest the *basis* and the *principle* of our unity? If the history of untold centuries proves and pledges India to be a country with a spiritual or cultural mission in the world, is it not fundamentally wrong and futile for us to try to rally ourselves into national unity round a common politics instead of that common mission? For if this very first rally is made round a wrong centre, it is a law of national growth that the whole collective life becomes irrevocably committed

to a wrong, fatal course!

Our new-born enthusiasm for collective life in India, or in other words, the surge of patriotism on which educated minds all over the country are rising to-day, has become infected and poisoned by this wrong rally we are making round a political centre. This corrupt patriotism is giving us a wrong scheme of values to apply in every sphere of our collective life and thought, and in the educative atmosphere created all over the country as a necessary outcome, it is impossible for the spirit of self-consecration to our true national mission to be effectively fostered. It has become rather an exception than a rule for young men to become inspired with such a spirit. Rather they become mostly fired with an ambition for political self-sacrifice, which, finding no adequate field, either works itself off in the keen struggle for existence or works itself into underground schemes of political violence. And while the real manhood of our country rots thus in sentimental impotence or in delirious fits of activity, India waits long in vain for those sturdy sons, fully self-consecrated, who would organise, both within and without, the pursuit of that spiritual mission, for and through which only she has to live in this world.

No wonder therefore that our country fails to supply at present this requisite type of workers to carry out what Swamiji characterised as the foreign policy of our nation. Everything else is ready: the spiritual discipline that will shape forth and chisel out the required type of character, the mould of culture in which the intellectual life of the workers has to be cast, the synthetic principle which puts into one organic system all that we have inherited from the past and all that we have to receive from the modern world and the inspiration to bring out the noblest impulses of human nature. But even perfection in machinery is of no avail, if the supply of proper materials is itself poor. And this

supply has been held off to a great extent by a mistaken nationalism which holds sway over the mental atmosphere of our country. This nationalism not only diverts all our collective energies from the real organising focus of our spiritual mission, but also places at a discount that ideal of renunciation which forms the real background and setting for the Indian ideal of service.

And secondly, let us ask what amount of co-operation and help the Ramkrishna Mission receives from those of our countrymen who are eager to see the ideals of Swami Vivekananda worked out in India and abroad. Swamiji made his appeal not to any particular sect and section of the public, for his programme was essentially a programme of nation-building. His spiritual ideal accepted all faiths and creeds and his scheme of work excluded no sphere of our collective activity. And before he gave up his body, he succeeded in materialising his ideas before his countrymen into a strong nucleus of workers. He did his own part of the duty, but have his countrymen as yet done their part of it?

If the workers left on the field by Swamiji are found wanting in capacity to work out his scheme, why do not those who sincerely feel it come forward to lend them a helping hand? It is exactly here that the solution of the whole question lies. It might be said that it is difficult to co-operate with a monastic order, for there the ideal of self-consecration is pitched too high for the generality of men. But it is to remove this very difficulty that the sister organisation of a Ramkrishna Mission was provided, side by side with the purely monastic order. Here in this organisation, the public are offered an ample scope for co-operating with the Sannyasins in the service of their country and humanity.

Now that the question has been mooted before the public, it would indeed be easier of solution the sooner they admit that if the

Vedantic mission working in America owes it to them to fulfil their expectations, they themselves owe it to that mission to offer it their full co-operation. Have our enlightened brothers who do this mission the important service of drawing public attention to its work in America taken into account this reciprocal responsibility? We are sorry, we have to reply in the negative.

Prof. Benoy Kumar Sircar has suggested a new scheme for the better representation of India in America. Evidently, there is not much love lost between him and the Vedanta philosophy. He seems to have his own suspicions about Vedanta lending itself too easily to a false view of life, extolling Mayavada and otherworldliness at the expense of practical success in the world. He has been insisting lately on our seeking inspiration from an ancient India that achieved marvelous success in practical spheres, as opposed to an ancient India of high speculative and spiritual achievements whom we have already made much of before ourselves and others. In fact, his whole outlook on Indian life, past and present, seems clearly to be governed by a false line he has drawn between the spiritual and the secular or practical. And therefore he declares with great emphasis: "Simply by representing Vedanta to the world outside we do not represent India. * * It is time to present mother India in all her other forms (or poses) and foreign nations are profoundly eager to see them."* So his plan is to have representative workers from all the other departments of our collective thought and life sent forth to other countries. "For then only the forces of speculative and spiritual progress in India would undergo a proper test under the scrutiny of the learned men of the modern world. It is then that the Westerners would be able to understand the true meaning of the Vedantic movement started by Vivekananda." †

* "*Prabasi*," Vaishakh. † *Ibid.*

Let it be understood that we have nothing but sincere enthusiasm for such a scheme of an Indian mission to the West. It is implied in that very relation of give and take through which only lies the hope of a future for our country. But before we go to organise any cultural expedition outside India on such a scale, is it not necessary to see whether we have first organised our own culture within India? If India still speaks to us in confused, conflicting voices, will she speak better to others outside? If we ourselves have not yet obtained an organic view of the life India has been living for centuries and centuries, what view of Indian life and thought shall we put before peoples outside?

And Swami Vivekananda wanted to preach a Vedanta to the world outside, which comprehends the whole scheme of Indian life and thought. It is utter ignorance of this Vedanta to say that it does not represent and interpret India in her perfect integrity. India has her own one, undivided personality, and unless we have a vision of this full-orbed personality, which Swamiji's Vedanta interpreted, we can never represent to others the various shining facets, as it were, which shed lustre along various angles of vision to govern the various concerns of our collective life. We must understand what the very self of "Mother India" is, before we can see and interpret what forms she seems to assume to assert herself through the various pursuits of human life. India never divided herself into one ancient India of secular successes and another of spiritual achievements. She had always lived her one, undivided life which is nothing but the all-comprehensive Vedanta in theory and practice,—Vedanta as the realisation of the Beyond through the Here and the Now, or more properly, as the progressive resolution of those terms into one another.

So, although nobody denies that the time has come when India must interpret to the world her own life in all its aspects, we maintain that it is best for her to do this

from the broad platform of a real Vedantic movement such as Swami Vivekananda inaugurated in the West. The self-interpretation of India to the world outside should be one co-ordinated programme of work to be carried out from this broad spiritual platform by all the missionaries of religion, art, science and literature that go out from India. Woe to us and to all our future hopes, if we cannot set up this one broad platform, but carry outside of India to other countries all the factions, jealousies and quarrels that tend to alienate one brother worker from another within the same mothercountry! And we have pointed out why this one platform must be essentially a spiritual one. How to spiritualise the secular, moreover, forms not only the greatest problem for the West,—the problem of the Sphinx which the West must solve in order to live,—but it also constitutes the eternal message that India lives to bear to all mankind. In view of this fact, every worker through whom India seeks to interpret herself should have to give to his own particular message that spiritual background which Vedanta never fails to teach him how to give.

And no educated men in India would have any cause to feel disappointed in the Swamis working in America on behalf of our country, if they remember how valiantly they are keeping alive for us with the scanty fuel at their disposal that great oblation-fire of Vedanta which is to give life and form to the great message the future envoys from India of her culture and spirituality will carry to all mankind. Is it not enough if they even succeed in keeping the field open to all the future possibilities of the work, when at home our collective thought-life is still being impotently rent asunder on all sides by our confusion of thought?

Lala Lajpat Rai proposes* a considerable seniority in age for those who are to be sent

* *The Modern Review*, May, 1916.

abroad to preach Vedanta. We do not see eye to eye with him in this matter. No age-limit can really govern spiritual attainments. The provision in ancient codes of a fourth Ashrama or life-period of renunciation for householders did never form in those ages the only exclusive portals for a life of Sannyasa. It was rather sought to imply through it a social compulsion on the life of householders. But the spiritual enthusiasm for renunciation was never sought to be enmeshed by social laws. But be that as it may, nobody can contend, with regard to the question, that age can form any sure index either to spiritual self-control or to the insight of worldly experience. It all depends on the inborn spiritual capacity of a man as to how soon these powers ripen within him, and we would surely be overdoing the point if we impose on our choice of Vedantist workers any hard and fast law of age.

As to the undue financial preoccupations of the Swamis in America and the restrictions imposed on their hospitality in that connection, we must remember that these may constitute only a passing phase of the keen struggle they are going through at present for keeping up their work. Swami Vivekananda always insisted that his workers in foreign lands should not entangle themselves in the financial or even in the organising work of the movement. This part of the affair should properly devolve on the local students of Vedanta. And we have every reason to expect that in this matter the spirit of the Sannyasin is bound to triumph directly the pressure of unusual circumstances is taken off.

Lastly, we may point out that the fact of women forming at present the large body of supporters of the Vedanta movement in America is not in itself any disparagement to that movement. It only leaves the further question to be discussed as to why American men do not feel equally attracted to the Vedanta propaganda. As to the reason of this fact, opinion may differ. It may just be

possible that our workers fail at present to appeal to the minds of American men along the peculiar grooves of their thought, but it is evidently equally possible that these grooves are too narrow and rigid so far as religious life is concerned, at least among the commonalty of these Americans. We have the verdict of many competent observers that the average American woman possesses a greater openness of mind for new ideals than the average American man and it is highly improper to stigmatise this good trait in the former as a blind, superficial partiality for everything new-fangled. In one of his letters,* Swami Vivekananda wrote from America what difference it makes for American men, as against their womenfolk, to become liberal and broad-minded. The former, he found, broaden out at the cost of religion, while the latter do the same without losing it. *The former tend to apotheosise the intellect* and to regard religion which claims a Beyond as superstitious. The Harvard pragmatism is a natural, inevitable reaction from this apotheosis. But religion fares hardly better at its hands, for here also it has to accommodate itself into the alembic of the intellect or the intellectual experience. So if in an academical atmosphere of peculiar hauteur and narrow self-sufficiency, Prof. Benoy Kumar Sircar came across a contemptuous attitude towards Vedanta and towards American women who fall victims to it, he need not feel sorry for either. Only he should not feel much elated by the gushing sympathy shown in such quarters for the more secular aspects of Indian culture, for people in the West now are on the tip-toe to cry up everything that panders to their deepest soul-passion for secularising or intellectualising the spiritual, and India has to go out only to interpret *herself* and not to dance and play to the tune of others.

* This letter is published elsewhere.

EPISTLES OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

XCII.

EXTRACTS.

(From a letter written to the Maharajah of Khetri).

America,
1894.

* * * *

“It is not the building that makes the Home—but it is the wife that makes it,”* says a Sanskrit poet, and how true it is! The roof that affords you shelter from heat and cold and rain is not to be judged by the pillars that support it—the finest corinthian columns though they be, but by the real spirit-pillar who is the centre, the real support of the home,—the woman. Judged by that standard, the American home will not suffer in comparison with any home in the world.

I have heard many stories about the American home: of liberty running into license, of unwomanly women smashing under their feet all the peace and happiness of home-life in their mad liberty-dance, and much nonsense of that type. And now after a year's experience of American homes, of American women, how utterly false and erroneous that sort of judgment appears! American women! A hundred lines would not be sufficient to pay my deep debt of gratitude to you! I have not words enough to express my gratitude to you. “The oriental hyperbole” alone expresses the depth of oriental gratitude—‘if the Indian Ocean were an inkstand, the highest mountain of the Himalaya the pen, the earth the scroll and time itself the writer,† still it will not express my gratitude to you!’

* “न गृहं गृहमित्याहुर्गृहिणी गृहमुच्यते”

† Adapted from :—

असितगिरिसमं स्यात् कज्जलं सिन्धुपात्रे
सुरतस्वरशाखा लेखनी पत्रमुर्वी।
लिखति यदि गृहीत्वा सारदा सर्वकालं—

Last year I came to this country in summer, a wandering preacher of a far distant country, without name, fame, wealth, or learning to recommend me,—friendless, helpless, almost in a state of destitution,—and American women befriended me, gave me shelter and food, took me to their homes and treated me as their own son, their own brother. They stood my friends even when their own priests were trying to persuade them to give up the ‘dangerous Heathen’—even when day after day their best friends had told them not to stand by this “unknown foreigner, maybe, of dangerous character.” But they are better judges of character and soul,—for it is the pure mirror that catches the reflection.

And how many beautiful homes I have seen, how many mothers whose purity of character, whose unselfish love for their children are beyond expression, how many daughters and pure maidens, “pure as the icicle of Diana's temple” and withal with much culture, education and spirituality in the highest sense! Is America then full of only wingless angels in the shape of women? There is good and bad everywhere, true—but a nation is not to be judged by its weaklings called the wicked, as they are only the weeds which lag behind, but by the good, the noble and the pure, who indicate the national life-current to be flowing clear and vigorous.

Do you judge of an apple tree and the taste of its fruits by the unripe, undeveloped, worm-eaten ones that strew the ground, large even though their number be sometimes? If there is one ripe developed fruit, that *one* would indicate the powers, the possibility and the purpose of the apple tree and not hundreds that could not grow.

And then the modern American women,—I admire their broad and liberal minds. I have seen many liberal and broad-minded men too in this country, some even in the narrowest churches, but here is the difference—there is danger with the men to become broad at the cost of religion, at the cost of

spirituality,—women broaden out in sympathy to everything that is good everywhere without losing a bit of their own religion. They intuitively know that it is a question of positivity and not negativity, a question of addition and not subtraction. They are everyday becoming aware of the fact that it is the affirmative and positive side of everything that shall be stored up, and that this very act of accumulating the affirmative and positive and therefore soul-building forces of nature is what destroys the negative and destructive elements in the world.

What a wonderful achievement was that World's Fair at Chicago! And that wonderful Parliament of Religions where voices from every corner of the earth expressed their religious ideas! I was also allowed to place my own ideas through the kindness of Dr. Barrows and Mr. Bonney. Mr. Bonney is such a wonderful man. Think of that mind that planned and carried out with great success that gigantic undertaking, and he, no clergyman, a lawyer presiding over the dignitaries of all the churches, the sweet learned, patient Mr. Bonney with all his soul speaking through his bright eyes. * *

Yours etc.

Vivekananda.

BRAHMOPANISHAT.

ब्रह्मोपनिषत्

[The Brahmopanisat is classed among Upanishads that belong to the Atharvaveda. From the commentator, Narayana, came a recension of this Upanishad which begins as in the text we have followed. But Sankarananda, another commentator, gives us another recension which begins with the number two of our texts.]

ॐ शौनको ह वै महाशालोऽङ्गिरसं भगवन्तं
पिप्पलादमपृच्छत् । दिव्ये ब्रह्मपुरे संप्रतिष्ठिता

भवन्ति कथं सृजन्ति कस्यैष महिमा बभूव यो
ह्येष महिमा बभूव क एषः ।

Om! Saunaka, a householder (*a*) of fame, once asked Bhagavan Pippalāda (*b*) of Angira's family: In this body, the divine (*c*) city of Brahman (*d*), installed, how do they (*e*) create? Whose glory does this constitute? Who is he who became all this glory?

(*a*) *Mahasala*: (lit. having extensive residential halls), providing in his household maintenance and shelter to many. Compare, Chandogya, V—II.

(*b*) *Bhagavan*—lit. means one having the six supreme acquirements: all lordliness, Dharma, fame, all prosperity, wisdom and renunciation. Of the ten major Upanishads, the Prashnopanishad, comprises the six discourses of this great Rishi Pippalāda given in reply to the six Rishis who came as enquirers.

(*c*) *Divya* radically means 'pertaining to the Shining Ones, the Devas,' and hence 'divine.'

(*d*) *Brahmapuram*, is a term used in the Upanishads to mean the human body. One Vedic Mantram (Atharvaveda, 10-4-9) seems to have started this idea, though we find there only the human face (according to the Nirukta and Brihadaranyaka II—2) represented as the abode of the seven Deva-Rishis. Compare also the use of this term in the Chandogya, VIII—1, and a parallel idea in Chandogya, III—13.

(*e*) These creative or manifesting agencies represent the functions of the organs such as speech etc. The whole question may be stated plainly as follows: How did the sense-functions come to be installed in man? How do they project this sense-world? Of whom do they form the manifestation? What this manifestation is in reality? The Kenopanisat opens with a similar question.

तस्मै स होवाच ब्रह्मविद्यां वरिष्ठां । प्राणो
ह्येष आत्मा आत्मनो महिमा बभूव देवानामायुः
स देवानां निधनमनिधनं दिव्ये ब्रह्मपुरे विरजं
निष्कलं शुभ्रमक्षरं यद्ब्रह्म विभाति स नियच्छति
मधुकरराजानं मात्तिकवत् । यथा मात्मीकैकेन

तन्तुना जालं विक्षिपति तेनापकर्षति तथैवैष
प्राणो यदा याति संसृष्टमाकृष्य ।

1. Unto him (Saunaka) he (Pippaláda) imparted the supreme wisdom of Brahman: That is Prana (*a*), the Atman (*b*). He constitutes the glory (*c*) of the Atman, the life of the Devas. He represents both the life and the death (*d*) of the Devas. That Brahman who shines within the divine Brahmapuram (or body) as the faultless One, devoid of manifested effects (*e*), self-effulgent, all-pervading (*f*), He (it is who) controls (*g*), like a spider controlling the king of bees (*h*). Just as spiders by means of one thread project and withdraw the web, so also this Prana, (who) retires drawing back his creation (*i*).

(*a*) *Prána*, is generally, but often loosely, translated as "vital breath;" the "life-force" or the "vital force" would be better. The term is applied both to the transcendental principle, the subtle cause, as well as to its effects, the forces moving to activity the organs, physical and mental. In Prashnopanishat Pippaláda unfolds the whole philosophy of this Prána.

(*b*) *Prána* is here expressly identified with the *Atman*, so that there may not be any misconception about the former being limited in meaning only to the manifested aspect of the latter. This manifested aspect, Prána, is in reality the same as the *Atman*, however much distinguished for the sake of intellectual comprehension, that is, for the sake of making out a *process* of manifestation or creation. In the Upanishads therefore, Prána is often used as synonymous with Brahman or *Atman*. Compare, *Brahmasutras*, I—23, I—28 to 31.

(*c*) *Prána* is here said to be the glory or *mahimá* of the *Atman*, just as the external developments of the innate genius of a man belong to him as his glory or *Mahimá*. Still the inapplicability of this word in the case of the *Atman* is confessed in Chandogya, VI—14. This and the former statement in Pippaláda's reply meet the last part of Saunaka's question.

(*d*) *Prána* is the life of the Devas, because the latter embody only its manifested functions which

go to make up the macrocosm and the microcosm, the external and the internal world. It is also their death, because their dissolution means nothing but resolution into it.

(*e*) *Nishkalam*, means 'devoid of *kalas*.' Now *kalas* are the products of the manifesting or creative process. In the sixth discourse of the Prashnopanishat, Pippaláda explains how through the sixteen *kalás* Brahman or the Purusha seems to reproduce himself as man and how when these sixteen *kalas* merge like rivers in the ocean of the Purusha, only the *akala* or *nishkala* remains.

(*f*) *Akshara* may mean the undecaying one, but taking the root to be *ash*, it means the all-pervading one. The term is applied to Brahman, as well as to Its aspect as the material cause of creation, as in Mundakopanishat, II—2.

(*g*) Here we have the reply to the first part of Saunaka's question. This spiritual or transcendental control over organs and elements is fully dealt with in Brihadáraneyaka, 7th Bráhmaṇa.

(*h*) *Like a spider etc.*—This comparison is explained in the next passage. The reference to the king of bees (*madhukararajanam*) caught in a spider's web implies the idea of the human being with his constituent organs of sense and activity. In Saunaka's question this human personality is not brought forward, so also in the next passage which develops the comparison.

(*i*) *Just as etc.* Here also Prana is to be taken both as the *Atman* and as its aspect of being the manifesting principle or Prana proper. The *Atman* is here compared to the spider, the Prana to the single thread let off from the spider, and the complex of organs and elements as the web which the thread inweaves. While Prana itself is but the self-projection of the *Atman* as Its own principle of manifestation, it is in and through this one Prana again that sense-functions and sense-products become evolved as well as involved. This is the meaning. It may be pointed out that the human personality is not separately mentioned here, simply because it is nothing but a mere reflection, on the wave of sense-functions, of the reality of the *Atman*, and therefore, it is only the wave that practically counts.

(To be continued).

FAMINE RELIEF WORK OF THE
RAMKRISHNA MISSION
IN BANKURA.

Since our last report the famine after attaining its maximum of expansion, is now growing in intensity. All classes of people are now affected by it. The labouring class, which has long ago become its victim, is now living entirely on public charity. Though there were some showers of rain yet they were too insufficient to make the hard soil yield to the ploughshare. More heavy showers are needed for the cultivation to begin. The next difficulty is as regards their employment. The middle class people, who employ them in their fields, have also fallen a prey to the terrible famine. Starvation is knocking at their door to snatch away their beloved ones. Under such maddening circumstances, can they think of future cultivation when their present living is at stake? In our inspection, we have met with such families who have sold away all their goods and cattle and are now living on boiled green custard apples, guava, and other wild vegetables. They have nothing left to provide themselves with better fooding. Babies and children also are compelled to swallow all these things for want of milk. The consequence is that diarrhoea and dysentery have broken out among them. Their appearance is so haggard, lean and thin that one doubts whether they would survive till to-morrow. One thing which now goes against them is their strong attachment for social self-respect. They would never speak out their real condition to charitable bodies. So we have to search out the distressed families before we can offer any help. The distress among this class is so widespread that nearly all of them need urgent help. This is the most critical time for them. In eight months the famine has made them totally destitute. They have none but those to whom our appeal reaches through newspapers to help them in this crisis. Will not the generous public come forward for their succour?

We have opened a new centre on a small scale at Koalpara in Kotalpur Sub-division. We have opened two other sub-centres viz. Chaharabad and

Birdra, subordinate to Indpur and Koniamara centres respectively.

A brief table of distribution, from 22nd March to 22nd April, is given below. Temporary helps are also included herein.

| Names of Centres | No. of Villages | No of Recipients | Amount of Rice | |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|------|
| | | | Mds. | Srs. |
| Indpur ... | 95 | 1060 | 35 | 0 |
| Do. (next week) | 95 | 1067 | 55 | 0 |
| Do. ... | 64 | 771 | 40 | 0 |
| Do. ... | 60 | 780 | 40 | 20 |
| Do. ... | 64 | 764 | 40 | 0 |
| Bankura ... | 12 | 128 | 7 | 0 |
| Do. (next week) | 25 | 153 | 8 | 0 |
| Do. ... | 35 | 223 | 12 | 0 |
| Do. ... | 36 | 249 | 14 | 0 |
| Do. ... | 37 | 260 | 13 | 20 |
| Koniamara ... | 41 | 775 | 38 | 0 |
| Do. (next week) | 41 | 785 | 42 | 0 |
| Do. ... | 29 | 338 | 17 | 30 |
| Do. ... | 29 | 351 | 18 | 20 |
| Do. ... | 30 | 369 | 20 | 0 |
| Sonamukhi ... | 41 | 526 | 27 | 20 |
| Do. (next week) | 41 | 627 | 31 | 20 |
| Do. ... | 60 | 739 | 39 | 0 |
| Do. ... | 60 | 762 | 38 | 10 |
| Do. ... | 67 | 775 | 40 | 0 |
| Chaharabad ... | 31 | 295 | 15 | 0 |
| Do. (next week) | 32 | 320 | 16 | 0 |
| Do. ... | 33 | 326 | 16 | 20 |
| Birdra ... | 30 | 528 | 28 | 0 |
| Do. (next week) | 30 | 536 | 28 | 20 |
| Do. ... | 30 | 561 | 30 | 10 |
| Koalpara ... | 8 | 55 | 2 | 14 |
| Do. (next week) | 8 | 56 | 1 | 35 |
| Do. ... | 11 | 83 | 3 | 2 |

Clothes were also distributed from all the centres. We are thankful to the Bankura District Board for giving us clothes.

In all our centres, specially at Indpur, people are suffering from scarcity of drinking water. Nearly all the tanks and wells have dried up. So people have to go to a distant place to bring water inspite of the burning heat of the sun. We have dug out a tank at Indpur at Rs. 500 as well as some wells. Our hearty thanks are due to Messrs Jumnadas Poddar & Co. of Nagpur for bearing the cost of excavation of the tank. But this is only a

drop in the ocean. Many such contributions are wanted to meet the pressing need of the situation. We appeal to the public for helping us in carrying on this work of excavation.

The task before us is very great. It requires hearty co-operation of the public. We are unable to give adequate help for want of sufficient funds. We therefore hope and trust that the generous public will help us in this work of saving the starving millions.

Any contributions, however small, will be thankfully received at either of 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. 3-5-16.

REVIEW.

The Proceedings of the Convention of Religions in India: Vol. I and II; published by the Vivekananda Society, Calcutta. (For important particulars, please see advertisement in page iv).

For three days from the 9th of April, 1909, a Convention of Religions was held in Calcutta,—the first of its kind in India. It was proposed to hold a similar convention every year in different parts of India, and a Convention Committee was formed. But it is a great misfortune for our country,—perhaps, greater than the suspension of any other annual conference or convention,—that after two annual sessions, the Convention of Religions in India lapsed into an indefinite period of hybernation. The Calcutta session of 1909 therefore remains to us not only as a blessed memory of its manifested life, a measure of its potentiality, but also as the constant appeal to our enthusiasm to revive it. For revive it we must in one form or another, to-day or tomorrow, as religious unity is not to us merely an object of purely religious interest, but is *the only bond of our national unity*. If we are to live on as a nation in future, we have to surrender ourselves, sooner

or later, to the unifying principle born of a unity of religions in India. So let us prepare ourselves for that great event, and one of the great mental aids to such preparation is the study of the Proceedings of the First Convention of 1909, which would give us a knowledge of the outlines, at least, of every creed and faith, now prevalent in the country. We highly commend these volumes therefore to every English-knowing reader in India and abroad.

NEWS AND MISCELLANIES.

In our April number we appealed for contributions to the Building Fund, set afoot by the Ramkrishna Mission Sevashrama at Kankhal for the construction of a general ward. We are informed that the funds required amount to Rs. 5000, out of which Rs. 2000 have already been accounted for; so the Sevashrama continues its appeal to the generous public. In April last, there were 11 indoor patients in the Sevashrama and 859 new outdoor patients. Total receipts for the months were Rs. 366-11-3, besides more than one maund of foodstuffs from the Sadâbrata of the Jeypore State. Of the receipts, a kind donation of Rs. 25 came from His Honor Sir James Meston K. C. S. I., Lt.-Governor of the United Provinces, and Rs. 200 from Mr. S. N. Pandit, Bar-at-law, Rajkote, half of this latter donation going to the Depressed Classes school of the Sevashrama.

THE Ramkrishna Mission Sevashrama at Brindaban treated during April, 1916, 14 old cases and 23 new in its indoor department and 2879 cases of which 709 were new in its outdoor dispensary. Four patients had to be treated also at their own quarters. Total receipts for Sevashrama work during the month were Rs. 98-3-0 and expenses Rs. 164. The expenses from the Building Fund this month were Rs. 1628-5-9. The Sevashrama still appeals for contributions to the Building Fund, and we hope as the construction work goes on, the funds will reach the required amount, thus removing the sorest need of the Sevashrama for a permanent habitation of its own.
