

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

Awakened India



उसिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।

Katha Upa. I. iii. 4.

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उत्थित जाग्रत



प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

Katha Upa. 1. iii. 4

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

—Swami Vivekananda.

VOL. XXI]

SEPTEMBER 1916

[No. 242

CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(RECORDED BY A DISCIPLE.)

V.

[Place: *The Kali-temple at Dakshineswar and the Alambazar Math. Year: 1897, March.*
Subject: *Celebration of Thakur's birthday anniversary, for the last time at Dakshineswar.*]

When Swamiji returned from England for the first time, the Ramakrishna Math was located at Alambazar. The house now occupied as the Math was known among people to be a haunted one. But being associated with the Sannyasins the haunted house was transformed into a place of pilgrimage dedicated to Bhagavan Ramakrishna. The place had witnessed no end of spiritual practices and worship, austerities and Japam, scriptural discussions and holy music. After the days of regal honours received in Calcutta, Swamiji stayed in this dilapidated Math house. And sometimes he would come and stay in the garden-house of Gopal Lall Seal at Kashipur, north of Calcutta, a place which the townsmen had devotedly allotted for him to stay for a month; and he would satisfy their heart's desire by granting to eager crowds there interviews on religious subjects.

The birth-day anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was drawing near. Preparations had been made this year to celebrate this festival at the Kali-temple of Rani Râsmani at Dakshineswar. Not to speak of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, the joy and enthusiasm of all people who thirsted after spirituality knew no bounds. For, it is in this year that the world-conquering Swamiji had returned after fulfilling the prophecy of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. Finding him in their midst to-day, his brother-disciples were enjoying as it were the happiness of Sri Ramakrishna's company. Food-offerings for the Lord were being prepared at the large kitchen, south of the Kali-temple. Swamiji with some of his brother-disciples reached there at about 9 or 10 A. M. He was bare-footed, with a yellow turban on his head. Crowds of people intent on following Swamiji were swaying from one side to the

other to see his sublime form and appearance, to touch his lotus-feet and to be blessed to catch his words, falling like glowing sparks of flame from holy lips. Hence, Swamiji had not the least time for rest to-day. Innumerable people were standing before the temple of Mother Kali, and when Swamiji prostrated before the Holy Mother of the Universe, thousands of heads, following him, bent low. Then after prostrating before Radhakantaji he came into the room which Thakur used to occupy. There was not the least breathing space in the room. From all points of the compass the temple was resounding with the shouts of 'Jai Ramakrishna.' Messrs. Hoare Miller & Co. kept a steamer plying between the temple and Calcutta, with hundreds and hundreds of visitors every time on board. *Suradhani* (the river Ganges) was dancing to the music of the *Nahavat*. Spiritual longing, enthusiasm, aspiration and devotion moved among men embodied in the form of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. The Utsab of this year is to be realised rather in one's own heart and cannot be described in language.

Two European ladies who accompanied Swamiji to India attended the Utsab. The disciple had not yet been introduced to them. Swamiji took them along with himself to show them the holy Panchavati and the Vilwa tree*. Though the disciple was not yet so much familiar with Swamiji he followed him, and presented him with the copy of a Sanskrit *stava* about the Utsab composed by himself. Swamiji read it while walking towards the Panchavati. And on the way he once looked aside towards the disciple and said, "Yes, it is done well. Attempt others like it."

The householder devotees of Thakur happened to be assembled on one side of the

* Panchavati is a grove of five special trees arranged and grown to serve purposes of spiritual practice. The Vilwa is also a holy tree of that sort.

Panchavati. Girish Babu† was sitting on the north side of the grove facing the Ganges and the others sat in a circle round him, lost in singing and recounting the praises of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. In the mean time, Swamiji accompanied by a throng came to Girish Babu and saluted him saying, "Hallo! here is Mr. Ghosh." Girish Babu returned his salutation with folded palms. Reminding Girish Babu of the old days Swamiji said, "Think of it, Mr. Ghosh, from those days to these!" Girish Babu endorsed Swamiji's sentiment and said, "Yes, that is true; but yet the mind longs to see more of it." Most of the outsiders could not catch the drift of the conversation that went on in this way between them. After a short while, Swamiji proceeded towards the *Vilwa* tree situated on the north-east of the Panchavati. When Swamiji left, Girish Babu addressing the circle of devotees present said, "One day, Haramohan Mittra came to me after reading some newspaper and said that some gossip had spread in America against Swamiji. I said to him then, 'if I see Noren doing anything wrong with my own eyes, I would say, there must be some fault in my eyes and would rather have them plucked out! They are like butter made before the rising of the sun; can they dissolve in water?'" While the talk was thus going on, Swami Niranjanananda came to Girish Babu, and while taking a smoke from a stumpy *hukka* related to him in snatches the story of how the people of different parts in South India had received the revered Swamiji with warm and wonderful ovations on the whole of his way to Calcutta from Colombo, and of what valuable teachings he gave them in the course of his lectures. Girish Babu listened and sat in dumb stillness.

That day the temple-garden of Dakshineswar was swept by a wave of divine sentiment.

† The famous dramatist, the late Babu Girish Chandra Ghose.

Now that huge crowd stood in keen expectancy to hear a lecture from Swamiji. But though he tried his utmost, Swamiji could not speak louder than the noise and clamour of the people. Hence he had to give up attempting a lecture and left with the two European ladies to show them sites connected with

Thakur's spiritual practices and introduce them to particular devotees and followers of Sri Ramakrishna. The fact of European ladies coming from such a distant land for the sake of spiritual training struck some of the visitors as astonishing and they talked about Swamiji's marvellous power.



OCCASIONAL NOTES.

FOR some people it is a very handy rule to follow when advertising their own views to get some dog to give a bad name to and then hang it in published print. It is very safe and easy to discredit India to the top of one's bent, for modernism applies the political standard in measuring worth and finds India laid low enough to form a convenient butt for calumny. This shady trick may just serve to feed self-pride on one hand and hurt none really on the other; but there are educated men in India who gloat over and hang on every word of reproach uttered outside their country when such words fall pat with the cries with which they push their own schemes of reforming India. In fact, if India had fewer traducers from outside to reckon with, she could have more easily outlived this era of baseless self-impeachment which confounds her initiative more than anything else.

It is quite natural that men should feel more and more braced up to live their life in the world, the more that life bristles with perplexities and challenges their effort. In fact, there is nothing new in the keenness for life, though it seems to be always growing. Men everywhere in all ages equally feel this urge and keenness, the difference lying only in the scope of its expression being more organised or less organised. Even in the case of the savage, life does not differ in the

net strength of effort put forth to satisfy this keenness, but in its complexity and organisation. So people in one country are quite as keen to live as people in any other. This is a law of nature and religion sought never to restrict but only to regulate its operation,—never to suppress life but to sublimate it.

But somebody exclaims: "What of Indian renunciation? Is it not refusing to live?" No, it is not. Renunciation is only refusing to live one life in order better to live another,—a life of Vidya for a life of Avidya, as the expression goes. Every religion admits two cross-currents in the stream of life. One floats us towards a growing bondage of matter and the other towards a growing freedom of spirit. Every religion discriminates between these two and requires us to take the current of freedom in every moment of our life. Renunciation implies this careful steering on the waters of life,—a course of discrimination that has nothing to do with enriching or impoverishing the stream itself. It is essentially a bold clever trick of doing things and not of leaving things undone, as the precepts of the Gita amply make out. It does in no way put human achievement or effort at a discount, but insists on spiritualising them so that we are perfectly free to strive and achieve as long as we play not into the hands of lust and mammon. "But this is," somebody re-

joins, "an ideal of renunciation for all men in all ages and climes: what of the Indian Sannyasa?"

Yes, the institution of Sannyasa has proved a stumbling-block for many in understanding the Indian ideal of renunciation. But it is all due to the startling strangeness of the thing rather than to any real perversity. It is through fixed attachments of heart that men reap the fruits of life. Life represents itself to men through all the *meum* and *tuum* of domestic and social ties. So at first sight it appears that a man who cuts himself loose from father, mother, wife, child, caste or community, cuts himself loose from life. On the face of it, therefore, Sannyasa impresses us as a recoil, an escape, from life. It strikes us as something abnormal, something weird like a hidden suicidal resolve, that any of us should wilfully surrender all the natural keenness for life to a strange vow of listlessness. The very first and therefore the most common reading which a domestic and social man gives to this phenomenon reveals it to be a transition from life to lifelessness. Sannyasa has often described itself and has been described from this common superficial standpoint. But there is another and a more real side of the shield.

When adolescence overtakes a child to dispossess her of all her toys and dolls with which she played at housekeeping, does it also rob her of the glowing heart which those toys and dolls served to draw out into human proportions? Symbols have their place no doubt in the unfoldment of man, but no set of symbols nor the whole of them can comprehend or constitute life. We find life symbolising itself through the relations and duties of home and society. These symbols serve to call forth in life all its latent richness of thought, will and sentiment. But what makes us think that life forfeits all this

intrinsic richness of being, the moment it withdraws from this common type of symbolisation to concentrate itself on further and subtler enrichment? It cannot be difficult to conceive that life may naturally tend to outgrow any definite set of symbols however universally adopted, just as the child in every age and clime outlives the symbols of its early self-culture. It cannot be denied that love in itself is a unity which exhibits, like the solar ray, a variety of forms when passing through the lens of domestic and social relation; and as the various colours may be concentrated into the form of light, why should not all our relationships of home and society be supposed to commingle themselves into the form of that concentrated life which the Sannyasin chooses to live?

So Sannyasa cannot be said in any real sense to be a refusal to live,—a transition from life to lifelessness. It is rather life itself in its self-concentrated reality. In the typical Sannyasins of history we find therefore such deeper activities of life *in excelsis* as shed their undying influences down the long vistas of time. In Western culture the scope for such types of life has become narrowed to the vanishing point. There is place in that culture no doubt for great monks of science or literature,—men who may practically withdraw from home and society to concentrate their life on such higher pursuits; but no stigma attaches to them as it attaches to the Indian Sannyasa, simply because the fruits of their renunciation, unlike those of the latter, may be made to lend the fullest support to the scheme of life the West has adopted. Monasticism can naturally flourish only in an atmosphere where life is organised on the basis of religion as the supreme governing end. The West has cast its die in favour of secular greatness exploiting religion for its own purposes. Its organisation of life is quite incompatible with that spirit of renunciation which describes the perfect diagram

of life making of society and Sannyasa its base and apex.

So it is easy to see through the hypocrisy or self-delusion of it when Western prophets burlesque the Indian ideal of renunciation. Let us present our readers with a recent specimen of such travesty,—a very clever one indeed! In a collection of essays recently published by the Oxford University Press, a writer discussing the interesting topic of "Religion as a Unifying Influence in Western Civilisation," opines :

"When the people of Europe are thoroughly weary of the work of destruction, it may be that they will turn to Christ again for the secret of rest, and find that He alone can guide their feet into the way of peace.

"However it arises and whatever form it takes, this faith in progress is characteristic of the Western outlook, and gives a positive answer to the question. Is life worth living? That such a faith is strange to India may be evidenced by the reception accorded to the poet Tagore in India itself.

"Mr. Yeats gives us the judgment of a Bengali who said of Tagore: '*He is the first among our saints who has not refused to live, but spoken out of Life itself, and that is why we give him our love.*'

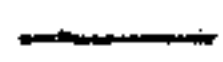
"Now, Tagore's genius is thoroughly Indian; but his originality in this respect is due directly or indirectly to contact with the influence of the West. It is our belief in action and in the worth of human achievement which is voiced in his poems and in his philosophy, and the note is new in India."

The sentiment which seeks to pillory India in order to teach the world a lesson of "faith in progress" is what we have discussed above to some extent, but the

argument employed here is peculiarly pregnant with meaning. Nobody perhaps pointed out so plainly how much the influence of the West went to the making of the poet in Sir Rabindranath. It really amounts to declaring that the West appreciates only itself in Tagore, and that his poetry is but an exotic plant. The West lavishes on him its praises because he dances to its tune. Of all Indian saints he only agrees to *live*, while others agree only to die every moment of their life. He only has accepted the Western definition of life, on the assumed infallibility of which the whole argument hangs. The popularity of Sir Rabindranath in India is also accounted for by the same argument. India is said to be awakening to life in the Western sense, and her opening eyes hail the poet as the interpreter of her new hope. The premises are cleverly stringed together round the central glory of the Western conception of life. So long live this ideal of life and the homage the whole world must needs pay to it!

It is assumed that "belief in action and in the worth of achievement" constitutes a new gospel for India, as if India has lived, and outlived many ancient nations, without having any line of action and achievement of her own; as if to act and achieve is the prerogative of those who live to enrich and encumber themselves most with the things of the world; as if the life of those who with the things of the spirit have toiled on for untold ages such as no other people have toiled on is a life devoid of action and achievement. The impropriety of insisting that there is only one ideal of human effort and achievement and that is the Western one is obvious enough to be amusing. This presumptuous claim gives rise to the silly paradox that India has all along refused to live but manages to outlive others who always longed to live and out of whose books the modern West takes a leaf and claims to live. The essential point is how you define life,

It is here that the Western outlook differs from the Indian outlook. India does not claim that she has already been living up to her ideal of life, but she maintains that she has her own scheme of life and within that scheme she has always been and will always be quite as keen to live as any other country on earth. It is a libel to say that she or any of her representative saints ever refused to live.



Yes, India will always refuse to live the Western scheme of life. Neither any poet's song nor any patriot's cry will ever reconcile her to a scheme of life which religion does not govern. The Western outlook on life inevitably leads to a betrayal of religion into the clutches of lust and mammon. For life is organised there by the principle of political ambition, and human effort and achievement are harnessed to political uses. The English writer whom we have quoted above looked big over the words of Zwingli, the great religious reformer, that it is the part of a Christian man "always to be attempting big things in fellowship with God." But it is

these very words which modern life in the West is pledged to respect in the breach, for history proves that all the big things that the West achieved in modern ages were attempted either under the auspices or on the spur of political utility, and never with an eye to pure spiritual advantage. Fellowship with God does not mean a lip-remembrance of God, but a constant surrender of every interest in life to that of a deeper soul-communion with Him. So true fellowship with God is bound to remain a figment of fancy so long as the West allows its political states to organise life by imposing on its interests and pursuits the supreme authority of political expediency. It is this political nationalism, this organisation of life on the political basis with politics as the governing end, which India will always refuse to accept, otherwise she never refuses to live the fullest life possible on earth if all the ends and pursuits of that life, if all human effort and achievement, revolve as an organised system round the central pursuit, collective and individual, of the Spiritual Ideal as the one supreme governing end.



THE BRAHMO SAMAJ AND SRI RAMAKRISHNA.

IN the *Indian Messenger*, a weekly organ of the advanced rationalist wing of the Brahma Samaj, a series of articles has been appearing lately on "The Influence of the Brahma Samaj." Four of these deal with the subject of the headline adopted above. Of these again, the first introduces Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa as "a Hindu saint of the mediæval type for all his catholicity and eclecticism."—"The abiding eclectic spirit underlying his moods was perhaps the secret of a warm friendship growing up between him and Brahmananda Keshab. This eclectic spirit is in a sense traditional in Hindu temperament." The article then concludes

with a quotation from P. C. Mozoomder's "Life and Teachings of Keshab" which describes the first meeting of Keshab with the Paramahansa and speaks of this acquaintance, "which matured into intimate friendship," as having "a powerful effect on Keshab's catholic mind." The quotation is rounded off with: "Mozoomder describes Paramahansa's influence on Brahmananda, but not the latter's on the former. It was the business of the biographers of Ramakrishna to estimate the influence of Keshab on his friend. But believing as they did in the incarnation of the saint, though he himself had no such pretensions, they put their own construction on

the relation subsisting between Keshab and Paramahansa."

In the second instalment, the writer of the 'Indian Messenger' rebuts the myth which is alleged to have circulated that the relation between the Paramahansa and Keshab was that of a Guru and disciple. He then proceeds to prove that the conception of Divine Motherhood was not any gift of the Paramahansa to Keshab and through him to the Brahma Samaj, for evidently there were more immediate and intimate sources for it such as the *Mahanirvan Tantra*, Theodore Parker and Miss Cobbe's *Religious Duty*. Only the Paramahansa might have helped to nurse out what was already a conception in embryo.

The next instalment seeks to elucidate how the "strange eclecticism" of the Paramahansa "suggested to Keshab's appreciative mind the thought of broadening the structure of his own movement" (Mozoomder). But the writer points out that in respect of this eclecticism, Mr. Mozoomder's pretension to originality on behalf of Sri Ramakrishna is untenable, for "Hindu saints and sages before Ramakrishna had walked the path the Paramahansa was now treading." Moreover, the reformed expositions Keshab gave of Hindu polytheism have been deplorably "utilised by orthodox champions to bring about a reaction on behalf of Hindu idolatry" (Mozoomder).

The last article on this subject in the 'Indian Messenger' adduces facts to prove that Keshab was not at all influenced by the Paramahansa in the same way or in the same sense as his own disciples were and then takes up the real subject-matter of these writings with the enquiry: "But did Keshab and the Brahmans only preserve their spiritual independence and not exert any influence on Ramakrishna?" The reply in the negative is supported first by a quotation (from a Bengali author of a book on Sri Ramakrishna's teachings and his short life) which

concludes with the statement: "The Paramahansa on the other hand advanced a step towards the spirit-God, acquired catholicity and to some extent good manners by his contact with the minister"; secondly, by another quotation from a writing of Mr. Mozoomder, namely: "When this singular man was with us, he would sometimes say the incarnations forsook him, his mother, the Vidya-shakti Kali, stood at a distance. Krishna could not be realised either as *gopala*, the child, or as *Swami*, the lord of the heart, and neither Rama nor Mahadeva would offer him much help. The Nirakara Brahma would swallow everything and he would be lost in speechless devotion and rapture."

"The Influence of the Brahma Samaj" forms the subject of the whole series of writings of which the 'Indian Messenger' is making a special offering to its numerous readers. Being a movement which was started by earnest souls from among our countrymen who hungered after truth, the Brahma Samaj cannot but exert an influence for good on the collective life and thought of the country. No thoughtful man, therefore, need have anything to gainsay when the general statement is made that the Brahma Samaj exerted an influence on any other sister movement in the country. Even in the case of some prominent members of the religious organisation founded within the fold of Hinduism under the leadership of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, no insignificant proportion of the formative influences in early life came from the Brahma Samaj. They never deny their indebtedness to the Brahma Samaj to that extent and the attitude of the whole monastic order, to which they belong, towards that Samaj is marked by such a sincere respect for the positive elements of the Brahma creed as differences in religious outlook and philosophy fail to forfeit.

And this attitude is an inheritance from Sri Ramakrishna himself. But we must point

out that the 'Indian Messenger' would have been better advised to attempt an enquiry as to how the Brahma Samaj acted or reacted on the movement which originated with Sri Ramakrishna than to undertake to analyse how Sri Ramakrishna himself was influenced in his spiritual progress by the Brahma Samaj. For in the columns of our contemporary which chose to adopt the course least advisable, we find the proverbial mountain in labour and the proverbial mouse spued forth, a still-born mouse to boot!

The "Influence of the Brahma Samaj" being the declared subject-matter and the relevant point being such influence as the Samaj exerted on Sri Ramakrishna, nobody expects that he has to wade through six or seven columns of irrelevant—though interesting—matter to stumble at last upon the real issue disposed of rather summarily with two quotations.

"The Paramahansa and the minister were each benefited by the other," claims the first quoted authority, for the Paramahansa "advanced a step towards the spirit-God, acquired catholicity and to some extent good manners by his contact with the minister." Now the first part of this bare statement may be contradicted by any student of the Paramahansa's life on the ground that having already realised the goal of Vedanta, the Vedantist Paramahansa had no occasion to be helped by the minister over any step towards the spirit-God. To forestall such objection, the second quotation from Mr. Mozoomder's writing is put forward, and from this it is evident that the Paramahansa himself used to admit how in the company of Brahmans, all conceptions of God in personal and embodied forms would be swallowed up in the reality of the Nirakara or Formless Brahma. But this admission of the Paramahansa from the witness-box does not vitiate but rather supports the contention of the 'Indian Messenger's' opponent; for he would

explain with more conclusive force that the intuition of the Formless Brahma incidental on the approach of his Brahma friends was not in any sense a novel experience super-induced on the Paramahansa's soul but rather only a peculiar response evoked from it. And those who care to investigate in proper spirit and method the facts of the Paramahansa's life, would easily cite many actual cases to prove that his mind often used to react and respond in this way according to the type of religious devotees that approached his presence. To interpret the manifestation of such responsive moods of mind as the conning over of new lessons from themselves in spiritual experience may serve well to pander to the sectarian vanity of those that happened to witness that manifestation, but it cannot establish the proposition that the full-pledged Vedantism of a perfected Vedantist stands in any need of being matured through the inspiration of the half-addled Vedantism of Brahma friends.

As to teaching the Paramahansa any lesson in religious catholicity, the 'Indian Messenger' itself has taken all the wind out of the sail of this preposterous claim by conceding to the Paramahansa the credit of having "an eclectic spirit ingrained in him," by reason of which "he tried in his earnestness whatever paths men had tried before him to conquer the flesh and to attain union with God." "This eclectic spirit," we have been further assured, "is in a sense traditional in Hindu temperament, and may be reckoned as old as the Vedic declaration *Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Badanti*." To this we may add that even the most careless student of the Paramahansa's life will easily perceive that with his marked attitude of unqualified and universal acceptance towards the faiths of the world, the Paramahansa had precious little to learn in the matter of religious catholicity from the New Dispensation which accepts those faiths as true only after treating them

through the alembic of its so-called liberalising interpretations.

But then, at least one important acquisition the Paramahansa must have made through the influence of the Brahmo Samaj,—it is undeniable that he learned from it “*good manners to some extent*”!!

But hush! nobody should disturb the infinite self-complacency of having a Paramahansa for a pupil in the Brahmo Sunday-school of good manners!

So the Indian Messenger’s estimate of how the spiritual progress of the Paramahansa was influenced by the Brahmo Samaj is a failure. As to other contentions advanced with very little relevance to the subject-matter of the articles as announced through their title, we have not much to say. We would have absolutely nothing to say, had these contentions only served, as alleged, the useful purpose of proving that “Keshab and the Brahmos” succeeded well in “preserving their spiritual independence” throughout their dealings with the Paramahansa, for we have no interest in proving the contrary and do not grudge our friends the fullest enjoyment of their sense of spiritual independence. But with the object,—among others maybe,—of keeping this self-satisfaction unalloyed, ‘The Indian Messenger,’ we find, had to launch upon an estimate of what the Paramahansa was and what he stood for, and naturally we may have a word to say about the verdict it has passed on the man and his ideals.

There is one parable of the diamond in Sri Ramakrishna’s teachings. A wealthy master once sent his servant with a rich diamond to the bazar to have its price ascertained. The servant happened to take it first to the seller of brinjals, who after close examination of the thing declared that it is equivalent to nine seers of brinjals, and on the servant expressing his dissatisfaction, flared up and said, he had already quoted higher than the bazar rate. The servant returned and was

asked to take the diamond to a cloth-merchant who after much curious scrutiny offered nine hundred rupees for the precious stone and would on no account add one hundred more to his offer. The servant returned again in disappointment and was finally sent to a good jeweller who after his peculiar tests declared the price of the thing to be one lakh of rupees roughly!

“Just so it happens when on earth
In flesh and blood the God-men live,
For as his store so each man rates,—
Their glory true but few perceive.”—

so expressed one writer (P. S. I. in P. B., April, 1914) the moral which the parable points.

Men have their own scale of values to apply in their estimate of greatness, and those who understand the Brahmo mind in all its peculiarities and angularities (as some of us do who have once sincerely lived the Brahmo life) have no difficulty at all in accounting for the peculiar way the ‘Indian Messenger’ estimates the greatness of the Paramahansa.

The Paramahansa was, in the first place, a mediæval saint, because “he preferred Sannyasa to Gârhashtya” (home-life), because he would say, “woman and Maya are one,” and because “his hand would get paralysed at the touch of sordid lucre.” In corroboration of the fact that preference was given by him to Sannyasa, one of his sayings is quoted where he illustrates how when one’s spiritual goal is reached through life in the world, some slight taint may attach to the perfection attained while there is no such taint in the perfection attained through Sannyasa embraced in early life.

If this particular saying of Sri Ramakrishna is placed side by side with others on the same subject, it becomes evident at once that he never denied the highest possibilities of spiritual perfection to any man, Sannyasin or householder, but what he meant to impress on our minds no doubt was the truth that the life of Sannyasa implies a superior method

of assuring spiritual perfection to the human soul than what any other type of life implies, and that exceptions like Janaka whose lives do not embody the superior method rather prove the rule than constitute any basis for generalisation.

But as modernism with its keynote of political nationalism deprecates Sannyasa as somewhat alien to its scheme of life, even this comparative excellence claimed for the latter is too much for the Brahmōs, who stigmatise it, therefore, as a relic of the mediæval spirit. But it is needless to point out that nobody feels bound to accept the Brahmō characterisation of what is modern and what is mediæval as final.

Again, in the most modern uses of the word "woman," is it very unusual to find it figuratively conveying the sense of "lust"? If not, why complain of such use from the lips of a man who yielded to none in a profound attitude of respect, even of worship, towards all women? Or, is it justifiable to condemn, on evidence which is beyond one's depth to interpret, the whole attitude of the man towards money as antiquated and impracticable when we find him taking every opportunity to teach his intimate associates even through concrete instances lessons of thrift and skill in the use of money?

Is it, indeed, so easy to understand and judge a man the springs of whose ordinary activities really lay beyond the reach of our intellectual comprehension? And even if you feel confident about your ability to sit in judgment on him, have you tried to collect all available facts of his life? You reject facts adduced by those who bore him constant company on the ground that they are polluted and perverted by the bias of discipleship, and choose to rely only upon insufficient data picked up through occasional formal interviews obtained by men bent more upon exploiting spiritual resources than upon studying the man and

all his moods with an open mind. It is an admitted fact that one leading interviewer from the Brahmō Samaj broke off paying visits when he found the Paramahansa associating with people who were, according to him, confirmed sinners. We know of a Brahmō worthy who once took the opportunity of meeting a great ascetic in some remote village, but all his curiosity and patience collapsed the moment he found the object of his scrutiny smoking from a *hukka*! Even while studying a plant or a flower a student has to expend a good deal of patient sympathy. But tenacious at all costs of their sense of spiritual independence, the Brahmō visitors of the Paramahansa cared very little to unburden their minds for the time of those preconceived notions which marked them out as a rising sect, but sought on the contrary to winnow all that was heard and seen with the windy conceit of those notions. It is evident that the Paramahansa always took notice of this stiff attitude in his visitors and would sometimes playfully remark that to proceed to farther depths on the subject of some talk might tend "to break up their sect." The Swami Vivekananda of those days was equally, if not more, jealous of his spiritual and intellectual independence, but he had no stilts of sectarian self-interest to move on.

So it was impossible for men with such bias of sect to watch how facts of the everyday life of the Paramahansa were bearing out the testimony of our ancient Shastras about the highest stages of spiritual realisation. For instance, it is said that when the highest Samadhi is attained in life, one transcends the mutually implying correlatives of Jiva and Ishwara or the human and the Divine and when therefore such a God-man happens to live amongst us, we may naturally discern in him both the moods of the human and the Divine alternating according as occasion requires. So the fact that Ramakrishna Paramahansa insisted on some

of his visitors to regard him as an ordinary man or *Sādḥaka* subject to human diseases and imperfections is no refutation of other facts which go to prove beyond any doubt perfect self-identification on his part with the great Avatāras of the world, or with the Divine Being of the universe. The life of such a Paramahansa may naturally illustrate for us the different virtues and excellences belonging to different stages of human progress. Moods and attitudes, varied and even conflicting, and each perfect beyond the grasp or intention of any eclectic philosophy or any mere eclectic spirit, may well be linked together in such a life simply because it transcends in its real aspect all the relativity of existence. One good attitude, it appears, becomes as real to it as any other provided it responds to some human need of the moment. So the picture which the Brahmos draw of the Paramahansa may be true as in some particular scene of the whole drama. We have no quarrel if they enjoy drawing it that way; but it is injustice, as every impartial man will see, to claim that their own representation exhausts all the greatness and richness of his being and life.

'The Indian Messenger' devotes two other articles to proving how the Brahmo Samaj influenced the views and ideals of Swami Vivekananda. We propose to take them up in future.

EPISTLES OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

XCVII.

(*Translated from Bengali.*)

"Sri Sri Durga is my Refuge!"

Baranagore,
26th June, 1889.

Dear Sir,

For sundry reasons I have been unable to write to you for long, for which please excuse

me. I have now obtained news of G—. He met one of my brother-disciples and both are now staying in the Uttarakhand (the sacred Himalayas). Four of us from here are in the Himalayas now, and with G— they are five. One brother-disciple of the name Sh— came across G— at Srinagar on the way to holy Kedarnath, and G— has addressed here two letters. During his first year on the Himalayas, he could not secure permission to enter Thibet, but he got it the next year. The Lamas love him much, and he has picked up the Thibetan language. He says, the Lamas form 90 per cent. of the population, but they mostly practice Tantrik forms of worship. The country is intensely cold,—eatables there are scarcely any,—only dried meat; and G— had to travel and live on that food. My health is so-so, but state of mind is terrible!

Yours etc.

Vivekananda.

XCVIII.

(*Translated from Bengali.*)

"Victory to God!"

Baghbazar, Calcutta,
4th July, 1889.

Dear Sir,

It pleased me highly to know all that your letter yesterday informed me of. You have asked me to request G— to write to you, but I see no chance thereof, for though they are sending us letters, they do not stop anywhere for more than two or three days and therefore do not receive any of ours.

Some relative of my former life* had purchased a bungalow at Simultala (near Baidyanath). The place being credited with a healthy climate, I stayed there for some time. But the summer heat growing excessive, I

* i. e. the life he has renounced.

had an attack of acute diarrhoea and I have just fled off from the place.

Words fail to describe how strong is the desire in my mind to go to Benares and have my soul blessed by meeting you and sojourning with you in good converse, but everything rests on His choice! I wonder what linking of heart existed between us, sir, from some previous incarnation that, receiving as I do the love and affection of not a few men of wealth and position in this city of Calcutta, I am apt to feel so much bored by their society, while only through one day's interview my heart felt charmed enough to accept you as a nearest relative and friend in spiritual life! One reason is that you are a favoured servant of God; another perhaps is:

तच्चेतसा स्मरति नूनमवोधपूर्व्वं भावस्थिरानि
जननान्तरसौहृदानि । †

I am indebted to you for the advice which comes from you as the outcome of your experience and spiritual practice. It is very true and I have also found it so very often that one has to suffer at times for holding in one's brain novel views of all sorts and kinds.

But with me it is a different malady this time. I have not lost faith in a benign Providence—nor am I going ever to lose it,—my faith in the scriptures is unshaken. But by the will of God, the last six or seven years of my life have been full of constant struggles with hindrances and obstacles of all sorts. I have been vouchsafed the ideal Shastra ‡; I have seen the ideal man; and yet fail myself to get on with anything to the end,—this is my profound misery.

And particularly, I see no chance of success while remaining near Calcutta. In Calcutta

live my mother and two brothers. I am the eldest, the second is preparing for the First Arts examination and the third is young.

They were quite well off before, but since my father's death, it is going very hard with them,—even having to keep fasting at times! On the top of it, some relatives, taking advantage of their helplessness, drove them away from the ancestral residence. Though a part of it is recovered through suing at the High Court, destitution is now upon them,—a matter of course as this is in litigation.

Living near Calcutta I have to witness their adversity, and the quality of *rajas* prevailing, my egotism sometimes develops into the form of a desire that rises to plunge me into action; in such moments, a fierce fighting ensues in my mind, and so I wrote that my state of mind was terrible. Now their lawsuit has come to an end. So bless me that after a stay here at Calcutta for a few days more to settle matters, I may bid adieu to this place for ever.

आपुर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं

समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत् ।

तद्वत् कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्व्वे

स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी ॥ §

Bless me that my heart may wax strong with supreme strength Divine and all forms of Maya may be foiled off from me far away: For "we have taken up the Cross, Thou hast laid it upon us and grant us strength that we bear it unto death. Amen."—*Imitation of Christ*.

I am now staying at Calcutta. My address is: The house of Balaram Babu, 57, Ramkanta Bose's Street, Bagbazar, Calcutta.

Yours etc.

Vivekananda.

† Kalidas's *Sakuntalâ*, Act. V: "It must be the memories, unwittingly recalled through depths of heart, of affinities firmly established in previous incarnations."

‡ Revelation.

§ The Gita II—70: "Not he that lusteth after objects of desire but he alone obtaineth peace in whom desires lose themselves like river waters falling into the ocean but leaving it unaffected and unmodified in spite of constant accession."

BRAHMOPANISHAT.

ब्रह्मोपनिषत्

(Continued from page 155)

हृदिस्थाः देवताः सर्वा हृदि प्राणाः प्रतिष्ठिताः ।
हृदि प्राणाश्च ज्योतिश्च त्रिवृत्सूत्रं च यन्महत् ॥

In the heart the Devas (*a*) live, in the heart the *Prānas* (*b*) are installed, in the heart exist the supreme *Prāna* (*c*) and Light (*d*) as also the immanent Cause of threefold constituents (*e*) and the *Mahat* (*f*) principle.

(*a*) It is better to explain the meaning according to the thirteenth chapter of the third part of the Chhandogya Upanishad. The Devas specifically mentioned there as dwelling within the heart are : Aditya (the Sun), Chandramâ (the Moon), Agni (the Fire), Parjanya (the rain) and Vayu (the air). The *Nirukta* makes all the Vedic Devās combine and coalesce into three, the Sun, the Air, the Fire. In Brihadāranyaka, IX—3, the number of Devās is reckoned on various principles, representing it to be 33, 6, 3, $\frac{1}{2}$, 1 etc. When the number is represented as one, the name of that one Deva is *Prāna*, i. e. the supreme *Prāna* which the present Upanishad speaks of from the beginning.

(*b*) The *Prānas* established in the heart are also specified in Chhandogya, III—13, namely the five well-known *Prānas*.

(*c*) The word *Prāna* here refers to the supreme *Prāna* described in the beginning of the texts.

(*d*) The *Light* refers to the same *Jyoti* or Light mentioned in the Chhandogya III—13. Brahmasutra I—1—24 explains this Light to be identical with Brahman.

(*e*) *Trivrit-sutram* literally means "the thread with tripartite sections," and hence the ordinary sacred thread worn on the body. But *sutram* figuratively means the material cause inasmuch as threads constitute the material cause of a piece of cloth. This cause of creation is said to be *trivrit* or tripartite either because it is composed of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas according to Sankhya philosophy or because it is made up of Tejas (the fire principle), Ap (the

water principle) and Anna (the matter principle) according to Vedanta, as in Chhandogya VI—2, 3, 4.

(*f*) The *mahat*, as is well-known, is one of the twenty-five principles of Sankhya (Sankhya-karika 3). Vedanta explains it to be the Cosmic Intelligence holding in itself in subtle essence the whole gross creation.

हृदि चैतन्ये तिष्ठति,

यज्ञोपवीतं परमं पवित्रं
प्रजापतेर्यत्सहजं पुरस्तात्
आपुष्यमग्न्यं प्रतिमुञ्च शुभ्रं
यज्ञोपवीतं वलमस्तु तेजः ॥

Granted (therefore) that it exists within the heart, that is, in the consciousness (*a*), (the *mantram* holds good, namely :) "Put on the sacrificial thread which is supremely sacred, which became manifest of yore with Prajâpati (the first created, Being) Himself, which embodies longevity, eminence and purity, and may it be strength and puissance to you!"

(*a*) The argument developed here is: Since we have seen in the foregoing text that it is in the heart that the real *trivrit-sutram* or tripartite thread exists, we easily understand the real significance of the *mantram* uttered when one is invested in common life with the sacrificial thread, (this *mantram* being then quoted in the text). And when it is once understood that the sacrificial thread worn outside the heart is only an external symbol of the real tripartite thread existing within the heart, we easily realise the true import of the custom of discarding the external symbol as formulated in the following ordinance about initiation into Sannyasa.

सशिखं वपनं कृत्वा वहिःसूत्रं त्यजेद्बुधः
यदक्षरं परं ब्रह्म तत्सूत्रमिति धारयेत् ॥

The enlightened one should discard the external thread putting it off with the sacred tuft of hair on the head; the supreme Brahman as the all-pervading (*a*) one is the thread, and he should put this on (*b*).

(a) The word "aksharam" may literally mean either the 'undecaying' or the 'all-pervading.' From some texts of Mundakopanishad, I—7, II—1 and 2, we find the term to signify Brahman in its aspect of the manifesting principle. Brahman in Itself, of course, transcends this aspect, but as the latter is identical with Prakriti or the material cause which has been spoken of above as the tripartite thread, Brahman as the Aksharam is specifically mentioned in the present text.

(b) To put on the all-pervading Brahman means, of course, 'to keep the mind fixed thereon in constant contemplation,' and this practice is to supersede that of wearing the sacrificial thread on the body.

IN MEMORIAM.

It must have sounded wondrous strange in the ears of Sri Ramakrishna's little group of young disciples, when one day, still half in Samadhi, their master announced to them in stammering words that not only would his disciples be many in number, but that among these would be found devotees from distant lands, speaking foreign tongues,—people from across the seas. "And these strange people will worship me," he said, "and place me on their altars."

The master was gradually coming back from what to the ordinary man is an unexplored field of consciousness. And the disciples smiled and they understood not the prophetic message.

It was long after that the hand of destiny drew the Swami Vivekananda to foreign lands. And ever since, now and then, we, his followers, see the fulfilment of his master's strange vision. For some of these devotees from across the seas have come to us and some have laid down their physical garb in this our motherland. Of others we have heard how in their distant homes they worship our Lord.

How many are there, who outside of our own country bow low before the master's presence? Who knows, but He whose children they are?

Some of these devotees have joined our Vedantic centres in the West; others have formed themselves into little groups to read and meditate together and to keep alive the fire of devotion implanted in their hearts. And others we may

find here and there, belonging perhaps to different creeds, living unassuming lives. But by the fruits we shall know the tree. Their lives bear living testimony to the fact that in their hearts is firmly enthroned the one whom they love and serve so well.

"When the life is lived, the plan will stand revealed." How true it is! We witness the play, but not until the curtain drops do we catch the motive, the plan, of the performance. And then we wish that the curtain may rise again, for now we have understood what it all meant. But on the stage of life the curtain rises but once, and when it drops, it drops for ever.

The light is extinguished, the performer withdraws, we will see him no more. We halt, darkness enfolds us, we grieve, we plead for just one more turn. But the actor smiles, his task is done, and he returns to his own. And even then, and only then, does his real life begin.

Another devotee of Sri Ramakrishna has left the world-stage in distant California.* And she withdrew calm and peaceful, with the master's name on her lips. And this final scene gives us the key to her new life. For, "whosoever worships me," says the Lord Krishna, "comes unto me." And "Whatever man thinks of at the time of death, into that he enters."

The life is lived and the plan stands revealed. The part appointed to our departed friend by the Great Director was simple, for it was her task, it

* Mrs. M. F. Magee died on June 7th, 1916, early morning. Her home in Oakland had been for many years the centre of a little group of Vedanta students, who met there for worship and study. A room in her home was set apart for prayer and meditation. There, she used to offer the first fruits of her garden and flowers raised specially for that purpose. One of our Brahmacharis enjoyed hospitality at her home for years and every one interested in Vedanta was welcome to use the worship room at any time. When her husband died and her only son was married, she took up the study of medicine with a view to offering her services, free of charge, to the poor and sick in India, should conditions allow her to come to our country. She expected to finish her studies in two years. She passed away at the age of 45.

First a theosophist, she became interested in Vedanta through the influence of Swami Vivekananda and while in the Shanti Ashrama, her devotion was deepened and broadened under the loving guidance of the Swami Turiyananda.

seems, to make others happy and to love the Lord. The part is simple, it is true, but oh, how few can enact this part as she did! Her cheery presence had healing power,—healing for the troubled heart. And her strong arm has lifted many a burden.

“And they will say: Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And He shall answer and say unto them, verily I say unto you, in as much as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even the least, ye did it unto me.” It is with the ear of faith that we hear the question whispered in broken accents and that we hear the jubilant reply of Him who now holds her close to His loving presence. For never was any one less self-conscious in the performance of great and noble deeds. To her it was as natural to serve others, as it is for us to breathe. The surface was all merriment, but deep in her heart of hearts flashed “the sacrificial knife of Kali.”

“When his flute calls, I must be ready! Early or late, easy or hard, no matter, I must go; and go, let the way through the forest be thorny when it sounds. I spread thorns every day on the courtyard floor, that on them I may learn to walk. And lest in the rains I should hear his call, I throw water where I am to step. For when He calls me I must hasten, and on the way I must not slip.” And the flute called early and late, and easy or hard, no matter, she went. And through the forest she went over thorny paths and in the dark. But she knew how to walk, for every day she spread thorns on the courtyard floor and she threw water where she was to step. And she did not slip.

“She must be with Swamiji now, and with our Lord,” writes one who knew her well. “And I am sure she went out in an inner concentration. There was left on her face an expression of great strength and firm withdrawal from external things. She had absolute faith that Sri Ramakrishna’s will would be done, and she did not care which way it went. In fact, she told me, before the operation took place, that she would like the change if it would not be at the expense of others. That was the keynote of her whole life, in big things and

small to make others happy or benefited. Always her own troubles were hidden or ignored, and everybody was helped by her courage and cheeriness. She had been suffering, since her husband passed away, from the effects of a strain she received when lifting him. For over a year she had not been free from pain, but none suspected it. She made light of this as of all her troubles, turning her ailments into jokes and laughing merrily at her own miseries. Her complaints were always humorous. Only one could see in the last few months that she was very, very tired. * * * I think of how rich she was in the things she could take with her,—her fine strong character, her devotion and faith and unselfishness.”

She did not preach her religion. She was contented to live the life. And is not example the greatest teacher? “She died as she had lived,” writes another friend, “with her thought on God and the comfort that comes with the knowledge that she was going to have freedom. If I can, when my time comes, meet death as she did, with the knowledge of truth that she had and have the comfort that comes from that knowledge as surely as she had it then I will be very blessed. ‘It is weakness to mourn for the free souls or for those who have advanced another step towards freedom’ says Swamiji. And we will take his books and believe in what he teaches. For he *knew*.”

Should one be asked to write a commentary on the life of our departed friend, one could not do better than quote the chapter from “Kali the Mother,” which begins: “Arise, my child, and go forth a man!” This little book was always with her, she loved it. And the chapter quoted she must have known by heart. She read it over and over again. It was a happy choice that prompted the friends gathered at the funeral to read that chapter. The last rites were simple, as she would have wished it. While the fire consumed the body a quartette sang selections from, “In Allah we find rest.” And the Lord’s prayer was chanted and after a short talk, there was one more song,—“Abide with me.”

And now let us remember that we also are actors on the world-stage. On us also the curtain will drop. And if we act our part well, humble though it may be, when we leave the stage the Mother

will clap her hands and say: Well done, my child, well done.

“Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide,
The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide!
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me!

I need thy presence ev'ry passing hour;
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?
Who like thyself my guide and stay can be?
Thro' cloud and sunshine, oh abide with me!”

A FRIEND.

THE VOICE OF DISTRESS.

(As it speaks through some Yearly Reports.)

Annual Reports for the year 1915 reached us last month from the Ramkrishna Mission Sevashrama at Brindaban, Benares and Kankhal. It is a happy coincidence, for as we read them all, we see a large mass of human sufferings lifted from obscurity and made articulate, as if the unseen form of a voiceless God materialises before our eyes and claims in a touching voice our sincere worship. Preachings and sermons about service and philanthropy fail to give us this clear vision, for they may at best conjure up a mental picture, but the Reports recount how God came to accept human offerings of love in the year 1915 clothed in that sacrificial fire which the sufferings of 35439 men lit up before our eyes. It is this realistic worship that counts. Human misery maintains for ever its constant ratio in the make-up of human lot, our efforts do not reduce it; but to convert a growing proportion of that misery into a new sacrament for the collective worship of God is a glorious miracle of the present age in which neither any Bibles of the world, nor its temples, churches, mashjids, caves and cloisters provide us actual participation. It is a new priceless opportunity for man created only by organised institutions like those of which Reports, briefly noticed below,

are worth the most careful perusal of every man who sincerely values active benevolence.

(1) *The Report from Benares*

The Ramkrishna Mission in submitting the Fifteenth Annual Report of its Home of Service at Benares draws prominent attention to the scheme of extension which the work imposes on the philanthropy and co-operation of the public. The Report contains ample evidence that this scheme grew out of the actual needs of the work. For instance, out of 51 phthisis and 33 smallpox cases that claimed treatment and nursing at the Home in 1915, only 11 phthisis and 6 smallpox patients could be accommodated in temporary segregated wards, these patients being found to be “too weak to be removed elsewhere.” Nearly one-fifth of the total number of indoor patients in the year, again, were found to be suffering from diarrhoea and dysentery, and as there were no special wards for such diseases, “the Home,” the Report complains, “was seriously hampered in serving these cases for want of sufficient room.” The scheme of extension as submitted to the generous public in last year's report provided for 10 infectious wards in all for dysentery, cholera, pox, phthisis and plague patients, female and male. The needs are so urgent that the construction of five of these wards had to be hurried through with loans drawn from the reserve fund of the Home,—a fund which gave the workers a basis for consolidating the sources for current expenses. How these urgent measures for extending accommodation have involved the Home in new difficulties will be evident from the Appeal for help which the Home is making and which we publish elsewhere. We also invite attention to another part of the scheme which provides for quarters for the workers and for the resident medical officer. It is a matter of deepest concern that the Report under review mentions cases of illness among the workers evidently brought on by deficient arrangements for their own accommodation. An important feature of the whole scheme is a Refuge for aged invalids with two blocks for male and female inmates. There is a rush for admission, all the year round, into the Refuge for invalid old women maintained by the Home at Dasaswamedh, and the importunate demand for such form of service has obliged the Home to take up the construction of the male

Refuge Block at the estimated cost of Rs. 13000 "though only Rs. 5500 has been received on that account." The construction of a Surgical Ward forms another urgent necessity, as is evident from the fact that during the year 1915, 109 important operations were performed in the Home. The Report also complains of the great inconvenience under which the Home labours for want of sweeper's quarters and out-houses for cook and store-rooms etc.

During the year under review, 14345 persons obtained relief from the Home, and of this total number 832 were indoor patients, including the 12 homeless invalids sheltered at the Branch Refuge at Dasaswamedh. The total number relieved during the year represents an all-round increase of 12 per cent. as compared with the last year.

(2) *The Report from Kankhal.*

The Fifteenth Annual Report of the Ramkrishna Mission Sevashrama at Kankhal also shows that "compared with the previous year there was a very large increase—nearly 50 per cent.—in the number of patients both indoor and outdoor. The indoor patients numbered 309 against 211 of the last year while outdoor patients increased from 9444 to 13213." The Night School maintained by the Sevashrama for poor classes such as Chamars is reported to be in good condition except for want of a separate small building of its own. The Dy. Inspector of Schools remarked in Oct. 1915: "on the whole the tuitional state of the school is fair. Altogether there are 40 boys on the roll."

One interesting feature of the present Report is a brief but clear account of the efforts that the Sevashrama made during the last Kumbha Mela at Hardwar to provide relief for diseased and distressed pilgrims. We took an early opportunity in May, 1915, to put before our readers almost all the facts regarding this vigorous extension of work which the Sevashrama was called upon to undertake during this notable occasion.

But although occasional appeals have been appearing in the Prabuddha Bharata for public help and co-operation in the efforts and struggles of this noble institution to cope with the growing claims of disease and misery on its services, we would again take this opportunity to re-iterate the earnest appeal made in the present Report special-

ly for the construction of a General Ward for all classes of patients, the existing Ward being specially used for Sadhus. The estimated cost is Rs. 5000, and of the four rooms the proposed ward will consist of, each will cost about Rs. 1225. The Rani of Searsole, Bengal, as our readers know, has undertaken to pay the cost of one room and the Sevashrama earnestly begs of the generous to add their contributions promptly towards the removal of a want which is hampering its work very seriously. An Out-door Dispensary (estimated cost Rs. 3000) and a guest-house for such relatives of indoor patients as accompany them very frequently from their distant homes constitute two other needs of the Sevashrama. And one most important point which the Sevashrama urges on the kind attention of the public is the extreme necessity of securing new or increased subscriptions and donations to meet the growing expenses of the work, for the problem of maintaining its efficiency has been causing of late much trouble and anxiety.

(3) *The Report from Brindaban.*

What impresses everybody as something heroic in the history of the Ramkrishna Mission Sevashrama at Brindaban is the way in which the institution has all along been demonstrating its absolute usefulness in spite of grave difficulties about accommodation impeding its work almost at every step. Unlike its sister institutions at Benares and Kankhal, the Brindaban Sevashrama has had no habitation of its own for all the nine years of its existence, and still from the outhouses of the temple buildings known as Kala Babu's Kunja, lent gratis so kindly for the noble purpose, the Sevashrama has been able to relieve distress in about two lakhs of cases during this period. But after these nine years of constant, keen struggle, permanent lease has been obtained of about 8 acres of land, and contributions are now earnestly solicited of the public for erecting a suitable hospital on this land and for sufficient means to carry on the work there. When we think of the fact that Brindaban ranks first as a centre of pilgrimage for Vaishnavas in whose scriptures the Lord says that the servants of His servants are dearest to Him, and when we see how wonderfully the Sevashrama is serving the pilgrims of Brindaban, we feel confident that this noble

cause will easily commend itself to the kind notice of well-to-do Hindus of our country who will respond gladly to the appeal for erecting memorial wards and endowing beds therein, just as we find happy instances of at the Benares Sevashrama.

The Ninth Annual Report under review shows altogether 36,717 entries in the register of patients, besides 23 persons relieved outside the Ashrama. Of this number 325 received treatment and nursing as indoor patients and 7224 received outdoor relief, being entered as often as they were served.

Particulars about the construction work and its scheme may be ascertained on application to the Hony. Secretary of the Sevashrama.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE CONCEPTION OF MUKTI,

ACCORDING TO SANKARACHARYA.

IN his introduction to the commentary on the Vedanta-Sutras Sankaracharya writes: "With a view to freeing oneself from that wrong notion which is the cause of all evil and attaining thereby the knowledge of the Self, the study of the Vedanta Sutras is begun." This sentence analysed, we find that the ideal of a Vedantin of the school of Sankaracharya is the "attaining of the knowledge of the absolute unity of the Self," or in other words, the knowledge or realisation of Brahman; and what stands on the way to this realisation is the "wrong notion" or *avidya* with which the soul of man is obsessed. And the state of Mukti is realised with the realisation of Brahman. निःश्रेयसफलन्तु ब्रह्मज्ञानं ।

In another place, he argues that we are already free, Mukta. It does not come out as the result of any of our good deeds: न चानुष्ठानान्तरापेक्षम्, for this state of Mukti is *Kutasthanityam*. इदन्तु पारमार्थिकम् कूटस्थम् नित्यं व्योमवत् सर्वव्यापी सर्वविकृतिरहितं मित्यमृतं निरवयवं स्वयंज्योतिःस्वभावं यत्र धर्माधर्मौ सह कार्येण कालत्रयं च नोपवर्तते तदशरीरं मोक्षारूपम् । "But this (Moksha) is eternal in the true sense, i.e. transcendently eternal without undergoing any changes (Kutastha-nitya), omnipresent as ether, free from all modifications, absolutely self-sufficient, not composed of parts, of self-luminous nature." Then he argues that *avidya* is the veil which covers our

vision from realising the state of eternal freedom, and with the knowledge of Brahman this veil of *avidya* is removed. And in order to support his own argument Sankaracharya quotes the Naya-Sutra of Acharya Gautama: दुःखजन्मप्रवृत्तिदोषमिध्याज्ञानानाम् उत्तरोत्तराऽपथे तदनन्तरापायादपवर्ग इति। "Final release results from the successive removal of wrong knowledge, faults, activity through attachment, birth, pain, the removal of each later member of the series depending on the removal of the preceding member."

Next, Sankara says that one who has reached true knowledge becomes *jivanmukta*, i. e. free even while still alive, स चक्षुरचक्षुरिव स कर्णोऽकर्ण इव सनागवागिव समसा अमना इव सप्राणोऽप्राण इवेति च— "With eyes he is without eyes as it were, with ears and without ears as it were, with speech and without speech as it were, with a mind and without mind as it were, with vital airs and without vital airs as it were."

Thus we find that the Vedanta or the Upanishads declare that a man can realise that he is Mukta even when alive. But how can one who is Mukta act and live in this world, for then the world is naught to him? To this Sankara replies: yes, he can live and act like all men and animals. पश्वादिभिश्चाविशेषान् । Though he may have realised the nothingness of this world and the truth that only Brahman exists, in his external behaviour he acts just like ordinary people of this earth. Only he has the knowledge that everything is the Self or Brahman. सर्वात्मभावो मोक्षः । विद्यया शुद्धया सर्वात्मा भवति ।

This Mukti is not again a state of vacuum or self-dissolution, but a state of having the true insight into the real nature of things and facts. After the disappearance of the body even, he retains that insight and knowledge that everything is Brahman. In the commentary of the Taittiriya Upanishad, Bhrigu Balli, we find the state of a Mukta person after death thus described: "ब्रह्मव्यतिरेकेण असन्निति कृत्वा.....भूरादिलोकान् संचरन्.....सर्वात्मना इमान् लोकान् आत्मत्वेन अनुभवन्" ।

Thus summarised, we come to the conclusion, that according to the Vedanta, *Mukti* is the state of having the realisation of the Absolute Unity of the Self and that this state can be realised even when alive.

BRAHMACHARI BHAKTICHAITANYA.

**FAMINE RELIEF WORK OF THE
RAMKRISHNA MISSION
IN BANKURA AND TIPPERAH.**

(12th August, 1916.)

IN our last report of 1st June last, we informed the public of somewhat better condition of the people of Bankura under our centres. The recent rains have improved the situation to a great extent in all our centres except Sonamukhi. Transplantation is going on in full swing everywhere except at that place—where it is feared, we shall have to continue our work of service for some more months to come. In all other places the number of recipients have fortunately gone down but they will come up again to original numbers in the interval between the end of the transplantation work and the reaping of the *Aus* paddy crop. For at that time they will not get any labour.

Below is given a brief table of the rice distribution for six weeks from 15th June to 22nd July last from the centres at Bankura.

Names of Centres	No. of Villages	No. of Recipients	Quantity of Rice	
			Mds.	Srs.
Koniamara ...	34	355	155	8
Birdra ...	33	450	144	0
Sonamukhi ...	68	638	207	0
Chaharabad ...	32	285	48	10
Khatra ...	42	419	133	38
Indpur ...	68	723	225	0
Bankura ...	58	485	151	28
Koalpara ...	20	155	48	17

Clothes were also distributed from all the centres.

The people under our two centres at Talsahar and Bitghar in Tipperah, were suffering from want of labour, but as the reaping of jute crop has begun, their condition has become much improved. Moreover, they have reaped the *Aus* paddy crop recently. The prospect of the future crop is also good. Under these circumstances we have closed those centres. The last distribution took place on the 20th July. Below is given a brief table of rice distribution for the last four weeks:—

Names of Centres	No. of Villages	No of Recipients	Quantity of rice	
			Mds.	Srs.
Bitghar ...	43	1262	252	6
Talsahar ...	13	294	55	0

Urgent news reached us of the distress of the people of Nabigung in Sylhet, and we sent two workers to report about the situation. They found that the Government was giving relief. The local men also have organised a relief committee to help those who are not receiving any relief from the Government. So our workers instead of opening separate centres of our own, have placed a sum of Rs. 350 in the hands of the local committee to help only those who are not receiving the help from the Government.

But we have to bring a sadder news of distress to the notice of our countrymen. In Garbeta, a Sub-division of Midnapur, famine has made its appearance. Though they are suffering from it since the last year on account of failure of crops for want of rain, yet they managed to maintain themselves up to this time, but now their condition has become very miserable. Two workers were sent to inspect the affected places; they reported: "Every poor man is suffering from want of food. The want is so keen that we had to help many with pecuniary gifts at the time of our inspection. Children with famished appearances can be met in every family. If relief be not offered shortly they may die of hunger. For dearth of rain, cultivation has not been proceeded with this year also, and if it does not rain sufficiently within a short period, there will be no hope for cultivation. So we shall have to help up to the month of Kartic, if the worst happens for some time longer."

So we are going to open a centre in Midnapur.

In these days of scarcity when the news of famine are coming from every quarter we appeal to the generous public to come forward to help their famine-stricken brothers and sisters, even by curtailing their own personal expenses.

Any contribution towards this relief work will be thankfully received and acknowledged on being sent to either of the following addresses:—

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

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

Saradananda,
Secy. R. K. Mission.

THE RAMKRISHNA MISSION HOME OF SERVICE, BENARES.

An Appeal.

It is now sufficiently known to every Indian who keeps himself informed of all new developments of Indian civic life, how from very insignificant beginnings, the above institution has reached its present stage of growth. It was started by some enthusiastic young men, who were inspired by the stirring appeal of the great Swami Vivekananda to his countrymen to serve the poor, the distressed and invalids as veritable manifestations of God, and it is being conducted by them with financial help from the kind-hearted public of all provinces of India and abroad.

The institution has got a house of its own at Laksha, Benares City, and has been maintaining 45 beds for indoor patients besides a branch at Dasaswamedh for poor women invalids, and is also helping a large number of poor widows at their own houses. We are glad to inform the public that a large plot of contiguous land about 25 bighas was recently acquired through the kind help of the Government and 5 infectious wards have been erected on it, thanks to the generosity of several charitably disposed persons, and these consisting of 30 beds will be opened very soon. But the Home has still several urgent needs, which demand immediate fulfilment. The acquisition of this large plot of land and construction of the buildings thereon have not only exhausted its building fund, but obliged it to take a loan of about Rs. 10000 from its surplus reserve fund, which was kept separate for any emergency. It was possible for the institution to have at its hands some surplus monies as reserve fund, because its income hitherto was in excess of its expenditure, but at present the expenses are gradually increasing, while the income from subscriptions and donations has become comparatively small for a variety of reasons. And so it has become now a problem to its conductors as to how the institution can be efficiently maintained, specially when the new wards will be opened, which will entail an increased monthly expenditure of about Rs. 400, in addition to the present expense of Rs. 600 per month.

Moreover we have not as yet got any worker's quarters and the resident Doctor's quarters, and these deficiencies hamper the work very much. The voluntary workers, about 15 in number, have now to be huddled together in the office or the patients' wards, which interferes with the efficiency

of the work of the institution. And it is needless to point out that a qualified doctor's constant presence is necessary in such an institution. But for want of proper accommodation we are not able to secure the services of an honorary resident physician though several are willing to serve the Home as such.

So we again appeal to the benevolently disposed public on behalf of suffering humanity to come forward and help us with sufficient funds to carry on this work which we regard as worship. Any contribution, however small, in the shape of money or cloths, bed sheets &c. will be thankfully received. For the information of persons who want to erect a room or endow a bed in memory of their beloved relatives, we beg to state that the cost of erecting the workers' quarters has been estimated at Rs. 15,000 consisting of 15 small rooms for as many workers and any memorial room in it may be erected on payment of Rs. 1,000. The maintenance of a single bed at the lowest estimate is Rs. 8 per month, and so a bed can be permanently endowed on payment of Rs. 3,000. For all other particulars please communicate with the undersigned or the Assistant Secretary, Ramkrishna Mission Home of Service, Benares City, who will furnish all necessary informations and also the detailed printed Report of the institution.

Yours in the Lord,
Brahmananda,
President, Ramkrishna Mission, Belur,
Dt. Howrah.

NEWS AND MISCELLANIES.

Srijut Ashutosh Bhattacharya, (Pleader), Hony. Secretary of Ramakrishna Sevashrama, Narayanganj, Dacca, sends us the following announcement:

After the model set forth by the Great Swami Vivekananda, a home of service, called the Ramakrishna Sevashram, has been started here to relieve the distress of the poor, the sick and the down-trodden. The workers of the Home carry on their work of nursing from door to door, irrespective of caste, creed or colour. The institution has also got an outdoor Homœopathic charitable dispensary and a Library attached to it. As this institution owes its very existence to charity, so it cannot carry out its projected work without help and co-operation from the generous public. Anything, however small, in the shape of donation or subscription will be accepted with thanks.
