

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

Awakened India



वसिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्नियोधत ।

Katha Upa. I. iii. 4.

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Prabuddha Bharata

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य वराशिबोधत ।

Katha Upa, I. iii. 4

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

—Swami Vivekananda.

VOL. XXII]

JUNE 1917

[No. 451]

CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(RECORDED BY A DISCIPLE.)

VIII.

[Place: Calcutta. Year: 1897.

Subjects: *A solar eclipse.—The disciple cooking a meal for Swamiji.*]

From some days past, Swamiji has been staying at Balaram Bose's house, Baghbazar. At morn, at noon or at eve, he has not a moment of rest; for wherever he may happen to be staying, many zealous youths, many students of colleges, flock there to see him, and Swamiji with loving readiness explains to them in plainest language the obstruse principles of religion and philosophy; before the play of Swamiji's genius, they seem to sit overwhelmed and silent.

A solar eclipse is going to happen to-day. It will be a complete eclipse of the sun. Astronomers have departed to various places for their observation of the event. Pious men and women have hastened down from long

distances for their ablutions in the Ganges and are now waiting for the time of the eclipse. But in Swamiji no enthusiasm is in evidence. The desire has been expressed that the disciple shall cook him his meal to-day. So he has come this morning at eight to Balaram Bose's house with fish, vegetables and some such stuff to make dishes from. On seeing him, Swamiji said, "Well, the cooking must be on the style of your native place*; and we must finish our dinner before the eclipse comes."

None of the ladies of Balaram Babu's

* This native place, the reader will remember, is East Bengal where a nice marked style of cooking Bengalee dishes specially obtains.

house was now here in Calcutta, so the inner apartments were all left unoccupied. The disciple went inside the house into the kitchen and started his cooking. The holy Jogin-mâ whose life was fully consecrate to Sri Rama-krishna stood by reaching up to the disciple the cooking requisites and materials and helping sometimes with proper directions. Swamiji also was coming in off and on to see the cooking with a word of encouragement and sometimes with the joke, "Look sharp please; the fish soup † must be after the East Bengal fashion."

The cooking had been almost completed,—the menu being rice, a soup of *mug* cereals, a soup of *kai* fish and two other curries of fish, one of sour taste and the other a little bitter,—when Swamiji came in after his bath and sat down for dinner putting up his own seat and plate. No listening to remonstrances that a bit of cooking is yet unfinished! Whining like the obstinate child he said,—“Do bring in anything finished, quick; I can't wait, I'm burning with hunger”! So no help,—the disciple hastily put before Swamiji the bitter dish of fish and some rice first, and off he started with these. Presently when the disciple had placed the other dishes before Swamiji, the Swamis Yogananda, Premananda and others began to serve the food. Never was the disciple an expert in cooking, but Swamiji went on lavishing praise on his performance to-day. The town-folk in Calcutta cut a lot of jokes at the name of a fish curry with bitters, but pleased with that dish Swamiji remarked, “Never have I enjoyed such a nice thing! But none of the things is hot enough like your fish soup ‡.” “It's just *à la mode* Burdwan District,” said Swamiji tasting the sour

dish of curry. He then brought his dinner to a close with curd and sweetmeats, and after washing sat on the bedstead inside the room. In the corridor, the disciple commenced partaking of the *prosad*. While having his after-dinner smoke, Swamiji remarked to the disciple, “Whoever cannot cook well do not live to be a good Sadhu; without the mind being pure, good tasteful cooking is not possible.”

Soon after this, the sound of bells and conchshells rose from all the four quarters, and the “*ulu-lu*” § in female voice was heard. Swamiji said, “Now that the eclipse has begun, let me sleep and you, please, shampoo my feet!” With this, he tried to induce sleep a little. And the disciple while shampooing his feet thought, “In this holy hour of eclipse, serving my Guru is to me both my bath in the Ganges and my *japam*” (the telling of beads). With this thought in mind and peaceful at heart, he continued in his work, while gradually the eclipse covered the whole of the sun's disc and all around fell the darkness of dusk.

While still there were 15 to 20 m. left for the eclipse to pass off, Swamiji rose from his siesta, and after washing, jocosely said while taking a smoke, “Well, people say that whatever one is occupied with during an eclipse, he gets that millionfold to do in future; so I argued that the Mother, Mahâmaya, hasn't assigned good sleep to the lot of this body, and if I could get some good sleep during the eclipse, I might have plenty of it in future. But it all failed, for I had sleep only for fifteen minutes.”

(To be continued.)

† The Bengali expression has a peculiar pronunciation in East Bengal which gives the point of the joke.

‡ The East Bengal pronunciation again.

§ This is a kind of sharp sound made from within the mouth to signify auspiciousness and good luck. The function is generally allotted to ladies.

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

QVERY one of the great world-prophets represents a gigantic wave of spirituality tending to sweep over the whole earth and each wave though differing in form is the same in substance. This central truth of religion has taken ages to impress itself on the human mind, and it is the greatest glory of modern humanity that a distinct revelation has come to it to-day to embody this central truth in flesh and blood. And as an inevitable consequence, from the life of the last great world-prophet has emanated a wonderful revival of appreciation and enthusiasm for all his divine predecessors. For while celebrating the Buddha anniversary this year in the month of May, we felt as we never had felt before that the distance of time extending over thousands of years has been annulled for the moment by the wonderful freshness of inspiration which linked our soul to the feet of the great prophet of divine compassion.

There came a time in Indian history when the Hindus claimed the Buddhist revelation as their own, but their old scriptures still betray a good deal of groping in the dark as to how this claim had to be established beyond any shade of doubt and criticism. The old antagonism obscured the issues and tainted the outlook. The realism of Buddha's message was lost in the tangle of philosophical disputes, and it was too early to discern its real historical significance in all its features. But time has now cleared up the perspective, the jarring noise of theoretical polemics has died away and Buddha's Nirvana has reappeared now in the new set-off of spiritual realisations harmonised and combined in the single life of a single prophet. The hour has struck therefore for all of us to go back to the real Buddha of Nirvana, the Buddha that lived his divine life among men

to discover for them a path of salvation, and not the Buddha that stands diversified before the arrogant prism of human understanding. From the Buddha of vainglorious Pali scholarship, of crystallised dogmas, let us turn to-day towards the real living Buddha enshrined, according to his own profound dictum, in the actual experience of Nirvana as revealed again before our eyes, for then only shall we see the real reason of his advent on earth, the real meaning of his message to men.

Buddha came on earth for the self-same reason as the many incarnations of India since Sri Krishna's memorable promise was uttered came and lived there for: I incarnate myself, Oh Arjuna, whenever religion falls into decay and unrighteousness prevails. To say that Buddha came merely to stop animal sacrifice is indeed a very poor appreciation of his life-work, while to opine like some of the ready-witted minstrels, whose theories have found their way into extant Puranas, that Buddha came to befool the opponents of the Vedas with a false gospel is not a shade happier than blasphemy. The sense of Buddha's divinity came upon the Hindu mind as an overwhelming fact, for the instinctive insight into such greatness had been nurtured there for centuries, but the anomaly of a God preaching religion beyond the basis of the Vedic books was too much for it to reconcile itself to and so the queer doctrines about Buddha's incarnation. The old Vedic culture however has now extricated itself from the tyranny of books and dogmas, of crystallised terms and forms of discipline, and the Pauranic interpretations of Buddha serve now to raise a smile.

The truth is, as Rhys David affirms with

admirable emphasis, that Buddha was born a Hindu, lived a Hindu and died a Hindu. But the Hinduism of his day was far too self-oblivious and uninformed to see itself glorified in his life and message. Its orthodox section flourishing in scattered centres of Vedic social life and clinging obstinately to the old ritualism of the Vedas felt itself already tottering before the rise and inrush of social groups and communities which its Vedic ritualism did not recognise. It was all too weak to face the great problem of a new India seething with new social elements of a non-Vedic type. But the solution of the problem was slowly coming out of the forest life of Sannyasins. Some of their sects had already evolved a new ritualism of five-fold worship (*Panchopâsanâ*) standing on the authority of the Upanishads. These new worships had already reached down to social strata nearest to the pure Vedic orthodoxy. But beyond this citadel and its suburbs swayed a larger India untouched and un-Aryanised by any strong Vedic influences, and this proved a fatal menace to the culture and the ideals of what might be called the Hinduism of the day. The only solution lay in bringing out the very core of this Hinduism in all its real fire and lustre but in a new unorthodox mould so that all the new seething racial elements might be melted down and thrown into it to form an easily absorbable material for a further process of Aryanisation. And this was Buddha's crowning achievement.

But Buddha came to *live*, and not to interpret, this historical achievement. He rode on the very crest of circumstances which had been shaping themselves perhaps for centuries. As on the one hand a new India with a new race of men was rising out of the ruins of the Kurukshetra which closed a long era of history, new moves on the chess-board of Time were going on, on the other hand, to bring about the re-incarnation of the old into

the evolving body of the new. So there was a series of developments behind Buddha to explain his peculiar position as the founder of Buddhism on one hand and the saviour of Hinduism on the other. He was the glorious culmination of a long course of experiments which had been proceeding through some of the monastic sects of the forest. The ancient Rishi was both a householder, a social unit, and a monk of the forest. In his time, the *yati* or the Sannyasin had very little to do with society except when specially but rarely sought for by inquisitive men in society. When the old institution of Rishihood broke down with the collapse of the real Vedic race of Kshatriyas, the Rishi either retired into the forest as a pure monastic or moved out to seek the protection of scattered centres of Vedic life and live there as ordinary Brahmins. Monasticism in ancient India received from this circumstance the first great impetus in its history. In Buddha's time we find the whole of Northern India inhabited by not an inconsiderable number of monastic sects; and if there is very little mention of any real Vedic sects among them that was because Vedic culture in its purer phases had already begun to retire southwards with prospects of greater patronage and safety.

But monastic sects of Jains and of Yogis brought forth into being by Sankhya and Patanjala had very little interest to maintain any Vedic character and origin. In the stories of Buddha's life we come across sects that bear strong family resemblance to the above, many practices and doctrines having, of course, multiplied on independent lines. The starting point in Buddha's life of enquiry was practically identical with that of the Sankhya system, namely the need of an absolute cessation of the miseries of life; and the enunciation of truths by the method of enumeration which gave to the Sankhya its very name came to Buddha most spontaneously. But the steps to the highest goal are

differently stated in the two systems, and so also the formulation of that highest goal. This difference in statement matters much no doubt in so far as a new propaganda arose out of it markedly distinct from the old Sankhyan propaganda. But this difference also is purely intellectual, for the same fact of experience may be comprehended differently by different intellectual temperaments. So in Kapila and in Buddha, we find two solutions of the same problem appearing to our intellect parallel, but really coincident in their ultimate inner psychology. If we rise above the dogmatic tendency of the human intellect and surrender ourselves to the absolute truth of experience, we shall find the Vedic dictum, एकं सद्भिर्वा बहुधा वदन्ति,—“The one Reality the sages state variously”—to be perfectly true as regards the Nirvana of Buddha, the Brahma-nirvana of Vedanta and Purusha beyond Sankhya's Prakriti. Buddha therefore came essentially to fulfil and not to destroy. The question as to why he did not take his stand on the Vedas is equally applicable to the case of many a Sankhyan or Yogic sect who lived and flourished in the forests of his age. These sects did not come out of their forest abode to deluge society with their doctrines, while Buddha had exactly to do so. And as it was in society that the distinction between the Vedic and the non-Vedic prevailed most prominently, Buddha's silence on that issue was most unfavourably construed by those concerned in it.

Had not therefore the great heart of Buddha moved him to scatter broadcast all over the world the truths he had discovered under the bo-tree, had he confined himself to founding a monastic sect of the forest, his system would not have provoked all that antagonism that it did in society among the dogmatic advocates of Vedic authority. It would have rather gradually come to occupy a position similar to that of Sankhya in the economy of Vedic culture. But all this was not

to be. The problem of a growing India of non-Aryan elements was crippling and crushing down the life of Vedic ideals, and Buddha had to come out of the forest to solve this problem. His burning message of renunciation, of selflessness, of peace and love, fell upon the non-Aryan India with a deep incisive, melting effect, and forced it into a new mould of life that was essentially Vedic in its implications. Within two hundred years after Buddha the real sting of a non-Aryan India lay broken for ever and the first stage in the absorbing process was accomplished. The second stage began when the Buddhists felt the necessity of symbolising their religious principles. This necessity betrayed the fact that the Aryan imagination had entered into the make-up of the Buddhist communities and it proved further that a social religion as distinguished from a religion of the forest cannot flourish long without a large scope for symbolisation.

Buddha himself endowed his own Buddhism with practically no potentiality for symbolisation. The faculty had to be borrowed from the nascent Tantrik religious consciousness which had already developed a good deal of new symbolism along the lines of Pancho-pâsanâ. So through this loophole of a symbolising necessity, neo-Vedicism in the shape of a new Tantrik development invaded the very heart of Buddhism and began to transform and assimilate it through different stadia starting with Mahâjan. For centuries from this period, the life-histories of Tantrikism and Buddhism coalesced with each other, the whole amalgam being divested from time to time of elements that proved unabsorbable to the Vedic religious consciousness, which again asserted itself as the immutable base in the whole chemical process. For some of the vulgar by-products of the process, which have attracted prominent attention of historians, nobody can blame either the Buddhism of Buddha or the Tantrikism of pre-Buddhistic

ages. They are mostly the natural developments from the strong non-Aryan taint to which Buddhism exposed itself by its promiscuous acceptance of all racial elements into its fold. But these by-products as well as other obstinate elements in the amalgam left unabsorbed through ten centuries received their death-blow since Sankaracharya began to re-instate the Vedic foundation of the Hindu religious consciousness or since Sri Chaitanya and Ramanuja began later on to restore the Vedic religion of Bhagabata and Bhakti over the ruins of the Buddhistic emotional fabric. This proved to be roughly the last stage of the absorption of Buddhism by the Hindu religious consciousness, and what was left still of the straggling by-products of Buddhism lay dead for ever under the sword of conquering Mahomedans.

Still there is a strong Buddhistic strain, no doubt, in the blood of modern Hinduism both of good and evil flavour. The good strain in the blood is of Buddha inspiring renunciation for the sake of Nirvana, love and selfless service to men and spiritual eagerness to uplift the masses. The bad strain in the blood betrayed in a partiality for miraculous powers, in an infatuation for unnecessary symbolism, in a complacent attitude towards evil propensities disguised under the name of religious practice, is traceable to the corrupted by-products of the Buddhistic movement. But the greatest gain accruing from Buddhism to India is the wonderful levelling up of innumerable non-Aryan racial factors that would have long ago swamped the old Aryan ideals of life and civilisation. From social and cultural standpoints, Buddha created an Indian unity but for which the later political conquests of India would have obliterated all hopes of a future national reconstruction on the basis of our historical identity. He appeared in one of the most critical periods of Indian history and effected through the cement of spiritual upliftment the greatest

social synthesis that India was ever called upon to make. The greatest architect of social reconstruction, he was no social reformer in any modern sense, for social reform was nowhere in his programme. In his religious ministrations, in admitting people into his monastic order, he simply kept an open door, and the scale of social status spontaneously adjusted itself on the basis of admitted spiritual worth and wisdom. This has always been the secret of social reform in India, the principle of dealing with social groups rather than social units being auxiliary to it.

The place of Buddha in Indian history therefore is unique and his personality will remain as impressive and inspiring through all ages to come as we may expect that of any Avatara to do. Apart from these two considerations, the gospel of Buddha will have an everlasting influence and interest for all sincere seekers after Truth. Though essentially there is nothing new in it other than the central truths of the way of Yoga and Advaita, its pivotal emphasis on the unreality of the ego around which its other practical features have been articulated will be always found very significant in the actual practice of the highest truth of Brahman or Nirvana, although curiously enough this very emphasis has misled opposing systems of philosophy to characterise Buddha's doctrine about the ego as nihilistic. But sages like Buddha have their eye on actual practice and not on any spruceness of theory, and to those who care to work it out in everyday life and conduct, Buddha's theoretical denial of egoism will surely prove the greatest aid to the practical conquest of egoism. In the days of Buddha the affirmative processes of spiritual discipline had overreached themselves in the formulation of needless intricacies and niceties. Buddha cut the Gordian knot by a thorough negation of the very basis of all falsifying affirmations, namely the reality of the ego-consciousness. When the mind finds nothing

to affirm, it becomes necessarily dissolved into the absolute reality. It is the "neti neti"—not this not this—process of the Upanishads boldly and unqualifiedly adopted into a form of discipline.

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Buddha therefore took the very essence of the Upanishads as the foundation of his message, putting it in the new garb of a new system of corollary principles which also do not contradict the Vedic psychology in their real implications. We have seen how historically this new statement of old truths became necessary for working from a platform outside of a Vedic orthodoxy which it would have prejudicially diverted Buddha's energies to carry with himself. Time was not ripe for asserting the underlying synthesis between

Vedic truths and Buddha's tenets while the latter were being preached to all the races living outside the pale of the narrow Vedicism of the age. So Buddha did his own part of the stupendous task and left the rest for later history to work out in proper time. But it behoves us now fully to understand how Buddha, Sankara, Chaitanya and lastly Ramakrishna are all historically linked in one great divine purpose, how wonderfully between themselves they have been weaving the web of Indian history for an eventful, fateful score of centuries and more. And as spiritual experience and insight deepen within us, we shall discover in all these great central figures on the stage of the dramatic events of centuries the self-same Maker of Indian history who lived here long ago both as Rama and Krishna.

SWADESHISM IN POLITICS.

THE word "Swadeshi" has come to stay in our vocabulary. We hear of "honest Swadeshism" even from the lips of high-placed officials. No other idea has been so widely popularised in India during the last decade than the Swadeshi idea. It is essentially an appeal to return to our national lines and modes of life and thought. It is a call to come back to the ways of one's own country.

This call was fervently uttered from the sphere of our political activities; the appeal to the Swadeshi spirit came pre-eminently from those who are regarded as our political leaders. Their forerunners from other spheres of activity might have sown the seeds, but it is the political leaders and workers who reaped the harvest of enthusiasm. They made Swadeshi a word to conjure with. So we would ask these worthy countrymen of ours a simple question to-day: "Are they themselves Swadeshi in their politics"?

It would not do to say that we had never any Swadeshi politics in India. No country can live without its politics, not to speak of living down through such long ages as India has done. Rather this unparalleled longevity proves India's politics to have been of the very toughest type.

But then, it may be said, India never lived long under the same political sovereignty, so her politics has been so indefinite and changeful that the less said about its having kept us alive so long, the better. This, however, is nothing but arguing on a narrow preconceived idea of politics. Politics in Europe has ever been centred round the king or the state, so that if there is a change of the state, the politics of the country is altered in its essentials; but if the people of a country as in India of the past, living, say, in their own village homes, are left free to administer the daily needs and affairs of their life, sovereigns may come and go, dynasties may rise and fall,

but the real politics of such a land is never essentially affected by such changes in the sovereign state. Politics, it will be admitted, ultimately means the regulation, the ordering of the needs and pursuits, the means and wherewithals of the life of a people on some uniform basis. In Europe all the ordering comes through the initiative of the state and so politics has come to mean there the exercise of the powers and functions of the state. In India, the people lived their life on their own initiative administering their needs and pursuits as part of their *dharma*, while the state was supposed to oversee their performance, keeping up as much uniformity as possible and realising taxes as its dues in consideration of its functions. There was a definite *prajā-dharma* as well as a definite *raj-dharma*, well-defined duties of the people as well as well-defined duties of the king. These duties or dharmas went to make up the politics in India. So it is idle to say that we had no Swadeshi politics in the India of the past.

But this Swadeshi politics of India, argues the opponent, was in a very elementary stage. The people had their duties and the king had his own, true; but what about powers and rights? The people had no power over the state, no voice in the making of its laws, no real interest in its fortunes, no intelligent enthusiasm for maintaining it against foreign enemies. In one word, the people did not share the powers and the life of the state. To call such a state of things by the name of politics is a good travesty of the word, no doubt.

Ah, but the ideal of Indian politics does not require the people to share the life, the glory, the powers of the king. It rather requires the king to strive to share the glories, the powers of the life of the people lived for collective spiritual aims. Of all political powers, the greatest is that of doing the good of the people in all its many-sided aspects. In European politics, this power

fundamentally belongs to the state, and political progress there implies the growing participation of the people in this power of the state. But in India, this fundamental power of doing good lay with the people, for the silent pursuit of their *dharmas* brought all the beneficent ends of their life to fruition, and they had no need of noisily besieging the state for such of its powers as would bring about and regulate the doing of good to themselves. Rather people in India had shown themselves capable of doing the greatest good to themselves where they had been the least interfered from outside by any king ruling or invading. But political sovereignty is an inevitable fact, while it is not inevitable that every king will fulfil his *raj-dharma*, that is, help to his utmost the life of the people to shine out in its glory,—as is implied in the literal meaning of the word *raja*. This ideal of Indian politics remained unrealised for long, while with the momentum of untold ages behind, the people in India had been moving on in that path of political life which had been determined for them in the very polity of their simple village life. This life of the people with its lofty spiritual and cultural ideals constitutes the main current in Indian history; the vicissitudes of political sovereignty have been like waves serving sometimes to ruffle it to its depths, sometimes to maintain its even tenour. The ambitions of kings and conquerors never materially affected the life of the people not because there was no politics in the latter, but because all the politics in that life was subservient to the higher spiritual and cultural pursuits of the people. If this subserviency is fully reflected in the policies of the sovereign state, no matter who establishes this sovereignty, kingship in India becomes the real *raj* of Indian politics, the people having the consummation of their political life, and they need not raise any longer the question of political rights and powers which have relevancy only where politics is purely the

business of the state as in the West and the people have to demand progressive partnership in it.

But for long ages, this consummation in the political life of the Indian people was held over owing to circumstances that implied a deeper process of reconstruction relating to the very spiritual and social basis of that life. The problem as to how the political ideal of the people has to be realised on a lasting basis had to wait till the more fundamental question of their religious and cultural unity was solved once for all. This question is now on a fair way to lasting settlement. The spiritual foundation of a self-conscious nationalism in India has revealed itself to us. So now we can afford to address ourselves to the task of re-organising the old politics of India so as to bring about its long-delayed consummation along the line of least resistance.

The long-standing problem in India, the problem of ages, is to provide on a permanent footing for the performance by the sovereign state of the *raj-dharma* of Indian politics. Now every state or *raj* has to fulfil its *raj-dharma* or shape its policies in conformity with some *prajā-dharma*, that is, some law of political life in some people. The British raj or state in India, for instance, has been shaping its policies in conformity with the *prajā-dharma* of England, for that is the only dharma or law of political life the British state is conversant with. So naturally in defining and determining its own interests, the British government in India could have before it mainly the interests of the people in England to consult with. It had never any real discernment of the politics or *prajā-dharma* of the people in India which had been lying decadent and almost self-oblivious without any voice to declare and interpret itself. So the British rulers naturally dealt with the people in India in the terms of their own foreign politics and in such an one-sided game, human nature is bound to fall a prey,

gradually and even often unconsciously, to selfishness.

The real remedy lay all along in a revival of the *prajā-dharma* of the Indian people on a new self-conscious basis. For then some basis of a permanent reconciliation between the *prajā-dharma* of India and England would have easily presented itself before the vision of the British raj anxious for the permanency of its political sovereignty in India. It is easy to see and explain that the old politics of the people in India as distinguished from that of any Western people never aspires to more than a sound material basis for their higher national pursuits. This measure of material efficiency does not imply any competition for political supremacy with any other nation of the world; neither does it imply any Western form of political autonomy such as the British colonies have been struggling to wrest from England. All that the politics of the Indian people or their *prajā-dharma* in the very plenitude of its self-conscious strength may demand of the state established over it is the performance of the old *raj-dharma* of India, which means a sincere supervision over all the self-conducted pursuits or dharmas of the people and the removal of obstacles to such pursuits coming from inside or outside of the country and requiring the strong arm of the king to remove them.

This is all the significance and trend of the Swadeshi politics of India. Had we, the educated people in India, gone back to it first setting about our part of the work in it and then asking our rulers to do their part of it, India would have been spared all the confusion and bitterness of our present-day relations with the government. A revival of the *prajā-dharma* of the people in India on a self-conscious basis would have presented a definite chart to our rulers as to their own *raj-dharma*, their own duties. But all the political demands formulated by educated men with an apish imitation of Western

politics, a foolish repudiation of their own past and an impotent desertion of their own praja-dharma, are serving not only to postpone a settlement between England and India but also to wreck their own future for ever. For is not Swadeshism the only secret of averting our death, economically as well as politically?

EPISTLES OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

CXIX.

(*Translated from Bengali.*)

Victory to God.

57 Ramkanta Bose's Street,
Baghbazar, Calcutta,
26th May, 1890.

Dear Sir,

I write this to you while caught in a vortex of many untoward circumstances and great agitation of mind; with a prayer to Vishwanath, please think of the propriety and possibility, or otherwise, of all that I set forth below and then oblige me greatly by a reply.

1. I have already told you at the outset that I am Ramakrishna's slave, having laid my body at his feet "with *til* and *tulsi* leaves." I cannot disregard his behest. If it is in failure that that great sage laid down his life after having attained to superhuman heights of Jnana, Bhakti, Love and powers and after having practised for forty years stern renunciation, non-attachment, holiness and great austerities, then where is there anything for us to count on? So I am obliged to trust his words as the words of one identified with Truth.

2. Now his behest on me was that I shall devote myself to the service of the band of all-renouncing devotees founded by him, and in this, I have to persevere, come what may,

being ready to take heaven, hell, salvation or anything that may happen to me.

3. His command was that his all-renouncing devotees shall group themselves together and I am entrusted with seeing to this. Of course, it matters not if any one of us goes out on visits to this place or that, but these shall be but visits, while his own opinion was that absolute homeless wandering suits him alone who is perfected to the highest point. Before that state, it is proper to settle somewhere to dive down into practice. When all the ideas of body and the like are dissolved of themselves, a person may then pursue whatever state comes to him. Otherwise, it is baneful for a practising aspirant to be always wandering.

4. So in pursuance of this his commandment, his group of Sannyasins are now assembled in a dilapidated house at Baranagore and two of his lay disciples, Babu Suresh Chandra Mitra and Babu Balaram Bose, have been so long providing for their food and house-rent.

5. For various reasons, the body of Bhgavan Ramakrishna had to be consigned to fire. There is no doubt that this act was very blamable. The remains of his ashes are now preserved and if they be now properly enshrined somewhere on the banks of the Ganges, I presume we shall be able in some measure to expiate the sin lying on our head. These sacred remains, his seat and his picture are everyday worshipped in our Math in proper form and it is known to you that a brother disciple of mine, of Brahmin parentage, is occupied day and night with the task. The expenses of the worship are also borne by the two great souls mentioned above.

6. What greater regret can there be than this that no memorial could yet be raised in this land of Bengal in the very neighbourhood of the place where he lived his life of *sadhana*,—he by whose birth the race of Bengalees has been sanctified, the land of Bengal has become hallowed, he who came

on earth to save the Indian from the spell of the wordy glamour of Western culture and who therefore chose most of his all-renouncing disciples from university men?

7. The two gentlemen mentioned above had a strong desire to have some land purchased on the banks of the Ganges and see the sacred remains enshrined on it with the disciples living there together; and Suresh Babu had offered a sum of Rs. 1000 for the purpose, promising to give more, but for some inscrutable purpose of God he left this world yesternight! And the news of Balaram Babu's death was already known to you.

8. Now there is no knowing as to where his disciples would stand with his sacred remains and his seat (and you know well, people here in Bengal are profuse in their professions, but do not stir out an inch in practice). The disciples are Samnyasins and are ready forthwith to depart anywhere their way may lie. But I their servant is in an agonising suffering and my heart is breaking to think that a small piece of land could not be had to install the remains of Bhagavan Ramakrishna.

9. It is impossible with a sum of Rs. 1000 to secure a land and raise a temple near Calcutta. Some such land would at least cost about 5 to 7 thousands.

10. You remain now the only friend and patron of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples. In the North-Western province, great indeed are your fame, your position and your circle of acquaintance. I request you to consider, if you feel like it, the propriety of your getting the affair through by raising subscriptions from well-to-do pious men known to you in your province. If you deem it proper to have some shelter erected on the banks of the Ganges in Bengal for Bhagavan Ramakrishna's sacred remains and for his disciples, I shall with your leave report myself to you and I have not any the

slightest qualm to beg from door to door for this noble cause, for the sake of my Lord and His children. Please give this proposal your best thoughts with prayers to Vishwanath. To my mind, if all these sincere, educated youthful Samnyasins of good birth fail to live up to the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna owing to want of an abode and help, then alas for our country indeed!

11. If you ask, "you are a Samnyasin, so why do you trouble over these desires?" I would then reply, I am Ramakrishna's servant and I am willing even to steal and rob, if by doing so I can perpetuate his name on the land of his birth and *sadhana* and help even a little his disciples to practise his great ideals. I know you to be my closest in kinship and I lay my mind bare to you. I have returned to Calcutta for this reason. I told you this before I left, and now I leave it to you to do what you think best.

12. If you argue that it is better to have the thing done in some place like Kashi, my point is as I have told you, it would be the greatest pity if the memorial shrine cannot be raised on the land of his birth and *sadhana*! The condition of Bengal is pitiable. The people here cannot even dream what renunciation truly means,—luxury and sensuality have been so much eating into the vitals of the race. May God send renunciation and unworldliness into this land. They have here nothing to speak of, while the people of the North-Western provinces, specially the rich there, as I believe, have great zeal in noble causes like this. Please send me some reply you think best. G— has not reached to-day yet, and may do so tomorrow. I am so keen on seeing him again.

Please write to the address given above.

Yours etc.

Vivekananda.

CXX.

(Translated from Bengali).

Almora,
30th May, 1897.

Dear Sir,

I hear some unavoidable domestic grief has come upon you. To you, a man of wisdom, what can this misery do? Yet the amenities of friendly intercourse incidental to relative existence in this world require my making mention of it. Those moments of grief, however, very often bring out a better spiritual realisation. As if for a while the clouds withdraw and the sun of Truth shines out. In case of some, half of the bondage is loosened. Of all bondages the greatest is that of position,—the fear of reputation is stronger than the fear of Death; and even this bondage appears to relax a little. As if the mind sees for a moment that it is much better to listen to the indwelling Lord than to the opinions of men. But again the clouds close up, and this indeed is Maya.

Though for a long time I had with you no direct correspondence, yet I have often been receiving from others almost all the news about you. Sometime ago you kindly sent me to England a copy of your translation of the Gita. The cover only bore a line of your handwriting. The few words in my acknowledgment of this gift, I am told, raised doubts in your mind about my old affection towards you.

Please know these doubts to be groundless. The reason of that laconic acknowledgment is that I was given to meet during four or five years only that one line of your handwriting on the cover of an English Gita; from which fact it seemed that if you had no leisure to write more, how would you have leisure enough to read much? Secondly I learnt, you were particularly the friend of white-skinned missionaries of the Hindu religion and the roguish black natives were repelling! There was apprehension on this score. Thirdly, I am a *melechchha*, *sudra* and

so forth, I eat anything and everything, and with anybody and everybody,—and that in public both abroad and here. In my views, besides, much perversion has supervened,—one attributeless absolute Brahman, I see, I fairly understand, and I see in some particular individuals the special manifestations of that Brahman; if those individuals are called by the name of God, I can well follow—otherwise the mind does not feel inclined towards intellectual theorisings such as the postulated creator and the like.

Such a God I have seen in my life and his commands I live to follow. The Smritis and the Puranas are productions of men of limited intelligence and are full of fallacies, errors, the feelings of class and malice. Only parts of them breathing broadness of spirit and love are acceptable, the rest are to be rejected. The Upanishads and the Gita are the true scriptures,—Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Chaitanya, Nanaka, Kabir and so on are the true *avatars*; for they had their hearts broad as the sky—and above all, Ramakrishna, Ramanuja, Sankara etc. seemed to have been mere pundits with much narrowness of heart. Where is that love, that weeping heart at the sorrow of others?—Dry pedantry of the pundit—and the feeling of only oneself getting to salvation hurry-scurry! But is that going to be possible, sir? Was it ever likely or will it ever be so? Can anything be attained with any shred of “I” left anyhow?

Another great discrepancy: the conviction is daily gaining on my mind that the idea of caste is the greatest dividing factor and the root of *maya*,—all caste either on the principle of birth or of merit is bondage. Some friends advise, “True, lay all that at heart, but outside, in the world of relative experience, distinctions like caste must needs be maintained.” * * * The idea of oneness at heart (stomach, perhaps, is the proper term), and outside, the hell-dance of monsters—oppression and persecution,—aye, the dealer of death to the poor, but if the pariah be

wealthy enough, "Oh, he is the protector of religion!"

Over and above, I come to see from my studies that the disciplines of religion are not for the Sudra; if he exercises any discrimination about food or about going out to foreign lands, it is all useless in his case, only so much labour lost. I am very low, a *mlechchha*, so I have nothing to do with all that botheration. To me what would *mlechchha's* food matter or pariah's? It is in the books written by priests that madnesses like that of caste are to be found, and not in books revealed from God. Let the priests enjoy the fruits of their ancestors' achievement, while I follow the word of God, for my good lies there.

Another truth I have realised is that altruistic service only is religion, the rest such as ceremonial observances are madness,—even it is wrong to hanker after one's own salvation. Liberation is only for him who gives up everything for others, whereas others who tax their brains day and night harping on "my salvation," "my salvation," wander about with their true well-being ruined both present and prospective, and this I have seen many a time with my own eyes. Reflecting on all these sundry matters, I had no heart for writing a letter to you. If notwithstanding all these discrepancies you find your attachment for me intact, I shall feel it to be a very happy issue indeed.*

Yours etc,

Vivekananda.

* With this letter closes the interesting collection which was placed at our disposal through the courtesy of the descendants of Babu Pramadas Mitra, Swamiji's correspondent. The latest letter is a bold challenge to the old love and spiritual fellowship of the two master-minds of that age, and as such Swamiji states his own case in it in all its extreme trend and tendency so as to demand of his correspondent a sincere depth of love and of the power to harmonise.

THE LAW AND CUSTOM OF WAR IN ANCIENT INDIA.

In some of the recent issues of the Calcutta University Magazine, appeared a very interesting contribution on the "International Law in Ancient India" from the able pen of Prof. Bal Krishna, M. A., F. S. S., F. R. E. S., etc. After a very brief survey of the law of European nations, he returns to the subject of his discourse and opens the important enquiry as to "the Indian law and custom of War on land alone."

Introducing his main theme with an incisive contrast the writer proceeds thus:

"But what about the morality of war in the civilised nations of the ancient world? Civilised China, Egypt, Carthage, Persia, Greece, Rome and Assyria show no more humanity and morality in their palmy days than the uncivilised Europe did in the dark Medieval Ages. From the Homeric age down to the Roman conquest of Greece, there is one horrible story to be told in this respect. Guile, treachery, cunning, falsehood on the one hand, relentless cruelty, unrestrained ferocity, extreme brutality, inhuman barbarity indiscriminate pillage, slaughter and conflagration, in short, savagery and vandalism were the morality of the day. Achilles and other typical heroes of the age, though virtual incarnations of treachery and cruelty, have been extolled to the skies for their immortal fame. Then the whole Roman Empire was actually watered with the blood of martyrs and captives of war. Slavery was the foundation of both the civilisations. Without this institution so eloquently defended by that great philosopher, Aristotle—the light of all succeeding ages—the Greek and Roman civilisations could have never seen the light of day. But is there anything of the kind to be found in Ancient India? It can be said on the unimpeachable authority of the Greek historians themselves that we made no captives in war, nor had any slaves, native or foreign, in our midst. Megasthenes, Arrian and Strabo have all testified to the truth of this assertion.

"Then, in India, belligerents had no license in ruthlessly butchering one another and winning victories by every means fair and foul, but they had to observe many restrictions which did not allow them

to transgress the bounds of morality, sympathy or humanity. War was looked upon as a contest of arms for securing peace, justice or the redress of grievances; although necessary evils, they were humanized. Cunning, treachery, unnecessary pain were against the rules of a fair warfare. Hence, the fighting armies have been prohibited by the great and primeval lawgiver and the first patriarch, Manu, to employ, (a) Weapons concealed in wood for treacherously killing the foe. (b) Barbed arms. (c) Poisoned arms. (d) Weapons whose points are blazing with fire.

“But it can be said that the present redaction of the Manava-Dharma-Shastra is not very old. It does not carry us far enough into the realms of antiquity. Justly so, let us go to the Sutra period. There, curiously enough, we find the same thing recorded in the Baudhayana Sutras. Thus, this passage is not only a valuable historic proof of the prohibition but of the previous existence of poisoned and fire arms among the Indians of the 5th century, B. C. Stranger still that an outright condemnation of poisoned arms is to be seen in the Ramayana. Meghnad is charged with the violation of the rules of fair fighting when he threw his poisoned javelin on Lakshmana. It should be noted, however, that the use of guns, cannon and other machines was not against the rules of a just warfare. Sukra has given instructions for their employment. “One should commence fighting,” says he, “by placing fire-arms, both light and heavy, in the front, but the war with mechanical instruments leads to great destruction in which balls are flung by the application of gunpowder in cylindrical fire-arms.” However, he has called this mode of warfare, the *Asuri* or demoniac.

After this, the writer introduces Kautilya and some of his methods of war and hostility as an illustration of the *Asuri* or demoniac mode of warfare. From his presentation of these methods it is evident that Chanakya, Vishnugupta or Kautilya, the surname that best describes him, could well beat hollow any Machiavelli that lands outside India could ever have produced. While concluding his description of the Satanic methods of war advocated by Kautilya, the writer goes on to remark:

“Sukracharya too has no trepidations in extolling the merits of a treacherous warfare. * * Be it remembered that both these preceptors were no

arm-chair philosophers. They were men of the world through and through and they faced it with the audacity of a daring man. They can appropriately be called men of blood and iron. That their deep cunning, far-reaching policies, their crafty statesmanship wielded by able hands can prove terrible weapons on earth has been faithfully depicted in the well-known drama of Mudrarakshasa. *But they do not at all represent the ideal of Indian warfare.* They have been unanimously called preachers of low morality. Sukra was the preceptor of demons; this is no anecdote but is taught in the opening verse of the Sukraniti itself. While the author of the Artha Shastra, whose real name was Chanakya or Vishnugupta, has been called Kautilaya on account of his crooked policies.

“There is, however, a deep-lying cause for the teaching of both the preceptors. They were only the products of their times and circumstances. They were born in days when India was surrounded on all sides by Yavanas, Mlechas, the Sakas, the Pahlavas, the Yuchies who were ever on the look-out to pounce upon this fairy land, who recognised no law of God or man in war. The nomadic hordes of the Sakas and Yuchis were bound by no rules of military morality; even the civilised Greeks were highly degraded in their dealings with foreigners. With such enemies of unbridled liberty all round, it would have been national suicide to fetter oneself by moral laws. It was therefore of the utmost importance for national preservation that Chanakya and others should have preached the policy that the crooked should be averted by means of crookedness. In short, the early ancient law has been faithfully expressed by the ethical teachers and historians, Manu, Baudhayana, Valmiki and Vyasa. That was to be highly binding when all the belligerent parties did homage to it; but if one of the parties rejected its rules, it was to be repaid in its own coins.

* * *

“Let us now further examine the rules of Hindu warfare. Many of the law-codes embody rules of giving quarter to the soldiers. Putting together all the provisions of the codes of law, books of political science and the epics, we find that the following were not to be killed by any warrior:—

1. One who begs mercy with joined hands. 2. One who runs away with flying hair. 3. One who

sits down with averted face. 4. One who says "I am thine." 5. One who has lost his coat of mail. 6. One who has lost his horse. 7. One who is disarmed. 8. One whose weapons are broken. 9. One who has alighted on the ground while his assailant stands on a chariot. 10. One afflicted with grief. 11. One who is engaged in an encounter with another. 12. One grievously wounded. 13. One who is naked. 14. One who is deformed. 15. One who is fear-stricken. 16. One who sleeps. 17. One who climbs up an eminence or a tree. 18. One who declares himself a cow or a Brahman. 19. One who is drinking water. 20. One who is taking food. 21. One who is busy with other matters. 22. Eunuchs. 23. Visitors. 24. Musicians, etc. 25. Messengers. 26. The King when alone. 27. The intoxicated. 28. The insane. 29. Women. 30. Infants. 31. Aged men. 32. Brahmins. 33. One whose standard is down. 34. One who bears the name of a female. 35. One who hath only a single son."

The writer then quotes in this connection "The highly interesting covenants made by the Kurus and Pandavas" in the beginning of their great fight :

"Persons equally circumstanced must encounter each other, fighting fairly. And if having fought fairly the combatants withdraw (without fear of molestation), even that would be gratifying to us. Those who engaged in contests of words should be fought against with words. Those that left the ranks should never be slain. A car-warrior should have a car-warrior for his antagonist; he on the neck of an elephant should have a similar combatant for his foe; a horse should be met by a horse, and a foot-soldier, O Bharata, should be met by a foot-soldier. Guided by considerations of fitness, willingness, daring and might, one should strike another, giving notice. No one should strike another that is unprepared, or panic-struck. One engaged with another, one seeking quarter, one retreating, one whose weapon is rendered unfit, one uncased in mail, should never be struck. Car-drivers, animals (yoked to cars or carrying weapons), men engaged in the transport of weapons, players on drums and blowers of conchs should never be struck."

Regarding the above covenants, the writer remarks : "They reveal a very high degree of civili-

sation, a deep regard for humanity and a laudable spirit of fair fighting. The Hague Conferences have not yet agreed to embody such humane regulations in their military codes.

"But here an important question crops up whether the above rules were ever observed in actual practice. The frequent occurrence of the provisions in the Sanskrit books, out of which nine have been quoted above, is a sufficient proof of their practical application. But the Mahabharatic epic supplies illustrations of each and every rule detailed above. Certain rules were occasionally violated in that great war but every such occasion provokes an indignant condemnation of all the leaders. * * "

Next in discussing the ancient laws which "regulated the conduct of belligerents in their relations with the conquered and non-combatant populations," the writer says :

"Pillage and capricious demolition of buildings were altogether prohibited. The whole unfighting population was to be religiously spared and promises of safety were to be proclaimed by various means. The victor was to inspire confidence among the conquered that he would protect them like his children, that they were like his own subjects. Even the royal race was not to be driven out unless it was of ignoble descent, but rather a prince of the ruling family of the conquered kingdom was to be invested with the royal dignity, after having fully ascertained the wishes of the whole population."

"The conqueror was to find out the best means of gratifying his new subjects. He was to win over the educated classes by highly honouring the righteous Brahmins, by worshipping the gods and lightening the taxes of the people, by making authoritative their customs, laws and family practices and finally by honouring the new king and his councillors with precious gifts. Sukra has laid down (p. 267) that at the completion of the conquest, the king should grant maintenance to the conquered king beginning from the day of capture, half of it to his (eldest) son, a quarter to his wife, then a quarter to each other prince, if well behaved, but a thirty-second part if they be ill-behaved, the remaining portion of the income from the territory may be enjoyed by the king himself." The Agni Purana (p. 848) confirms some of the above-mentioned practices in an unmistakable language

as follows :—

“The wives of a defeated king do not pass over to the victor, while on the other hand, he should protect them and honour their virtues as his own mothers. A king should treat a prisoner of war, ransomed and liberated, as his own begotten son. A defeated enemy should not be fought again, and the victor should maintain and honour the customs and usages of the country newly added to his kingdom.”

* * *

“The rules for the pacification of a conquered territory have been most brilliantly formulated in Kautilya's Artha Shastra. The whole passage is so very interesting and instructive that it deserves quotation in extenso, but I present only a few sentences immediately bearing on the subject :—

“Having acquired a new territory, he should cover the enemies' vices with his own virtues, and the enemies' virtues by doubling his own virtues, by strict observance of his own duties, by attending to his works, by bestowing rewards, by remitting taxes, by giving gifts and by bestowing honours. He should follow the friends and leaders of the people. He should adopt the same mode of life, the same dress, language and customs of the people. He should follow the people in their faith with which they celebrate their national religious and congregational festivals or amusements. His spies should often bring home to the mind of the leaders of provinces, villages, castes and corporations the hurt inflicted on the enemy in contrast with the high esteem and favour, with which they are treated by the conqueror who finds his own prosperity in theirs. He should prohibit the slaughter of animals for a night on the day of the birthstar of the king and the national star.”

The Agni Purana (Chap. 236) lays down the following rule for the guidance of rulers :—“The king should protect his own army and worship the guardian deities of the places occupied by it in the enemy's domain and should take special care in order that they might not be the least insulted by an infuriated soldiery, nor their temples or properties dedicated to their enjoyment be in the least interfered with. The inhabitants of an enemy's territory should not be molested in any way.”

Comparing this passage with the 27th Article of the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, we find that

while it contains an absolute prohibition, the two provisos, “as far as possible” and “if they are not used at the same time for military purposes” of the article referred to above, give an ample latitude to the commander of the forces. When the feelings of the combatants are highly warped, it is difficult to discriminate between ordinary and exceptional cases, hence men are more liable to violate the laws; therefore, the whole object of the regulative limitations is frustrated by this doctrine of extreme necessity of the modern times.

Manu and others do not allow the confiscation of property of the hostile subjects. Seizure, despoilation or wilful destruction of property of every kind are prohibited. Sukra, indeed, ordains to levy a tribute on a portion of the annexed territory or even on the whole, but Manu lays down a very sensible rule for the guidance of rulers. “The seizure of desirable property,” says he, “which causes displeasure, and its destruction which causes pleasure, are both recommendable, if they are resorted to at the proper time,” meaning thereby that the entrance of an invader into the foreign territory as a conqueror is not a proper time for the seizure of property. According to the Hindu Law codes, the main object of war was only to establish certain lawful rights and not the aggrandisement of the conqueror, nor the extension of territory by annexation of a portion or whole of the conquered state, nor even the enrichment of the conquering nation.

That the Indians adhered to these liberal rules from times immemorial, from the days of the mighty Rama, must be known to you all. Can any reader of the Ramayana forget that Bibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana, was installed on the throne of Lanka? This Bibhishana was recognised lawful ruler of that island from the very moment of his installation. Not even a single man of the conquering host enters the city for pillage or sight-seeing! Even Rama impatient to meet his devoted queen forbears from doing so. These are the memorable words uttered by that monarch of irresistible might, the virtual master of Lanka and Bibhishana :—‘O gentle Hanuman, obtaining permission from the king Bibhishana, do thou enter the city of Lanka and enquire after Sita's welfare.’

See what a difference of heaven and earth there is between the conquest of Lanka by Rama and

the victories of Mamud, Mahammad Ghauri, Timur, Nadir Shah and Abdali! Compare it with the accounts of the Grecian Ramayana, the celebrated Iliad of the immortal poet. "Extermination rather than subjection of the enemy was the usual practice. After Troy was taken the Greeks did not think of taking possession of Priam's kingdom; the town was simply destroyed, inhabitants enslaved or put to death, and an imprecation pronounced on the very soil that had belonged to the victims. Sometimes prisoners were sacrificed to the gods, corpses mutilated, and mercy refused to children and to the old and sickly." (The International Law and Custom in Ancient Greece and Rome, Vol. II. 208).

Finally this practice is fully borne out by the Allahabad Inscription wherein we read that victorious Samudragupta, otherwise called Indian Napoleon, 'had his glory increased by the favour shewn in capturing and liberating numerous kings of the Hill states, forest countries, of Arya Varta and of the region of the South and of the frontier tribes and whose tranquil fame was generated by establishing (again) many royal families, fallen and deprived of sovereignty.'

The same principle has been illustrated in the Raghubansa. Throughout his victorious march there is one motto from which Raghu never swerves, i. e. he defeats, captures, *liberates and reinstalls kings* wherever he goes. He levies tribute from them for once and that not for personal aggrandisement but to be spent in a Vishwajita sacrifice when every item of the personal wealth of the king had to be bestowed in alms.

* * *

As the Hindus had nothing to gain from their conquest but the name, they did not lead their conquering hosts into foreign lands. This is borne out by Arrian (Indica IX):—"On the other hand, a sense of justice, they say, prevented any Indian king from attempting conquest beyond the limits of India." The same thing has been preached as a moral precept in the Shanti Parva (C. 69-23):—"Brihaspati has said that a king possessed of intelligence should always avoid war for the acquisition of territory. The acquisition of sovereign dominion should be made by the three well-known means.'

Mr. Jayaswal has done a great service in finding out a corroborative testimony of a Moslem His-

torian of the 9th century on this point. The passage runs as follows:—"The wars they wage with the neighbouring princes are not usually undertaken with a view to possess themselves of the adjoining dominions. When a prince makes himself master of some kingdom, he confers the government upon some person of the royal family." (Hindu Polity, p. 26).

The following corroborative evidence of Megasthenes regarding rules of war is also highly illuminating:—"There are usages observed by the Indians which contribute to prevent the occurrence of famine among them, for whereas among other nations it is usual, in the contests of war, to ravage the soil and thus to reduce it to an uncultivated waste, among the Indians on the contrary, by whom husbandmen are regarded as a class that is sacred and inviolable, the tillers of the soil, even when battle is raging in their neighbourhood, are undisturbed by any sense of danger, for the combatants on either side in waging the conflict make carnage of each other but allow those engaged in husbandry to remain quite unmolested. Besides, they neither ravage an enemy's land with fire, nor cut down its trees. Nor would an enemy coming upon a husbandman at work on his land do him harm, for men of this class being regarded as public benefactors, are protected from all injury." (Ancient India, McCrindle, p. 33, 41).

* * *

The injunctions of the Dharma Shastras, historical evidences of foreign and native writers of repute, inscriptions, and the philosophical systems for the exposition of those laws, in fact one and all confirm this important point that the confiscation of the property of the inhabitants is unlawful and that annexation of the conquered territory for the enjoyment of a complete sovereignty was also illegal. Such was indeed the sense of justice of the Indians. But just compare such a noble ideal and practice with what mankind has been doing up till now. Shall I remind you of the Roman Colonies, of the Norman conquest and the consequent confiscation of the property of the English, or of the conquest of both the Americas and dispossession and wholesale slaughter of the native inhabitants of the land? Need I speak of the moral, economic and social conquest of India by one of the most civilised nations of the world? Europe has cried itself

hoarse by loudly proclaiming the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity; but to tell you the truth that is a big lip-talk, it really knows no equality, liberty and brotherhood of mankind in the relationship of a European with a non-European. This is fully enunciated by such philosophers as Benjamin Kidd and Treitschke

* * *

One interesting enquiry more and I have done. It is whether the Hindus borrowed the rules and principles of international jurisprudence from the writings and customs of any older nation or were they the first to evolve, develop and ultimately build such a noble edifice that it is likely soon to become a wonder of the world for its pristine and unsullied beauty. These doctrines of international law must have taken centuries to develop, hence their beginnings must necessarily be hidden in an unknown antiquity. We find them faithfully followed in the great civil war fought in the 14th Century B. C. according to the European estimate. The Ramayana also testifies to some of the rules. Hence their very antiquity is a test of their originality. We will quote from Dr. Phillipson who has made a special study of the customs of war of the nations of antiquity to show that we could derive inspiration from none. "The Assyrians, the Phoenicians, and the Egyptians were given to treachery, inhuman passion, destruction of everything and every living being in their way whether or not the victims took part in the wars against them."

Among the Hebrews there was at times a similar practice of indiscriminating slaughter, and seizure of lands, which were considered to be by divine decree destined for the favoured conquerors. Their deeds of blood were conceived to be a religious duty towards God, a fulfilment of the divine judgment.

Similarly in ancient China extreme cruelty and brutality obtained.

Persia is an example of constant devotion to pillage, destruction and massacre.

The Macedonians were no exceptions to the rule.

The Carthaginian war practices were likewise characterized by unremitting ferocity and inhumanity.

Hence it is clear as daylight that the Indians were preceded by no nation on earth for laying

humane rules for minimising the evils of unavoidable wars, that though surrounded on all sides by nations of antipodal customs they evolved a body of laws in consonance with their own conceptions of justice and humanity. As the impassioned and infuriated mankind shows itself at its worst in wars, hence all laws for humanising war thoroughly reflect the morality, culture, and civilisation of the people. Our laws are indeed beautiful even in their decay, and they must have been mostly charming in their youth, hence they are the greatest achievements of a great civilisation.

REVIEWS.

1. "The Illusions of New India": By Pramatha Nath Bose, B. Sc. (Lond.), author of "Epochs of Civilisation," "A History of Hindu Civilisation under British Rule," "The Root Cause of the Great War," "Essays and Lectures," etc. Published by Messrs. Newman & Co., Calcutta; pages 259; price Rs. 3.

We rise from the perusal of this book with a clear sense of satisfaction very seldom derived from the study of any present-day productions of any present-day Indian author. Our literature of today, English and vernacular, on the problems of India, is verily a mass of confused ideas and sentiments. For the Westernising impulse holds all of us educated men in its insidious grip, and seldom do we find a man in high position or low speaking out a mind which is perfectly free from the delirium of the disease. And look at the inveteracy of the disease, the worst sufferers therefrom consider themselves the healthiest minds in India, strutting forth as the thrice-blessed reformers of ancient evils! "The Illusions of New India" is a bold challenge flung at their face, fighting their beliefs with their own weapons, and weapons to boot culled from Western sources by which they swear. The "New India" of Westernising infatuations is no longer new, however. Its failure to represent and inspire the real soul of India is slowly but steadily spelling its death and the staleness of its noisy platitudes is being gradually brought home to the healthy nationalist mind eager to discover the mighty forces of national growth that lie hidden in the old life of the people. By

further developments along his admirable line of thought. the author of the "Illusions of New India", we hope, will render substantial help in the digging of the grave of this dying India of illusions.

The central note in the speculations of Srijut Pramatha Nath Bose is his robust faith in the old scheme of life and thought to which India stands pledged for all time to come. We have so long silently watched how his critics failed to dislodge him from this faith. Swami Vivekananda used to call the burning inspiration of this faith by the name of Sraddha and used to illustrate it by that anecdote of his life in Kashmir in which a Mahomedan lady when asked by him as to her religion declared, "By the grace of the great God, I am a Mussalman" —*laillá rusulállá moy Mussalmáni hu.* The creed of the New India of Westernising illusions served to destroy this faith, this Sraddha, from the hearts of educated men, and this is the greatest evil of their position in thought. Otherwise, no lover of his country denies for a moment that there is much room for reform in every department of our life in India. But if we lose all real Sraddha for the old national scheme of life, its modes and methods of expression and achievement, we forfeit the very fundamental condition of all further progress and growth. For it is only when the very soul of good in some individual or some society commands our highest love and Sraddha that we find ourselves enabled to detect his or its real needs and defects. And real reform, moreover, is impossible in the case of any living organism, if the evils to be remedied are simply protested against and exposed with all the proud relish of sapient reformers, for such evils and defects can never be cried down to death but can only be outgrown in a deeper life lived with all the intensity of those noble traits and features, already acquired, against which the evils and defects to be remedied appear as avoidable accidents of growth. In the case of any society or its individual unit, you can assure to it the only process of outgrowing its evils, only when you intensify the life that it has to live on the sole basis of all the good which has become its acquired character. But if we have no sincere Sraddha for the scheme of civilisation and culture which has carried us marvellously through all ravages of time for centuries, hands off, we have no right to raise any

whining cry of reform with a shameless reliance on texts quoted from foreign authorities. A morbid patriotism that fails to identify us with the past life of India in the real sense of a conscious self-surrender of Sraddha to all its peculiar modes of expression and lines of achievement is, to say the least of it, a backboneless sentiment, and the sooner it is hurled down from its hollow pedestal of patronage propped up with borrowed shibboleths of Western thought and life, the better for the future of our country.

An examination of the valuable contents of the book which has been very kindly placed on our table by the author, Srijut Pramatha Nath Bose, is not possible in this brief review, for they speak of problems and truths which it is the avowed task of the *Prabuddha Bharata* to discuss in its columns almost every month of its life. We hope, therefore, to undertake such an examination in future. The essential lines of thought adopted by the author are evident from what we have said above, and we invite the English-reading public in our country to extend to him the strongest encouragement that any Indian author may hope to receive from them, by helping to circulate his book. We invite the author also to persevere in his noble endeavours,—to study more assiduously the constructive suggestions that lessons of history both in India and abroad offer to the open-minded student and specially to strive to find for his intellectual activities those everlasting foundations of spiritual insight and faith standing on which Swami Vivekananda—(whom, we regret to see, the author of the "Illusions of New India" has been led to misjudge by some inaccurate second-hand quotations) once declared with all the intense sincerity of his conviction:

"We all hear so much about the degradation of India. There was a time when I also believed in it. But to-day standing on the vantage-ground of experience, with eyes cleared of obstructive predispositions and above all, of the highly coloured pictures of other countries toned down to their proper shade and light by actual contact, I confess in all humility, that I was wrong. Thou blessed land of the Aryas, thou was never degraded. Sceptres have been broken and thrown away, the ball of power has passed from hand to hand, but in India, courts and kings touched only a few; the

vast mass of the people from the highest to the lowest, has been left to pursue its own inevitable course, the current of national life flowing at times slow and half-conscious, at others, strong and awakened. I stand in awe before the unbroken procession of scores of shining centuries, with here and there a dim link in the chain, only to flare up with added brilliance in the next. And there she is walking with her own majestic steps,—my motherland,—to fulfil her glorious destiny, which no power in earth or heaven can check—the regeneration of man the brute into man the God.”

2. *The Kural or the Maxims of Tiruvalluvar*; Saint, Statesman, Poet. An English Translation by V. V. S. Aiyar. Cloth, price Rs. 2-12-0. Postage extra. To be had of the Author V. V. S. Aiyar, 89 Dharmarajah Covil Street, Pondicherry, South India.

Tiruvalluvar, the weaver poet and saint, is a great name in ancient Tamil literature—a poet enraptured by the unspeakable beauty and rhythm of noble conduct in life, and a saint who sang out of the blissful poise to which wonderful powers of piety were reduced. A collection of his valuable maxims in verse, carefully rendered into English and thus made accessible to the widest circle of appreciative and critical readers was indeed a great desideratum. We are glad that such a production has at last been brought out by V. V. S. Aiyar Esqr. of Pondicherry. His method of translation has been very successful so far as we can see, but it seems, the retranslation into different vernaculars had better wait till translators are found who can enter into the spirit of the original language. Meanwhile, English readers all over the country and abroad who value the strengthening of faith in righteous conduct in life would surely make a very profitable bargain by having for themselves a copy of this handy and well got-up book of maxims.

3. *An Appeal to the Young Hindus of Bengal*; by Rai Jadunath Mozoomdar Bahadur, M.A., B.L., Vedanta Vachaspati; published by the Metcalfe Printing Works, 34, Mechuabazar Street, Calcutta; Price Re. 1, for students As. 8.

This appeal, which “appeared,” says the author, “in the columns of the *Indian Mirror* some time ago and is now issued in the form of a booklet at the request of some friends,” is a laudable attempt to combat anarchical tendencies of thought in

young students. A thorough intellectual remedy of the disease is no doubt most urgently called for, but it is never likely to come from physicians who prepare mixed recipes of Western and Indian politics. May we humbly invite the author to give his impartial consideration to proposals in the line discussed during the last three years in the columns of this journal?

NEWS AND MISCELLANIES.

FOR want of space, reports of R-k. Mission Sevashramas and other important news are held over for the next issue of July.

ON Sunday, the 6th of May, '17, a meeting was held under the auspices of the Calcutta Vivekananda Society to celebrate the Buddha anniversary at the premises of the late illustrious Kali Prasanna Singha. Mr. C. R. Das, Bar-at-Law, presided. The meeting was largely attended by literary men and students interested in Buddha and His teachings. The proceedings began with an announcement by the Secy. of the Society regarding the significance of this sacred “Thrice-Blessed-Day” of the Bodhisatva. A Buddha Stotra was sung and a portion from “Buddha-Deva,” a drama by the famous poet, G. C. Ghose, was recited by Sj. Bhupendra Nath Bose. Sj. Kiron Ch. Dutta then read a poem on “Buddha” composed by him for the occasion.

Sj. Kumud Bandhu Sen, a member, then read a paper on “Buddhism in Bengal” written by Mmy. Pundit Hara Prasad Sastri, M. A., C. I. E. Raja Yatindra Nath Chowdhury, M. A., B. L., Sj. Charu Ch. Bose, Sraman Punnananda, Swami Suddhananda (Belur Math) delivered eloquent and impressive speeches on the religion and teachings of Buddha. In the course of their addresses they maintained that it was proper as well for the Hindus to observe and offer their respectful tribute and devotion to Buddha, on the “Baisakh” full-moon-day, just as the Buddhists did. Bhagavan Buddha was regarded by the Hindus as an incarnation of Vishnu and it was on this sacred day of the year that He was born, attained to Buddhahood, and closed His earthly career. The speakers concluded by pointing out the essential kinship of Buddhism to Hinduism. The Chairman then delivered a short nice speech in which he remarked that the practical aspect of religions, the realisation of Truth, should be preferred merely to their argumentative phase.

The meeting separated with the usual vote of thanks to the Chair proposed by Rai Radha Charan Pal Bahadur.

A special Puja of Bhagavan Buddha was performed on that day and Prasadam was distributed at the Society Room, 78/1 Cornwallis St., Calcutta.