

Prabuddha Bharata

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

Katha Upa. I. iii. 14.

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

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

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REMINISCENCES OF THE HOLY MOTHER

RECORDED BY A LADY DISCIPLE

(Continued from the last issue)

When Mother first came to live at Dakshineswar, she was quite unsophisticated. She went through her spiritual practices with the utmost devotion, but we were not aware that she experienced any spiritual ecstasy. She rather felt frightened at the *Samadhi* of the Master. She herself once told us that on her first coming to Dakshineswar, the Master, at the word of his Guru Totapuri, made her sleep with himself.* She thus spoke of those days: "Master would be in one or another of superconscious moods throughout the night. I could scarcely sleep,—I would be terribly frightened and anxiously wait for day-break. One night he went into such a profound trance that seeing him not returning to the normal plane even after a long interval, I sent the maid-servant, in my anxiety and fear, to fetch Hriday.† He came and repeated the Lord's name in

* Totapuri once said to Sri Ramakrishna, "How can I know that you have conquered lust, unless you can live unaffected in the society of your wife?" Therefore to test himself he slept with her in the same bed for eight months after she first came to Dakshineswar.

† Hriday was Master's nephew and used to attend on him.

his ears when he slowly regained normal consciousness. Next morning Master taught me the mystic formulas which should be repeated in his ear to bring him back from Samadhi."

Some days after I became acquainted with the Mother, she said to me: "Please tell him (Master) that I may have the experience of spiritual ecstasy. I cannot go and request him personally as he is always surrounded by strangers." I took her at her word and decided to speak her request to the Master. Therefore finding him next morning sitting alone on his cot, I went in and, having saluted him, told him of the Mother's prayer. He heard me but remained very grave and silent. I did not feel encouraged to speak further on the subject. I sat quiet for some time and then came away making my obeisance.

Coming to the *nahavat* I found the Mother engaged in worship. I opened the door of her room and found her laughing and crying alternately.* Tears flew incessantly from her eyes, and by and by she merged into the silence of Samadhi. I closed the door and came out. When I went back to her after a long time, she asked me: "Are you just come?" I said: "Mother, how did you tell me that you never experience ecstasy?" She began to smile embarrassedly.

After that incident, I had several occasions to sleep with Mother at Dakshineswar. Though I would wish to sleep separately, she would not allow me but draw me to her bed. One night, hearing a neighbour playing on a flute, she went into an ecstatic state, lost all sense of the external and began to laugh. I withdrew to a corner of the bed, for I thought that being a worldly person I must not touch her at that time.† It was long before she returned to the normal plane.

Once while meditating on the terraced roof of Balaram Basu's house, Mother went into Samadhi.‡ On regaining con-

* These are symptoms of high spiritual ecstasy. One often laughs and cries when one's mind rises high into the superconscious region.

† The touch of an impure person during the experience of a superconscious mood causes excruciating pain and drags down the soul.

‡ The natural tendency of the soul is to go to the superconscious state, for there only does it find itself in its proper sphere and shine in its true glory and power. In fact only in the superconscious state can man be said to truly live. Desires however hold the soul down to the world and its consciousness. When the mind is purified of desires and the soul realises its unchanging spiritual nature, it naturally tends to soar high above the world of variety and rest in the bosom of the Infinite and the Eternal.—This is called Samadhi. Samadhi is truly man's

sciousness, she said: "I saw I had gone to a strange region where everybody was very kind and affectionate to me. I found I had become very beautiful. The Master was also there. . . . I cannot tell you how blissful I felt there! Coming a little down to the normal plane I became conscious of the body lying aside, but was for a long while very reluctant to re-enter it,—it seemed so ugly!"

On another occasion, one evening at Nilambar Mukherji's garden house at Belur, Mother, Sister Golap and myself sat down side by side to meditate. When I finished my meditation, I found the Mother sitting in the same posture, calm and motionless, evidently lost in Samadhi. A long while after, she regained consciousness and said: "Yogen, where are my hands and legs?" We began to press her hands and legs to bring them back to her consciousness. But it was a long time before she began to feel her bodily existence.

Another occasion. While staying at Kala Babu's Kunja at Brindaban, she one morning went into a very deep Samadhi in which she remained a very long time. I recited the Lord's names in her ears to bring her down to the conscious plane, but it was of no avail. Swami Yogananda also came and did the same. This slowly brought her down. While still in the semi-conscious state, she said "I want to eat" exactly as the Master used to say while returning from Samadhi. Some refreshments, a glass of water and betel were placed before her, and she partook of them in the same way as the Master used to do. Her gestures and postures were all like the Master's at that time. She said afterwards that she had been that morning lost in "Ramakrishna-consciousness." Swami Yogananda put certain questions to her in her semi-conscious state and received the same answers as he had done from the Master.

Four days after the Master's passing away at the Cossipore gardens, Mother came back to the Dakshineswar temple to her old place at the *nahavat*. Sister Golap and another lady disciple of the Master came to keep her company for a few days. She next went on pilgrimage to Benares in the company of Swami Yogananda, Swami Abhedananda, Swami Adbhutananda

normal condition of existence. The present condition, though *called* normal, is really abnormal.

and Sister Lakshmi. She stayed there some eight or ten days and then went to Brindaban where she lived for nearly a year at Kala Babu's Kunja. I also had come to Brindaban about a fortnight before the Master's passing. When I met her, she clasped me to her bosom and began to cry bitterly in the agony of the Master's bereavement. During her first days at Brindaban, Mother would often cry very bitterly. One day the Master appeared before her and said: "Why do you cry so much? Here I am, I am not gone. It is only as if I have passed from one room to another." Latterly, however, Mother became very cheerful;—she seemed full of an ethereal delight throughout day and night and looked like a happy little girl. . . .

(Concluded)

SOME FUNDAMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

BY THE EDITOR

The All-India Congress Committee in its Bombay meeting last May passed a resolution accepting the Muhammadan proposal of joint electorates with the conditions attached to it. This has been considered as the most valuable of results achieved by the Congress during the last few years. Naturally there has been great jubilation over it, as it is thought that by this rapprochement between the two major communities, the foundation of Indian nationhood has been truly laid and the most potent cure applied to the festering sore of communal strife.

Though this has no doubt advanced the evolution of India's political constitution, yet we do not consider that it has advanced the cause of Indian *nationalism* in any substantial measure. At least we must not be carried away by unthinking enthusiasm. We shall not be far wrong if we maintain that our struggle for national rehabilitation has been hitherto somewhat like groping in the dark. Our activities have not always been determined and illuminated by the consciousness of the true nature of the constituents of Indian nationalism. We are still dominated by the hypnotic influence of Western ideas and ideals; and there is nothing strange in that. For most of our political leaders are English-educated and look

upon the claims of the spiritual traditions of the land with amused tolerance. Yet the very essence and foundation of Indian nationalism is spirituality.

There are two ways of approach to our collective problems : (1) by falling in a line with the prevailing ideas—those of the present administration, and interpreting and solving national problems from that point of view, and (2) by finding out the fundamentals on which the Indian collective life has been based from times immemorial, and guiding the national activities in the light of the knowledge, always keeping in view the ultimate ideals of the nation. The first alternative requires us to make an unthinking surrender to the prevailing ideas. But the second requires that we should move among facts and circumstances with the greatest circumspection and ever keep the national ideals in view, and so regulate the present circumstances that they will eventually lead to the desired results. We must take into account all the forces, religious, social, economical, cultural, etc. of the different communities and weld them into one organism, so that their combined forces may freely contribute to the national well-being. We cannot safely surrender ourselves to the prevailing ideals. Extreme caution is necessary in view of the fact that we are at present under the overwhelming domination of foreign ideas and institutions which were introduced into our country in our passive days, and their influence, very subtle and scarcely sympathetic to our eternal ideals, may easily swamp our understanding. Our progress must necessarily be in almost perpetual opposition to its prevalence.

Our jubilation over the joint electorates resolution is, we think, mainly inspired by the first point of view. It must not be understood that we look upon it as detrimental to the country's interests, though we must admit that the conditions hemming it round take away much from its benefit and value.* Our point is that we are attaching too much importance to it due to our misunderstanding the true depths and dimensions of the national problems. Our basic problem is not one of merely

* For a most searching analysis of the resolution, see the article "The All-India Congress Committee and Joint Electorates" by Ramnanda Chatterjee in the *Modern Review*, June.

building up joint electorates or an effective system of Government. It is much more fundamental, and the state is but the fringe of that being which is the Indian nation.

The views of the first school of thinkers were expressed a few days after the A. I. C. C.'s Bombay meeting by an eminent thinker in these words :

But after all if India is ever to have a National State and a National Government of its own responsible to the people and to no others then we must build up an Indian Nation first. In the building up of this Indian Nation the Hindu and the Mahommedan and the other Indian communities must be coalesced to form one political organism. In the building up of this national organism these joint electorates will be of incalculable help. * * *

I know those who have been profiting by this Hindu-Muslim conflict, whose leadership in our present political life has been built upon the exploitation of communal animosities, be they Hindus or be they Mahommedans, do not, and being after all human, cannot, lend their whole-hearted support to this proposal. But they are the real workers of mischief and it will be a bad day for Indian nationalism, if the counsels of the nation are led or misled by these communalists. Already the cry of Hindu interests has been raised. It is a new cry in Indian nationalism. The Nationalist State in India can never be anything except a secular State. This has been the very plinth and foundation of Indian nationalism ever since its birth. Religion and politics must stand apart in the common national life of India, not the spirit of religion which is fortunately more or less the same in Hinduism as in Islam or Christianity, but its formulas and outer sanctions being different in different religions, can never be permitted to influence, much less dominate the common civic and political life of our composite people. —(Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal in the *Forward*.)

We hope we shall be excused for this long quotation. But it is typical of the ideas of perhaps the majority of our politically-minded countrymen. Their motives are quite admirable. But they seem to miss the true significance of the Hindu revival movements. Hindu revival in its true aspect is not a cry for the loaves and fishes. It is the assertion of the Hindu view of life and of the claim that the Hindu view of life should mould and direct Indian nationalism. By Hindu revival we do not specially mean the activities of the Hindu Mahasabha, and Suddhi or Sangathan organisations, but the general awakening and self-assertion of the Hindus, of which these are some imperfect and passing expressions. It is vain to deny the far-reaching significance of the Hindu revival. It is not a negligible factor or merely a working of narrow communalism. It is the uprising

of the spirit of the Indian nation itself. It is yet in the primary stages of its development and will ere long assume proportions surpassing even our wildest dreams.

The first school of thinkers however is blind to this significance. Its view of nationalism is essentially secularistic. It does not seem to recognise a difference between the state and the nation. This is a fundamental error. Whatever may be in other countries, in India at least the distinction must be recognised. In the above quotation, we find this passage: "The Nationalist State in India can never be anything except a secular State. This has been the very plinth and foundation of Indian nationalism ever since its birth." It will be seen that here the difference between state and nationalism is entirely ignored. Yet if the history of India and of the Hindu collective life teaches anything, it is that the collective life should be as free from the state control as practicable. If the tendency in the West is towards greater and greater centralisation, the tendency in the East is towards greater and greater decentralisation. Decentralisation is necessary as much for material advantages as for the spiritual growth of man. The state was considered as a secondary aspect of the collective life. Whereas the state could only be secular in outlook and action, aiming mainly at the material prosperity of the people, nationalism was concerned with the deeper and more fundamental aspects of life, such as religion, culture, social economy, etc., and sought to organise the life of the people on spiritual foundations so that all life-activity might lead to the realisation of the ultimate spiritual ideal. The state protected but scarcely interfered in the truly national functions. The state could be endangered by conquerors, but the nation lived on and grew unobstructed except when new racial or cultural elements were introduced from outside. In fact Hindu history and also Muhammadan history in India may be looked upon as a parallel growth of the nation and the state,—the one fundamental and predominant, the other secondary ; the one governed and inspired by prophets, Incarnations, saints, devotees and Karma-yogins, the other by kings, statesmen, generals, adventurers and conquerors.

This basic distinction need not be lost in the present age. Such a loss would be suicidal. The experiences of the present

age, East or West, rather point to the urgent necessity of this distinction being made real everywhere. The absorption of all collective functions by the state which can at best be secular, tends to secularise the motives and ideals of life and to bind men to material interests. It is naturally dominated and guided by clever politicians who are scarcely saints, and the majority of voters that uphold them are rarely actuated by idealistic principles. It therefore drags down the nobler ideals of the people. The high spiritual principles unless when they fall within the domain of practical politics, are more shadowy than real to it.

India therefore, from very ancient times, conceived a distinction between administrative efficiency conducing to material prosperity and spiritual self-realisation—individual and national ; and devoted her best energies to the fulfilment of the latter function. Her constant endeavour was to make the national life-currents flow along the channel of spirituality and see that they were not obstructed by material considerations. Age after age new seers and prophets arose to make suitable adjustments required by changed circumstances and to find new unities and syntheses, assimilating new race and culture units. In all essentials, she refused to brook any interference from the secular state and sought to spiritualise even the apparently secular functions of the social and individual life ; even the ordinary industries were raised to the spiritual level of worship.

Organisation has its benefits, but it has its evils also, one of which is that it mechanises. We have times and again mentioned that India's one driving motive is to spiritualise life. It means that every individual should learn to conceive his daily life, his thoughts and actions, as a continual worship of the Divine. An individual has two functions : his domestic relations and his public duties. It is easier for him to spiritualise the former, but not so the latter. To his family members and his friends, he is emotionally related. His contact with them is personal. He can transmute it into a spiritual relation by looking upon his friends and relatives as embodiments of God. This personal and emotional contact also makes it possible for him to maintain his actions and relations on a true moral level and freely control and guide them towards a desired ideal. He

is his own master, conscious of the spiritual ideal and free to move and direct his present life towards that ideal. To be bound to an organisation, especially a secular one, is to lose this moral freedom in a large measure.

His public duties consist of his relations with the society, the state, the nation and the humanity. They are social, economical, political, cultural, philanthropical. But it so happens that in most cases he has to fulfil those functions without coming in direct contact with the *persons* whom his activities concern. His work is more or less a part of the activities of a big organisation. The personal touch is absent. There is neither the freedom nor the opportunity of exercising freedom of thought or moral judgment. He can only submit to the higher power of the organisation. When millions of soldiers rush to the battle field, it is the blind, unhuman power of organisation that drives them on. The officers of a state are less conscious of the *persons* they are appointed to serve than of the system of which they are the instruments and of the authorities they work under. When the labourer works in the field or factory, his exertions lack the sweetening touch of personal freedom and emotional self-determination, but are regulated and exploited by the unmoral powers of the capitalistic organisations. Even the labour organisations cannot restore to the labourers the human touch that redeems,—they also are mechanical. The daily industry remains still a bare routine work, devoid of emotional personal relations. In fact when man is not in personal contact with the men he serves by his labours, he cannot easily feel the emotional glow which, being spiritualised, illumines the shrine of the Divine. It may be possible for the advanced few to work and serve worshipfully even when the objects of service are beyond personal contact. But the masses require direct contact to be able to spiritualise life in any measure ; and the *common* tendency of all organisations is to render its constituents more and more mechanical, conscious only of the immense power and magnitude of those organisations and too stupefied to judge their rightness or morality. The organisations themselves may have honourable motives and their leading members may be conscious of them. But the rank and file become inevitably passive instruments, content only to work and flattering themselves that they are

doing their duties, as if the dignified name of 'duty' can redeem any thoughtless action of its inherent foolishness and inanity. There is an intoxication in feeling oneself as an instrument—an unquestioning, obedient tool—of a great power, like a soldier killing and being killed without a murmur in the battle field. But that self-satisfaction is far from the spiritual self-realisation that comes out of the fulfilment of a *moral* function consciously and thoughtfully done.

India therefore wanted to give man the opportunity to come in direct contact with the persons concerned even in the discharge of his public duties. That required decentralisation. The self-contained *samâjas*, the social units, had this spiritual advantage over and above material advantages. When the persons we serve socially, politically or industrially, are in direct contact with us, we find it easier to maintain correct emotional relations between them and ourselves and conceive those relations in the true worshipful spirit. We can easily and naturally look upon our whole life, domestic and public, as a continued act of worship and thus fulfil ourselves and the national purpose which is the spiritualisation of life. The distinction conceived between the nation and the state is indeed real in view of India's spiritual ideals, and it will be disastrous to ignore it in any scheme of national rehabilitation. Organisation and consequent mechanisation of life and behaviour there must be to some extent, but we must guard against this necessary evil as cautiously as possible.

From this—the necessary distinction between the nation and the state—follows of course the need of Hindu revival. For though we deprecate attempts at bringing all the departments and functions of the collective life under the single domination of the state, we yet feel the urgent necessity of organising the different races and communities and their activities into a united *nationhood*. By nationhood we understand the common consciousness of the same spiritual urge, of the same life's ideal and the same ceaseless travelling along varied paths towards its realisation. It is the realisation of the already existing spiritual unity. We want a united Indian nation. We want again the stagnant currents of the national life to flow in fresh vigour. Our history upto the British rule

has been one long attempt at assimilating new elements of race, culture and creed from age to age and infiltrating them with the common spiritual idealism,—that idealism which finds the ultimate value of life and action in the realisation of the spiritual self. Even during the British rule, this same attempt has been continued. The light of the new synthesis has been reflected on the national life, and the present communal turmoil is the murmur of the reawakening. That is why the Hindus are again asserting themselves. For Hinduism alone holds the secret that will translate the new synthetic ideal into the reality of the national life. Hinduism will furnish the foundation of the coming nationhood and point the direction of its progress.

There are those who believe that unless the various communities inhabiting India become self-possessed and self-conscious, the all-India national consciousness cannot come. This is only apparently true. If we look upon the Indian nation as a federation of self-contained communities, held together by pacts and agreements and considerations of common interests, it is certain that only self-possessed communities can so combine. We however dream of a more real nationalism. Material interests can be harmonised by pacts and agreements. But cultural and spiritual unity can come only out of a *fusion* of the communities. If our nationalism is to be the acceptance and realisation of a fixed spiritual ideal and the living of a single life with conscious aims and methods, the communities partaking in that idealism must discover that life and being in which the ideal is real and identify themselves with it. That is real nationalism. All true union is the discovery of a pre-existing unity. There cannot be any spiritual combination unless the combining parties realise themselves as phases of a great unity of being. The Indian nation must be such a being or nothing.

Some sixteen months ago writing on Swami Vivekananda's solution of the Hindu-Moslem problem, we emphasised the idea that in the realisation of the Indian national unity, Hinduism must supply the nucleus and pattern of crystallisation. What is our national ideal? It is as we have pointed out before the spiritualisation of life. No other culture or religion has stood for it so clearly and unflinchingly as Hinduism. This has been her one constant main endeavour through the course of her

long history. All other Indian communities also must accept this as their ideal. We know that unless this motive is already existent among the different communities, Hinduism cannot force it into them. But this is already present in all men all over the world in greater or less degree. The tendency to spiritualisation is the fundamental motive of all human life. Hinduism only emphasises it and seeks to make it consciously active in order to a rapid development. Therefore this would be no innovation with the other communities. And there is that in India's atmosphere which slowly induces all to follow the sacred path to spiritual self-realisation. By and by all come under the magic spell of her great ideal. Besides, the turn of the world events has made it more imperative than ever that all life, individual or national, must be conceived spiritually if we are to escape final disaster. No communities in India therefore have any valid reason to deny the ideal that Hinduism holds forth.

But in order that Hinduism may become the basis and the guiding spirit of Indian nationalism, it is absolutely necessary that it should conceive itself as super-credal, as the meeting ground of all the different cultures. So long as Hinduism thinks of itself as of a stereotyped form, bound and limited by infinite details of negation, it cannot be the foundation of that which is the Indian nationality and which is also consequently the international unity,—for India is really the epitome of the world. Hinduism must shed its crude limitations and must become again the grand synthesis of the age. Hinduism in its original character is always super-credal. Accepting as it does the truth of all spiritual experience and the validity of all honest methods for its realisation, it has always provided infinite scope for the accommodation of various races and cultures. It is only in the periods of its decay that it seems to forget its universal character and mission and becomes a bundle of negations. Once again it is waking up and calling forth its pristine nature, and its present communal struggle is really the first onrush of its resurgent life.

It is our deliberate opinion that the realisation of the Indian national unity and also of international unity is peculiarly and mainly the concern of the Hindus. They of all people are best fitted by history to accomplish it. It is not by the equal

co-ordination of the self-contained communities, but by the leadership of one and the obedient following of the rest, that all great unions become possible. Hinduism has to provide this great leadership.

That is why we do not consider the present communal troubles as absolutely evil. Evil they are, but a necessary evil. For through these clashes with other communities and through sufferings from their onslaughts, Hinduism is learning to divest itself of its credal limitations and discover the greater hidden unity behind its negations. The requirements of the situation are teaching it to discover its historical purpose and its immortal strength.

It is a peculiarity of Hindu evolutionary movements that the first start is made with its religion. The very first step is the enunciation of a new synthetic ideal of religion. With the grasp of the religious synthesis comes the liberalising of the social outlook. And then new races are admitted into the society, lower castes are raised to higher statuses, and a social revolution of tremendous magnitude takes place without any way impairing the essentials of the national life. The present communal struggle of the Hindus is effecting such a two-fold reform in Hinduism,—religious and social. Just as we are asserting the dynamic character of the universal principles of our religion, the exigencies of the time are compelling us also to revise our social code and make it broader and more universal in spirit and form. When this reform will be sufficiently advanced, we shall not only have removed the ban from over our suppressed classes, but have also actually prepared our society to welcome aliens as honourable sharers of the blessings of our religion. Therefore let the movement be carried on with greater vigour and enthusiasm. For that way only lies the realisation of Indian nationhood.

In our opinion, apart from minor profits, this is the solid gain at which the Hindu revival movement aims. Its quarrel with Muhammadan or other communities is but a passing phase. The direction is towards the realisation of a super-credal character and the peace of universal harmony. Those who are active participants in the movement must never forget it. To forget the altruistic, supercommunal, truly national and international character of the Hindu revival is to defeat its very purpose.

The superior purpose of its existence and the high internationalism based on spiritual harmony which it aims at, cannot be realised if we allow ourselves to be degraded by communal acrimony.

Therefore we do not sympathise with either those who hope for the realisation of Indian nationhood without working at the foundations, do not feel the need of a spiritual basis and are satisfied with external patch-work, or those who fail to see the larger supercommunal character of Hinduism and obstructs its progress by misleading it into narrow communalism. All who aspire after the realisation of the Indian nation, must never forget these two things: (1) That the Indian state is quite distinct from the Indian nation; the former is the concern of politicians who may evolve the constitution by pacts and compromises, whereas the latter is to be realised by the union of the different communities believing in the same ideal and pursuing the same method generally for its realisation. And (2) that Hinduism alone can bring about that spiritual union and teach that ideal and method; and Hinduism therefore should be made so liberal and universal in both social and religious aspects that all the different creeds and communities will automatically find admission into it and grow into a united nationhood.

ASPECTS OF GOD-REALISATION

BY SWAMI RAGHAVANANDA

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So long as we are human beings endowed with mind and senses, we are bound to think of God in a human and personal way, and that constitutes our only way of approach to Him. There is no harm in that way of worship either, if we only remember that that is only one aspect of God and does not exhaust all the possibilities of His nature. What God is in His real full essence, we can never know by the mind and the intellect. No scripture, no sage has yet been able to realise Him in His complete fullness or describe His glory in full

excellence. "A small ant coming to a hill of sugar, ate one grain of sugar which filled him completely and with another in his mouth went back home",—such is the fate of the ordinary seekers of Truth. Sages are like the big ants who can take five or six grains from the hill of sugar in their mouths. Such is the vastness or the amplitude of the being of God as described in the Hindu scriptures. Unable to describe His glory, the scriptures stand mute and stop with speechless wonder and exclaim: "Not this, not this. This even is not the limit of God's being." Who can set a limit to the being of God? None but the lunatic and the fool. Such being the case we may despair of knowing Him in His entirety. But we need not. It is sufficient if He fills us to the limit of our spiritual capacity.

God is beyond mind and speech, because mind and speech limit objects, and God is unlimited, infinite. But He is reflected in the pure mind. The mind which is purged of the senses and depleted of worldliness, in that mind the intelligence of God shines brightly. This is what is meant by the statement in the Old Testament, "None can look upon the face of God and live." To know Him is to annihilate the lower self.

The mind is composed of qualities and consists of various moods. The proximity of God stimulates some of the noblest moods and emotions of the mind, and all good and noble qualities come to nest in the life of the person who realises Him, and adorn it like ornaments. Just as an iron-ball placed near a blazing fire is impregnated with the heat of the fire and burns red like fire, so the mind contacting the essence of God is impregnated with the power and being of God and becomes transfigured.

This change induces four different moods of the mind, moods of infinite energy, infinite intelligence or awareness, deep introspectiveness or inwardness and infinite love. As the presence of the king is inferred from the signs and insignia of royalty, so the presence of God in a life is inferred from the noble moods and the attendant noble qualities like dispassion, discrimination, love, knowledge, compassion, etc.

In some life He is realised as Infinite Energy. Beneficial energy goes out constantly from it. Intense activity is the law of that life, but that activity is unselfish and beneficent. For

contacting the essence of God, all selfishness, all egoism is burnt up, and it is no longer possible for him to serve self and pursue the material interests of lust and greed of gold. But while engaged in the field of activity he feels himself present at the altar of the inner shrine, and taking part in the consecration of a temple where Divinity is being unfolded with holy hands. Work has transformed itself into worship, the Divine power has come and filled him with a divine afflatus, consecrating and deifying everything he turns his hand to. He sees his Master's face in everything. Work is no longer felt as drudgery, but as an outpouring of the joy of soul in activity. All distinction between secular and spiritual is lost and incessant worship goes on in the inmost recess of the heart. The soul sings a divine anthem day and night, divine enthusiasm courses through every nerve and vein of the body and burns with the fire and fervour of a strange ecstasy. Such lives are actual embodiments of consecrated service or worshipful activity. Every act they do, every movement they make, is felt as proceeding from Him, is felt as His activity. Such persons are examples of the wonderful text of the Gita: "Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, do that as an offering to Me. Thus shalt thou be freed from the bonds of actions, good and evil, and attaining freedom through the Yoga of renunciation thou shalt attain to Me."

In another aspect, He is realised as Infinite Knowledge or Awareness. The light of our present consciousness is flimsy and flickering, ready to go out, choked and overpowered by matter and burns dimly with a meagre flame. Therefore do we feel ourselves so limited and small, and the world looms so large on our horizon. Why is this so, psychologically? Because knowledge is small and the light of consciousness is dim. Therefore we feel so dissatisfied, so crushed down by ignorance and haunted by doubt about the mystery of existence. But one day God will be realised as Infinite Consciousness. The meagre flame of knowledge burning within us will grow to infinite proportions and cover the whole of the seen and unseen universe, illumine the deepest and darkest places of the universe and everything will become manifest in its light. Then knowledge will be infinite, the gloom of the heart will

be dispelled and everything will be clear. Describing this state of infinite consciousness, Sankaracharya says: "One that is present always as consciousness, the bliss absolute beyond all bounds, beyond all compare and all qualities, ever-free, limitless as the sky, without parts, the absolute, the perfect—such Brahman, O sage, shines in the heart of the Jnani in Samadhi." Now our finite consciousness has its periods of setting and rising, of wakefulness and sleep, of forgetfulness and memory. But the Rishi of the Upanishad depicts in fine imagery the state of the unsetting and unchangeable consciousness: "One day the Sun of Knowledge will rise to the meridian and will remain motionless, alone in the centre of consciousness; will not rise again, nor set again, but shed an undying radiance dispelling all the gloom of the universe."

God is also realised as deep Inwardness or Introspectiveness. Ordinarily we find the man of action devoid of the power of introspection. He cannot enter the deep regions of the heart wherein lie scattered the pearls of spiritual truth and enjoyment; he cannot lift the veil of the material and sensuous universe and peep into the beyond. His inner life is callous, dull and devoid of objects of absorbing interest. God is realised as the inner transcendent reality, beyond mind and sense, beyond this little universe of ours, when this power of introspection opens. Then only can we at will shut the doors of the senses, cut off the external universe and retire to the inner citadel where the Cause of things is laid, but where the sense-bound man has no access. There one can remain as long as he likes, refresh himself with its satisfying knowledge and light, drink of the fountains which flow far beyond the world of sense, and feel strengthened and revitalised. A man devoid of this power of mysticism is only half man, cut off from the inner source of joy, strength and spiritual enlightenment. It is like a man who is doomed to remain only in the ante room and can have no access to the inner apartments. Aspiring to this state the Sanskrit poet Bhartrihari has sung: "Will those happy days come to me, when on the banks of the Ganges, sitting in a 'lotus posture' on a piece of stone, I shall fall into *Yoga-nidrâ* (deep inward meditation oblivious of the external), resulting from regular practice of the contemplation of Brahman,

and when antelopes, (mistaking me to be a motionless stump), having nothing to fear, will rub their limbs against my body?"

God is realised by men also as Infinite Love. The faculty that now is in us is narrow, partial, inconstant, heavily shot through with strands of sense, and is only another name for self-indulgence. It is hardly proper to dignify it with the name of love. But this faculty of love can be purified, broadened, universalised till it will form one of the master clues to the solution of the mystery of the universe. Love is the great motive power behind the universe. The mother gives up her life for the child, the patriot for the country, the saint for humanity, impelled by the unseen power of love. Selfishness is the love of the little self at the expense of the whole universe. When I have an all-comprehending sense of the Divine, there can be no selfishness in me, no particularity in my love. Selfishness is the universal love contracted and narrowed down by this dominant claim of the little self. Thus we find that love is the great Deity that is present in all beings from the lowest worm to the highest angel, that its manifestation is great and small according as its sphere is broad or contracted. When love is lifted out of all particularities and personalities and is directed to the universe, it becomes all-conquering. He in whose love there is no limit of particularity or personality, no distinction of high and low, great and small, learned or ignorant, saint or sinner, whose mind never reacts in hatred to any blow from outside, his love will conquer the world. And God is realised by him as the Infinite Love present in the heart of all beings and moving the universe. "The beauty of the sun and the moon, and the human face, are all reflections of His beauty. He is the source of all beauty and sublimity." He is present as the inner attraction drawing the whole universe towards Him. When God is thus seen to be present in all objects as the inner attraction, then the whole universe changes its aspect, and unswerving and unstinted love is given to one and all without distinction. All distinctions are lost and swallowed up in the ocean of love. The universe with all its diverse objects are blotted out, men, animals and trees all melt into the homogeneous ocean of love which is felt as present in the heart of the devotee. Thus sings the poet of the Upanishad : "Who could have lived, who could have breathed, if the Great

Being had not filled the universe with His love? From bliss all beings proceed, in bliss they live, and unto bliss they return in the end.”

SARADAMANI DEVI*

BY RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE

Editor, The Modern Review

The Hindu scriptures praise both householders and monks ; and they justly hold that the life of the householders is the basis of the other orders of life. It is not that either all monks or all householders should be praised or blamed. It is the God-given powers and tendencies of the mind that determine the kind of life God wants a man to lead and the works He wills him to accomplish. One's satisfaction or dissatisfaction arises from the consideration whether he is living up or not to the ideal of the life he has chosen for himself. We cannot judge a man's worth or success by the mere name or form of his life or the relative superiority of the life of the householder or the monk without reference to the individuals that live those lives.

It is generally found that the Sannyasins are either not married at all, or if married, they sever all relations with their wives, renounce them and leave their homes. Paramahansa Ramakrishna was a Sannyasin, but he married at the age of twenty-four. His marriage did not take place when he had not arrived at the age of discretion or against his will. In fact it had his full approval, and it is recorded in his life that the choice of his bride was made under his own guidance. It is true that he did not live with her like an ordinary householder and in any physical relations ; but neither did he forsake her, but rather kept her near him and made her his true helpmate by affectionate instructions and personal example. This is one of the specialities of Ramakrishna's life.

* The article, translated by a follower of Sri Ramakrishna from the original Bengali of Mr. Chatterjee as it appeared in his Bengali monthly, *Prabasi*, was published last month in the *Modern Review*. Saradamani Devi was the wife of Sri Ramakrishna and was called the Holy Mother by his followers.—Ed., P. B.

But Ramakrishna alone was not unique. His wife Saradamani Devi also shared this quality. May be that Ramakrishna himself taught and trained her, but the pupil also must have had the capacity to assimilate and avail herself of the teaching. All pupils of the same teacher do not turn out good and wise ; we cannot make as fine ornaments of a lump of clay as of gold.

One is, therefore, naturally interested to know the details of Saradamani's life. Unfortunately no biography of her is available, and one has to be contented with the fragments of information that lie scattered about the life-story of Ramakrishna. We earnestly request that some of the disciples of Ramakrishna and Saradamani should record the life and teachings of this great woman. It may be that several records will be required. But there should be one among them which will be a simple and unvarnished narration of her life and sayings without any attempt at interpretation, comment or criticism. Such a biography of Ramakrishna also is greatly wanted. Our plea is that those also who are not their intimate followers should be afforded the opportunity of understanding them in their own way. The followers themselves may have another kind of biography.

The lay name of Ramakrishna was Gadadhar. "His affectionate mother and elder brother decided to have him married to a suitable bride, hoping to cure him thereby of his extreme indifference to the world and constant mental unsettlement."* "They held their council in secret ; for they feared that if Gadadhar came to know of their decision, he was sure to protest against it. But the intelligent Gadadhar found it out in no time. He did not however raise any objection. He rather took it as a great fun, like a child enjoying a festival."

Messengers were sent about to find a suitable bride, but they returned disappointed. It was then that Gadadhar suggested the daughter of Ramchandra Mukherji of Jayrambati in the Bankura District. His mother and brother sent a man to enquire, who brought hopeful news, and soon all negotiations were over.

Accordingly in the latter part of the month of Baisakh of the Bengali year 1266, Gadadhar duly married the five-year-old

* All passages in this article which are within marks of quotation are taken from the Bengali book named *Ramakrishna-lila-prasanga*.

daughter of Ramchandra Mukherji. A dowry of three hundred rupees had to be given to the bride's father. Gadadhar had by then completed his twenty-third year and stepped into the twenty-fourth.

Gadadhar's mother Chandra Devi, "had borrowed some ornaments from her rich neighbours, the Lahas, to adorn the bride on the wedding day in order to please the bride's people and maintain the family dignity. It may be well imagined, therefore, that she felt her poverty very keenly when she had to return them after a few days to their owners. From the very day of the marriage, she had felt a great love for her daughter-in-law. The thought of snatching the jewels from the girl's person filled her eyes with tears. She did not speak out her agony, but Gadadhar felt it intuitively. He consoled his mother and cleverly removed the ornaments from the person of his wife while she was sleeping. But when she woke up, she cried out, 'Where are my ornaments gone?' Chandra Devi took her in her lap and said: 'Gadadhar will give you much better ornaments afterwards.' "

These words were fulfilled to the very letter, though not in the sense in which they were used.

"This episode however did not end there. The bride's uncle who happened to arrive there on that day, came to know of it and took away his niece in great dissatisfaction. Chandra Devi was naturally very much cast down at this unhappy turn. But Gadadhar consoled her with the remark that in spite of all that they might say or do, the marriage was a settled fact and could not be undone."

In the month of Agrahayan of 1267 when Saradamani reached the seventh year, she came with Gadadhar to his house at Kamarpukur, which was four miles distant from her parental house.

After that Ramakrishna was absent from Kamarpukur for many years. He returned there in the year 1274 with the Brahmin woman who had assisted him in his spiritual practices, and his nephew, Hriday.

His return after many years filled the humble household with great delight, and the ladies of the family sent for the bride to realise the complete measure of happiness. Saradamani had seen her husband but once after the marriage, when

she was in her seventh year. Her only memory of the occasion was that her husband's nephew Hriday had sought her out hiding in a secret corner and worshipped her feet with lotus flowers in spite of her great fear and shyness. About six years after that, when she was thirteen years old, she was taken to her husband's house at Kamarpukur, where she stayed for a month. But Ramakrishna was then living at Dakshineswar and she could not meet him. She lived for another six weeks at Kamarpukur about six months later. But then also she did not see her husband. And then, three or four months after, the word came that Ramakrishna had come home and she had been sent for. She was now thirteen years and six or seven months old.

Ramakrishna now set himself to the fulfilment of a noble duty. He did not care whether his wife came to him or not. But when she did come to Kamarpukur he engaged himself earnestly in her education and welfare. "His great teacher Tota Puri, knowing him to be married, had said, 'It does not matter. He alone is truly established in *Brahman*, whose dispassion, discrimination and wisdom are not in any way impaired even in the company of his wife. He alone has attained true knowledge of *Brahman* who can look on men and women with the same eye, perceive them as identical with the *Atman* (the Soul) and behave with them accordingly. Those who make a distinction between men and women are far from the perfect knowledge of *Brahman*, though aspirants to it they may be.' "

These words of Tota Puri now came back to Ramakrishna's mind and led him to put his long-acquired spiritual knowledge to the test and devote himself to the well-being of his wife. Whenever he felt anything to be his duty, he could not neglect it or leave it half finished. In the present instance also he did not act otherwise. "When he resolved to educate his young wife, he did not do it in half measures. He saw to it from the first that she attained skill in the service of God, Guru (spiritual preceptor) and guests and in the works of the household and learned the proper use of money. He taught her above all to live in absolute self-surrender to the Lord and behave correctly with all persons under all circumstances and in all conditions and stations of life."

Her education under her husband began in her fourteenth

year. She was then naturally quite an unsophisticated girl. For, "whoever had occasion to compare Calcutta girls with their sisters in Kamarpukur and other villages, must have noted that the former attained maturity in body and mind quicker than the latter. The reason is probably that the latter live a natural life in the pure air of the country, moving about freely without unnecessary restriction."

The pure-hearted girl felt an indescribable joy in living in the divine company of Ramakrishna and being blessed with his selfless love and care. In later days she often spoke of this great happiness to the women disciples of her husband. "Since then," she would say, "I always felt as if a pitcher filled with bliss had been installed in my heart. I cannot tell you how full I felt of that calm, steady and divine joy."

A few months later Ramakrishna went back to Dakshineswar. Saradamani also returned to her father, intensely conscious of having found a supreme endless happiness. "This did not make her giddy, flippant or selfish, but calm, thoughtful and selflessly affectionate. She forgot all her personal wants. She felt an infinite sympathy for the sufferings of others, she became the very embodiment of compassion. Her great inner joy did not let her feel even the hardest of physical sufferings or the pain of seeing her love unreciprocated by her family. Thus she passed her days in her father's home, self-absorbed and content with the barest necessities."

"But though her body lived there, her mind dwelt ever with her husband at Dakshineswar. She often felt a strong desire to go and see him ; but she suppressed it carefully and patiently and consoled herself, with the hope that he would call her of himself to his side in due time. For, surely, he who had loved her so graciously at the first sight, could not forget her entirely."

"Thus passed her days, waiting in full faith for the arrival of that auspicious hour. But though faith and hope flowed unabated in her heart, her person underwent a daily change till in the month of Paus of 1278 she became a young woman of eighteen years. True, the great lasting joy with which her first acquaintance with her godly husband had endowed her, kept her above the joys and sorrows of her daily life ; but the world did not allow it flow unimpededly. For often the villagers would refer to her husband as a mad man, as one who roved

about nude, crying out the names of God, and the village women pitied and despised her as the wife of a lunatic. These, though she endured them silently, went deep into her heart. Was he really so changed from what she had seen him? Has he really become what he was reported to be? Thus she would think, and conclude that if the reports were true, then her place should not be in her father's house but by his side to serve and nurse him. After long and careful thought, she resolved to go personally to Dakshineswar to see him with her own eyes, and act as circumstances required."

Some of her distant women relatives had decided that year to go to Calcutta for bathing in the holy Ganges on the occasion of the birthday anniversary of Sri Chaitanya on the full moon day of Phalgun. She now proposed to accompany them. When they asked her father for permission, he came to understand the reason of her intended visit and arranged to take her himself to Calcutta. It was not possible to reach Calcutta by railway from Jayrambati. One had either to walk or to travel in a palanquin, but the rich only could avail themselves of the latter means. Therefore Ramchandra Mukherji started on foot with his daughter and party.

"They passed joyfully the first two days of their journey, enlivened by the sight of endless paddy fields, interspersed with tanks full of lotus flowers, and occasional rest in the cool shades of pipal trees. But the joy did not last to the end. For Saradmani, unused to such tough journeys on foot, fell ill of severe fever on the way and caused much anxiety to her father. He found further progress impossible and took shelter in a way-side rest house."

In the morning, however, Ramchandra found her completely free of fever and thought it best to proceed slowly, instead of waiting helplessly in the rest house. She also agreed with her father. They fortunately came across a palanquin before they had proceeded far, and engaged it. That day also she had fever, but it was comparatively mild. She bore it easily and did not speak of it to any one. The same night at nine, the party reached Dakshineswar.

Seeing her arrive so ill, Ramakrishna became very anxious. "He arranged for a separate bed for her in his own room, lest she should catch cold elsewhere, and said again and again sorrow-

fully, 'You are come at last! But my Sejo Babu* is no more to look after you properly.' She was cured completely in three or four days by proper treatment and nursing."

All these days Ramakrishna kept her in his own room and himself supervised her treatment and diet; and when she recovered, he arranged for her stay with his mother at the *nahavat*. † Saradamani saw that Ramakrishna was the same as before and his love and affection for her had not changed. A great joy filled her heart and she devoted herself to the service of her husband and his mother. Her father went home after a few days, rejoicing at the happiness of his daughter.

Ramakrishna also devoted his attention to the discharge of his duties to his wife, and availed himself of his leisure hours to instruct her on the end and aim of human life and its duties. It is said that it was at that time that he said to his wife, "Just as Uncle Moon‡ is the uncle of all children, so is God nearest and dearest to all. Every one has the right to call on Him. And whoever will call on Him will be blessed by His vision. If you call on Him, you also will see Him." His training did not end in verbal instruction. His method was to keep the pupil by his side and completely master his heart with his great love. He would then give him instruction and keep a keen and constant watch over him to see how far he was carrying those instructions into practice, and would correct him whenever he found him going wrong. He followed the same method with Saradamani. Ramakrishna was so careful about trifling details that he said to his wife, "When you get into a carriage or boat, get in first. But when you get down, get down last after seeing if anything is left behind."

It is said that one day while shampooing her husband's feet, she asked him, "Who do you think I am?" To which Ramakrishna replied, "The Mother who is in the shrine gave birth to this body and is now living in the *nahabat*; even She is now shampooing my feet. Really, I tell you, I find you an embodi-

* Mathuranath Biswas, son-in-law of Rani Rashmani, the founder of the Dakshineswar temple. He was the manager of the temple and was extremely devoted to Sri Ramakrishna and supplied all his wants and took every care of him.

† A small room at some distance from the temple enclosure, intended for the temple music.

‡ In Bengal, children are taught to call the moon their maternal uncle.

ment of the Divine Mother Herself." Ramakrishna found in all women—even the most corrupt—the presence of the Mother of the universe.

"The Rishi of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* thus teaches in the discourse on Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi: 'Because the Divine Self is in the husband, therefore does the wife love her husband ; and because the Divine Self is in the wife, therefore does the husband love the wife.' "

During this time Ramakrishna and Saradamani used to sleep in the same bed. Ramakrishna had no consciousness of the body, and spent almost the whole night absorbed in *Samadhi*. From what Ramakrishna said of those days it is clear that if Saradamani also had not been completely free from all desires, he would not have so completely escaped the taint of body-consciousness. It is found of many great men in different fields of life that much of their noble achievements were possible through the assistance of their wives, who carefully cleared their path of worldly obstacles. Not only do the wives of many great men spare them the daily distractions of domestic life, but they also instil courage and hope into their hearts in moments of fatigue, weakness and despair. And it is doubtful if, without the noble and pure character of his wife, Ramakrishna would have reached the height of spiritual realization that he did, though it may be she appears even now rather like a shadowy figure behind the effulgent personality of her husband.

Thus passed more than a year. Ramakrishna found that his mind was not assailed by even a moment's consciousness of physical appetite and could not look upon and think of Saradamani as other than a fragment of the Mother of the universe or different from the *Atman* or *Brahman*. He felt that he had passed through the ordeal unscathed. He, therefore, arranged for the performance of the *Shodasi Puja** and worshipped Saradamani with due rites and ceremonies. It is said that during the latter part of the worship she lost external consciousness and went into *Samadhi*.†

But this did not make her proud or turn her head.

* The worship of a young woman as the very embodiment of the Divine Mother.

† A state in which the consciousness is withdrawn from the body and partly or wholly from the mind, and concentrated on and identified with the Divine.

She spent nearly five months at Dakshineswar after the *Shodasi Puja*, during which she would, as usual, serve Ramakrishna and his mother and his guests by preparing their meals and doing other household duties. She would pass the day-time in the *nahavat* and the night in the same bed with her husband. Ramakrishna could not stand all kinds of food or cooking. She had, therefore, often to prepare special dishes for him. In those days Ramakrishna "used to be in constant *Samadhi* throughout day and night," and "signs of death would sometimes be manifest on his person," and Saradamani could scarcely sleep at night for fear of his going into *Samadhi*. When Ramakrishna came to know of it, he arranged for her sleep with his Mother in the *nahavat*. After such a life of sixteen months, she returned to Kamarpukur probably in the month of Kartik of 1280.

In after-life she often spoke of those days in these words to the women disciples: "Words cannot describe the divine moods in which he used to live in those days. He would pass the whole night, sometimes talking in ecstasy, sometimes crying or laughing and sometimes losing himself in the stillness of *Samadhi*. Oh those were sublime manifestations of Divine presence and glory! I would be overwhelmed with fear and eagerly wait for the morning. I did not understand much of ecstasy or *Samadhi* at that time. One night I found him lost so long in *Samadhi* that I burst out crying and sent for Hriday. He came and recited the names of God in his ears, which brought him back to normal consciousness after some time. After that, finding that his *Samadhi* often frightened me, he taught me which names or mystic letters should be recited in which kinds of *Samadhi*. Since then, I did not fear so much; for the recital would invariably bring him back to the normal state."

She said, "He taught me everything secular and spiritual. He taught me how to arrange the wick of a lamp, what kind of a person each of the family was and how he or she should be behaved with and how to move in a stranger's house and such other worldly things. He also taught me the singing of the praise of the Lord and the secrets of meditation, *Samadhi* and the knowledge of *Brahman*."

Many women from Calcutta and neighbouring places would come to Dakshineswar to visit Ramakrishna, and spend the

whole day at the *nahavat*. Saradamani had to cook for them also. It would sometimes happen that there would be widows among them, who do not take meat or fish or eggs, and she had to cleanse the oven as many as three times during a day and cook for them separately.

On one occasion, when about to start for Panihati to attend a famous Vaishnava festival, Ramakrishna sent a woman disciple to his wife to enquire whether she would also go there. He said to the women disciples, "Since you are going she may accompany you if she likes." On hearing this Saradamani said in reply, "Quite a crowd is going with him. The festival also will be much crowded. It will be very difficult for me to get down from the boat and see the festival. I will not go." Ramakrishna said afterwards with reference to this decision, "She was quite right in not going. It was so crowded and everyone was noticing me on account of my ecstasy and *Samadhi*. Had she gone, people would have said, 'See Hansa and Hansi* have come!' She is very intelligent." And he added the following instance of her intelligence and unavaricious nature :—

"When a Marwari devotee offered me ten thousand rupees, I felt as if he had plunged a saw into my head. I cried to the Mother, 'Oh Mother, do you want to tempt me at last?' I wanted to know her (his wife's) mind in the matter, and when she came, I said to her, 'The devotee wants to give this money. But as I cannot accept it, he wants to give it in your name. Why do you not accept it? What do you say to it?' But she replied at once, 'How can that be? The money can never be accepted. For if I take it, it will be as if you took it. If I accept it, I shall have to spend it in your service ; it will thus be practically accepted by you. People revere you for your renunciation ; this money must never be accepted.' Hearing her, I heaved a sigh of relief."

This is certainly eloquent of the unavariciousness and balanced judgment of one who, owing to extreme poverty, had sometimes to walk all the way from home to Dakshineswar—a precarious journey of about three days.

"Saradamani afterwards explained the reason of her not going to the Panihati festival. 'The way in which he gave me

* A male and a female swan. The pun is on the word Paramahansa, by which he was known.

permission to accompany him showed that it was not whole-hearted. If he had approved of my going, he would have said, 'Yes, certainly she will go.' Instead he transferred the responsibility of the decision to myself, saying, 'If she likes, she may come.' I then decided to give up the desire of going.' "

Saradamani Devi, being a Bengali Hindu wife, was naturally very bashful. She spent many months in constant attendance on her husband and his guests, but very few ever saw her. She would leave her bed at three, before day-break, long before any one was about, and return to her room after finishing her bath and other morning duties and would not come out of it during the whole day. She would finish all work silently and with extraordinary quickness long before others had risen, and engage herself in worship and meditation. One dark night, stepping down the stairs of the bathing ghat at Bakultala she was about to tread on a big crocodile lying on the stairs. It jumped into the river at the sound of her steps. She never afterwards came to the ghat without a light. But it was marvellous to see, how in spite of her habits and nature, she spent days in dutifully serving her husband in spite of all personal discomforts in an one-storied house in Shampukur, crowded by strangers, where he lived for some time undergoing treatment for cancer. "As soon as she learnt that his disease might be aggravated for want of a suitable person to prepare necessary diet for him, she hastened with a glad heart to take up the charge without the least thought of her personal comfort. It was she who bore the brunt of the responsibility of nursing him." There also she would rise from her bed before three in the morning and sleep only between eleven and two at night. Though a Bengali Hindu wife, she could, if necessary, forego her habits and preconceptions and behave properly with courage and presence of mind. We quote an instance.

In those early days Saradamani Devi had often to perform her journey from Kamarpukur or Jayrambati to Dakshineswar on foot for want of money and cheap conveyance. The way lay through the plains of Telobhelo and Kaikala, extending over eight to ten miles. In those days the fields were infested by murderous robbers. Even now one can see a grim image of Kali installed in the centre of the fields, generally called the "Robbers' Kali of Telobhelo." The dacoits used to worship

her before engaging in murders and robberies. No travellers ever dared to pass through the plains except in large parties.

Once Saradamani was coming to Dakshineswar from Kamarupukur in the company of a nephew and a niece of Ramakrishna and a few other men and women. On reaching Arambag they found that there was still time enough to cross the notorious fields before nightfall and proceeded on without stopping there for the night. Though Saradamani was sore tired with walking, she proceeded with them without any objection. But she often lagged behind. Her companions waited for her time and again till she overtook them. But at last they declared that proceeding in that way they could scarcely cross over before it was very late at night and were sure to fall into the hands of robbers. Finding herself to be the cause of inconvenience and apprehension of the party, she asked them not to wait for her on the way but to go directly to the resthouse at Tarakeswar, where she would meet them as early as possible. They walked fast and soon went out of her sight. She also tried hard to quicken her pace, but she was too tired, and it became dark shortly after she had crossed the centre of the plains. She felt greatly perturbed and was thinking of what she should do when she perceived a tall swarthy man coming towards her, with a club on his shoulder, and another person following him. She saw that escape or alarm was useless and stood still. In a while the man came to her and asked her in harsh tones, "Who are you standing here at this unearthly hour?" She replied, "Father, my companions have left me behind, and possibly I have lost my way. Will you kindly take me to them? Your son-in-law lives in Rani Rashmani's Kali temple at Dakshineswar. I am going to him. If you escort me so far, he is sure to show you great consideration." Before she had finished speaking the second person came up to them. She found that she was a woman, the wife of the man. This greatly relieved her. She took her by the hand and said, "Mother, I am your daughter Sarada. I am stranded here alone, being left behind by my companions. Fortunately father and you are come, or I do not know what I would have done."

This unsophisticated behaviour, utter faith and sweet words deeply touched the hearts of the man and his wife. They were "low"-caste people. But they forgot all differences of caste

and rank between them and treated and consoled her as their daughter. Finding her tired, they did not allow her to proceed further but found her shelter in a shop in a neighbouring village. The woman spread her own clothes to make a bed for her and the man brought her some puffed rice from the shop. Thus they looked after her with parental care and affection through the night and escorted her next morning to a shop at Tarakeswar, where they asked her to rest. The woman said to her husband, "My daughter had little to eat yesterday. Finish your worship at the shrine quickly and get me fish and greens from the market. I must feed her nicely to-day."

While the man was off on his errands, Saradamani's companions happened to come there in search of her and rejoiced at her safe arrival. She introduced her kind Bagdi* parents to them and said, "I do not know what I would have done if they had not come and given me shelter." When they prepared to start, Saradamani expressed her deep gratitude to them and asked their leave to depart. To quote her: "This one night has so endeared us to one another that I began to cry bitterly in uncontrolled grief as I bade them adieu. I could part from them with great difficulty, and that only after I had made them promise that they would visit me at Dakshineswar at their convenience. They followed us for a long distance. The woman gathered some peas from a road-side field and tying them in a corner of my saree, said tearfully, 'Mother Sarada, when you take puffed rice at night, take these with it.' They fulfilled their promise to me and came several times to see me at Dakshineswar with various presents. He (Ramakrishna) also having heard of them from me, behaved with them as their son-in-law and treated them with great love and consideration. But though my dacoit father was so good and simple, I have a shrewd suspicion, he had been once or twice engaged in robbery."

Ramakrishna passed away on the 13th Shravan, 1293. Saradamani was then thirty-three years old. I had heard that she did not put on the weeds of a widow on the death of her husband. In order to ascertain the truth of it, I wrote to a disciple of Ramakrishna and Saradamani. I received the following reply :

* One of the depressed castes of Bengal.

“When after the passing of Sri Ramakrishna she was about to remove the bangles from her wrists, Sri Ramakrishna revealed himself to her in the healthy appearance of his early days, and holding her hand, said, ‘Am I dead that you are removing the signs of wifehood?’ After that she never bared her wrists. She always put on a cloth with a thin red border and bangles on her hands.”*

If all had this faith in the immortality of the soul, the world would be relieved of much of its misery, sin and suffering.

She lived for thirty-four years after her husband's passing. She herself passed away in her sixty-seventh year on the 4th Shravan, 1327. The Bengali monthly *Udbodhan* of the next month celebrated her austerities, renunciation, steadfast faith, self-control, universal love and service, tireless activity, complete indifference to personal comforts, simplicity, humility, patience, kindness, forgiveness, sympathy, selflessness and other great qualities. The followers of her husband and herself used to call her Mother and even now refer to her as such. May the significance of this name be fulfilled in every way!

THE PRINCIPLE OF ADHIKARA AS A KEY TO THE STUDY OF HINDUISM

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(Continued from the last issue)

This same principle was applied by the Hindus to the selection of students as well. It should be mentioned here that the Hindus attached little importance to mere knowledge, divorced from practice; so much so, that a school of thinkers went to the extent of ruling out the authority of the texts of the Vedas, themselves, if they did not contain any practical bearing.¹ So it was but natural that before knowledge was imparted to a student, his capacity or *adhikara* was carefully considered from various points. An

* Bengali Hindu widows wear only a white piece of cloth without any coloured border. They do not wear any jewellery.

¹ The Mimāṃsakas; cf. their formula: “*Annāyasya kriyārthatvāt ānarthakyam atadarthānam.*”

ancient text expresses this fact with an imagery : “*Vidyâ* (learning) once came to the Brâhmana and said, ‘I am yours ; protect me, don’t give me to an unworthy and conceited fellow. Protect me, I shall be better in that way.’ ”² The later scriptures abound with warnings to the same effect and systematically lay down conditions by fulfilling which students could be admitted to their study.³ So Manu says : “If any one wrongly asks to know and if anybody wrongly imparts knowledge, then both will be damned.”³ For, it says : “It is like wasting good seeds on a barren field.”³

It is interesting to note in this connection, the emphasis which Plato also lays on the discriminating choice of students. In connection with the study of dialectic he says : “. . . the characters which are to be initiated into dialectic, must be stable and orderly, in opposition to the present system, which allows anybody, however unfit, to enter the field.”⁴ Again he speaks of how in the hands of unworthy persons it was perverted “into an amusement,” and how “thereby they and the whole cause of philosophy have been prejudiced in the eyes of the world.”⁴

Now the whole range of knowledge was classified by the Hindus in order of difficulty, and persons were initiated into different branches according to their respective powers of reception and assimilation, which constituted their respective *adhikâras*. The Shudras and the women-folk were taught through stories and parables—the Purânas and Itihâsas. The three upper castes (or the more advanced persons) were entitled to the study of the Vedas and their auxiliary scriptures. Of them again those who came to possess the rare virtues of self-control, equanimity, concentration and a genuine thirst after Moksha (salvation), were admitted to the esoteric teachings of the Vedantas. This last branch of knowledge, called the *Parâ Vidyâ* or supreme knowledge, was very cautiously guarded from the officious intrusion of unworthy persons who would distort and defile it. So we come across the warning given to the teacher : “Even if this earth with its waters, full of riches, be offered to him (the teacher) even then, it (the knowledge

² Chhândogya Brâhmana.

³ Manu 2. 110-116.

⁴ ‘The Republic’—Bk. VII. para 539.

of Reality) should not be parted with ; for, it is far more valuable.”

It is important to note in this connection, that a person, if really qualified otherwise, was not shut out from the attainment of the higher branches of knowledge on the ground of low birth or for belonging to the fair sex. We have warrants for this statement in the examples of Vidura in the Mahâbhârata, Jânasruti in the Chhândogya Upanishad, Suta in the Bhâgavata, and Maitreyi, the wife of Yâjnavalkya, in the Brihadâraṇyaka Upanishad. In the Chhândogya Upanishad we have also the story of the boy Satyakâma who was admitted to the privilege of esoteric learning on the ground of his truthfulness, though his parentage was unknown. But above all, we have the example of the sage, Vyâsa who, though born of a fisher-woman, came to be the greatest figure in the field of Hindu culture.

By far the most important part played by the theory of adhikara was in the determination of various forms of worship and prayer. Within the fold of Hinduism there are so many various types of faiths that it can fairly be called the epitome of world-faiths. It has been looked upon very often as a great anomaly. But so soon as we look at this phenomenon from the stand-point of adhikara, all conflict and contradiction fly away. For, have we not seen, at the very beginning of this paper, the differences that exist in tastes and aptitudes of different persons? And have we not already noticed how every person has got to advance upwards exactly from the position he occupies, and that through a series of progressive steps? That being true, different methods of worship to suit different persons or the same person at different stages of development, were the only logical outcome and consequence. A universal form of worship is, no doubt, a more mouthful phrase and a more delightful vision. But it is against the overwhelming evidence of experience and the unalterable laws of the human mind ; and as such, it will ever remain an idle dream.

This fact was recognised in the earliest Upanishads, where we find teachers imparting knowledge of Reality through gradual courses of instructions, always trying to turn back the naturally objective and materialistic current of the student's mind slowly to make it more and more subjective and spiri-

tualistic. Bhrigu asked his father Varuna, a sage, to instruct him as to the Reality that stood at the back of the phenomenal world. He was asked to meditate and communicate the result. On meditation he first concluded that matter was the Reality. He was sent back, for further meditation, by the sage. This time the vital elements were conceived to be the Reality. He was sent again for further meditation. Thus successively the mind, its ideas, and lastly *Ananda* (the Supreme Bliss, as the highest aspect of God) were known to be the Reality. Throughout the history of Hinduism we find this fundamental law of the human mind, namely, its gradual upward march from the gross to the subtle, from the material to the spiritual, amply recognised. Hence the great importance that is attached by the Hindus to *chitta-shuddhi* (clarification or purification of the mind) through various ways, as a preliminary preparation for the reception of the highest Truth. Hence also the series of symbols that we find recommended for worship by the Hindu preceptors. So even the great Shankara, while advocating the most abstract form of monism and asserting that knowledge was the only method of attaining absolute, accorded still a place, however low, to the worship of idols. Hence again the three different paths (*margas*) of *jnâna*, *bhakti*, and *karma*—knowledge, devotion and action—as methods of approaching God, in consonance with the three different attitudes which characterise different minds. Among the Hindus, some worship God as the Father, some as the Mother (Kâli, Durgâ etc.), some as the Child (Bâla-Gopala) and some again as the Husband, according to their respective tastes and aptitudes. But those who conceive God as “beyond even words and thoughts,” do never try to belittle the foregoing forms of worship. For, the sense of *adhikara* reigns supreme over all and harmonises the apparently conflicting views and methods. So the Lord assures his devotees in the Geeta: “In whichever form men seek Me, I reveal Myself to them in that very way.”

Side by side with the highest form of idealistic monism, we have, within the fold of Hinduism, also the worship of many gods and of idols. These have been the grounds for the stigmas of polytheism and idolatry, that are often hurled against Hinduism. We have already tried to explain

partly the true significance of these phenomena. But considering the importance of these somewhat knotty problems, a few words more are necessary. The Hinduism frankly confessed the inability of ordinary people for the highly difficult task of combining the infinite aspects of Godhead in one synthetic grasp of the unaided intellect. For, It was "subtler than the subtlest, greater than the greatest"—"far beyond thoughts and words." So, if it was convenient to ease understanding by consciously representing the different aspects as different gods in the initial stages of development, there could be no room for reasonable objection. On the contrary, it was the height of self-deception—*mithyâchâra*—to profess an abstract and monistic form of worship while in reality the mind was not yet developed enough to get beyond concrete and pluralistic ideas. The same was also true of idols as conscious symbols that helped the intellect in the tasks of conception and concentration. The Hindus were aware (as we shall see a little later) that idols were false representations of the ideas of God. But on the same ground, prayers offered in words (which were but symbols of ideas) were also equally open to objection. So a wholesale condemnation of idolatry disclosed but a blind zeal based on one-sided thinking. So Fichte said: "Every so-called concept of God is necessarily that of an idol."⁵ As for the practical worth of idolatry, it will not be altogether unsafe to refer to the testimony of Hindu experience. Throughout the long history of Hinduism, we find how worship of idols in the right spirit has produced a considerable number of saints whose spiritual perfection would stand any intrinsic test of any other religion. To indicate the real spirit in which forms were ascribed to the Formless and limitations to the Infinite, it will be sufficient to quote an apologetic stanza from the Bhâgavata: "That I have, in meditation, ascribed a form to Thee that art formless, that in praising Thee, I have ignored Thy indescribability and universality, that in visiting shrines of pilgrimage, I have denied Thy all-pervasiveness, Oh God! pardon these three faults of mine."

We have tried to show so long how a right understanding of the principle of *adhikara* throws a flood of light on some of the most important but obscure and time-worn institutions of

⁵ Werke, V. p. 267.

the Hindus. The general influence exerted by the dominating sense of *adhikara* has been to impart a rare spirit of catholicity, toleration and broad-sightedness to the Hindu culture as a whole. This principle has acted as a factor harmonising all conflicts and differences and increasing the power of assimilation. Contacts with foreign cultures, formulations of new philosophical theories and antagonistic religious doctrines were all synthesised by this unifying and assimilating genius of Hinduism, and accommodated with a keen sense of differences of *adhikaras*. It is thus that traces of even aboriginal and non-Aryan elements, now thoroughly Hinduised, are being discovered in this faith by antiquarians in an abundant quantity. Even so powerful and antagonistic a religion as Buddhism was gradually absorbed, and Buddha himself came to be reckoned as one of the ten Hindu *Avataras* (Incarnations). Actuated by this spirit of assimilation, some Hindu thinkers have gone to the extent of altogether explaining away Buddha's irreconcilable antagonism towards the Vedas as a mere disguised attempt to bewilder the godless hordes (the *Daityas*) with false theories and ruin them thereby.⁶ We find the same spirit at play in the *Sânkhya-Pravachana-Bhâsya* where the famous scholar, *Vijnâna-bhiksu* tries to reconcile all the conflicting systems of philosophy—from the *shunya-vâda* of the Buddhists to the *advaita-vâda* of Shankara—as necessary for persons of different *adhikaras*. This rare spirit of catholicity, which is writ large on every page of the great work, the *Geeta*, contributed a unique trait of toleration and breadth of view which enabled Hinduism to embrace every other faith with perfect amity.

But we shall be failing in our duty if we do not mention, before we conclude, some of the undesirable developments that arose from the abuse of this healthy principle of *adhikara*. We have mentioned before the threefold criteria for the determination of genuine *adhikara*. But in course of time, heredity came to be the only and all-sufficing consideration. Naturally enough, this undermined the healthy exercise of the principle, and degeneration became the inevitable consequence. For, unworthy persons came to assume responsible functions simply on the strength of noble birth, while even worthy persons were

⁶ Cf. *Bhagavata*, I. 3. 24. and Introduction to *Sankhya-Pravachana-Bhasya*.

shut out on the one-sided and imperfect ground of low birth. The caste system came to be a blind machinery that served to stifle the natural growth of society. The genial flow of culture became stagnant under the custody of unqualified persons. The cry of *adhikara* which was once raised for the selection of the fit, became a convenient plea for scaring them from their genuine rights. Though the Brahmanas began to neglect the study of the Sacred Books, they were increasingly zealous in their protests against the Non-Brahmanas if they ever tried to study them. This dog-in-the-manger policy of the so-called Brahmanas hastened the doom of the Hindu culture. Thus the abuse of the very principle on which some magnificent institutions once reared their lofty heads, came to be the cause of a pitiable downfall. We have confined the consideration of this principle to the study of Hinduism. But being founded on laws which hold good for all times and places, this principle has got far-reaching implications for the individual and national lives of the modern world as well. This forms a vast subject for investigation and the toils undergone to work it out will be amply rewarded.

(Concluded)

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHERLAND

BY SISTER NIVEDITA

We are rounding Cape Dondra. All day long we have been coasting the eastern side of Ceylon,—a land lovely with palm-forest and pasture, with rose-lit cliff and curving broken rock.

It is the Hour of Peace. Every day at this time, as sunlight dies, the sea begins to utter itself in a new tone. A kind of sorrowful sighing mingles with the sound of waves, and every night and all night long, goes this low moaning of the waters. But to-night it is as if the soft voice spoke to itself a name,—the name of Sita ; and again, as a higher surge than common rises, and beats against the ship, “Jay Sita-Ram ! Sita-Ram ! Jay ! Jay ! Jay !” one hears dying away in the distance.

That snow-white ring of surf against the shore has a signi-

ficance all its own,—here, where it girdles the prison of the most perfect wife the world has ever seen.

Brynhild, the warrior princess of the northern story could be come at only through the Circle of Flame—but Sita—type and crown of Indian womanhood—has for her magic guard the “wine-dark sea,” and the fair sea-foam that breaks among the rocks.

Oh lovely Lanka, and beautiful dreamy Indian sea, fraught with memories like this and the obedience of Hanuman, you under your forests of palm and your groves of cinnamon, are surely one of the jewels of the world!

Great days of the Heroes, come back to us, the weary children of a meaner age,—waken us from our slumber, redeem us from our weakness, and let us once more breast our own storms, and battle with our own needs, as in the times of old!

But the Hour of Peace is gone, and we are turning to the West. Out there is Galle Point; to-morrow at seven we reach Colombo; only a few days more, and the beloved land will be a memory,—an ever-present and ever-beautiful memory truly, but no more an actuality. There is pain in all partings: in this, though it is only for a while, how much!

It was eighteen months ago that I, a stranger, passed this way before, and to-night, as a man sums up a situation, I have a fancy to make reckoning with my own soul as to the drift of the impressions that I have gathered, in the year and a half just gone.

In the first place, I remember gratefully. privileges accorded to few of my race. Received by the Motherland as one of her own children, I have been permitted to see her, as it were, without her veil. I have been allowed to share in the life of the people. Kindness has been showered upon me. Neither poverty nor worship has been hidden from my eyes.

And the outstanding impression that I have gathered from such experience is that this is a people with a curious habit of producing great men unexpectedly. Whatever may be thought of the average development of character in the race, I am convinced that moral genius is commoner here than elsewhere. For by “greatness” I do not particularly wish to imply any kind of intellectual or physical expertness,—these I regard as mere accessories: I refer rather to a certain largeness of feeling which

lifts a man out of all that is individual and makes him stand to humanity as the interpreter of another life. Sometimes that life surrounds him almost as a light upon the face ; sometimes we realise it in the growing sweetness with which years of self-sacrifice are borne ; in India I have seen it lift even scientific research into sainthood. However it manifests itself, we all know that in some men's veins runs the blood of the gods, and of such men India has more than her due share numerically.

And I can trace this effect to three probable causes. The first two I find in the tremendous emotion and concentration of the Hindu temperament. Hindu feeling is something that makes the merely Western feel himself a dwarf before a giant. That jealous privacy which marks the inner life of Oriental nations causes this feature to be little suspected by Europeans. They are more or less deceived by the mask of indifference that is worn with such success. To a certain extent, indeed, the indifference is real. Strong forces are rarely evoked by a slight stimulus. But when the secret note is sounded in this case, sleeping energies of joy or suffering are apt to be aroused, besides which life itself seems a very very little thing.

Another reason why Europeans as a rule are so completely unaware of the real nature of those with whom they deal is that these energies commonly express themselves in a language outside their ken. The Japanese have applied the same thing to the patriotic, instead of the religious, idea, and the West has understood at once. As to Indian concentration, one comes to India to learn that the secret of holiness is here, and having learnt, silence seems the only reverence. When all selfishness, all littleness, all greed, has burnt itself away, and the man has become only the voice of the Chosen Idea of his life, then we learn what Renunciation is, what Devotion is, and again India stands supreme.

But these gifts of temperament would scarcely have been enough without the subtle and immense ideals which are the possession of the people of this country. It is not the Vedas so much as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata that are to-day its Bible, and these epics are known to all. There is indeed a terrible reverse to the medal, for a lofty conception of duty always paralyzes some in proportion as it inspires others, 'but one inevitable result of the constant companionship of Hanuman

and Bhima, of Rama and Yudhisthira, is sublime attainment on the part of many.

And so I lay one flower of love and worship at the feet of the Motherland. May she receive many of her alien-born children as she has received me! May she bestow on them even some little of that undeserved Motherhood and bounty that she has bestowed on me!

Another great characteristic of Indian Society as compared with Western, is the much higher civilisation and refinement of the lower orders. It is difficult for the European mind to recognise this fact under the mask of that grinding poverty which is so apparent here. The occidental conception of social development concerns itself much with labour and with letters, and more or less presupposes a condition of material prosperity. That is to say we are not able to detach the idea of the thing itself from that form of it which we have happened to produce. But if we drive the question of the ultimate significance of civilisation home, we shall all, I think, unite to acknowledge that it lies in a habit of self-restraint, in that which lifts man above the brute, rather in any special series of phenomena. And in these directions the bustee-population of an Indian city is so far ahead of the slum-population of London, Paris, or New York that an impartial critic could not fail to assign the order of age of their social systems correctly without *à priori* information.

Hindu culture is in fact, like a gigantic tree which is constantly embracing a wider and wider area with its roots. Through ages this huge organism has been at work, silently reclaiming more and more of humanity from barbarism. Perhaps each successive stratum won may have been a new caste taken in. Religious notions would seem to be the first great unifying nerves sent out. Then follow, though in what order I cannot guess, various accretions of custom, till by degrees appear the old gentleness, the old self-direction, and the old horror of defilement.

And so, silently, steadily, borne on the age-long stream of tendency to its inevitable goal, proceeds the education of a continent. The immensity of the original task can only be surmised from the time that has already elapsed in its accom-

plishment, and the number of tribes still excluded from the pale. But the value of an image-worshipping, temple-building faith, in a land where the cause of religion is one with that of refinement, must be incalculable. The influence of woman, too, on civilisation, is probably vastly greater in India than in the West. And this because the one woman to whose guidance a man is more or less willing to resign himself is also she whose impress is most indelible,—his mother.

Treating her child as a baby for at least two years, making herself his constant companion whenever he is in the house, cooking for him and watching him eat, and at the day's end telling him stories till he sleeps, it is not easy to overrate the part which the mother and the grandmother play, in the life of the rising generation.

And this influence is redoubled, when the boy marries. In the West

“My son's my son till he gets him a wife :

But my daughter's my daughter all the days of her life.”

The exact contrary is the case in India, where the little daughter-in-law comes home to be moulded and educated by her husband's mother, while the daughter of the house goes forth to receive her training at other hands.

As one looks at modern India, therefore, one feels that in the womanly touch on the individual and on home-life lies the pivotal point of its being. There can be no doubt that to this is due the saturation of the people with their own folklore, and the exact conservatism of religious custom from age to age must surely be traced to the same source. A man may be a constant visitor in a Hindu house without even knowing where the rooms are in which the ladies live. Strength, it has been said, lies in reserve, and those who are here so strictly concealed are perhaps all the more potent for that fact !

It is to women, then,—who have wielded with such power those great impulses of purity, renunciation, and spirituality upon which the India of to-day is built,—it is to these that must be committed those other ideas of strength, freedom, and humanity, which are to prove the legacy of this age to the world.

Without the underlying development strength would be a word of mockery ; it is not to the denationalised that this inspiration can come in its vigour. All the tremendous discipline of

the Hindu woman will be taxed to its utmost, to win and use that expanded education which she will need for this task. But she will be found equal to it all, for she will be answering the cry of her own children,—and is she not an Indian mother?*

THE ESSENCE OF VEDANTA

[VEDANTASARA.]

[1 *Grace*—It is one of the most important factors in the disciple's attainment of Knowledge.

2 *Refutation etc.*—*Adhyârôpa* means erroneously attributing the properties of one thing to another, such as considering Brahman which is not really the material world to be the material world. *Apavâda* is the refutation of this false imputation. The Vedanta while speaking about the origin of the universe, does not really believe in its origin. This origin is only empirically true and admitted to make accommodation for the undeveloped intelligence of the pupil. But when his vision is clarified he is taught to deny even this empirical existence. This denial is called *Apavâda*. These terms are explained in details in subsequent Texts.

3 *Such etc.*—Comp. “यद्वेत्य तेन मोपसीद ततस्त ऊर्द्धं वक्ष्यामि ।” (Chh. Up. 7. 1. 1)—“Please to tell me what you know; afterwards I shall tell you what is beyond.”]

असर्पभूते रज्जौ सर्पारोपवद्वस्तुन्यवस्त्वारोपोऽध्यारोपः । ३२ ।

32. *Adhyârôpa*¹ or false imputation is attributing the properties of the unreal to the real such as considering a rope which is not a snake to be snake.

[1 *Adhyârôpa*—Another word of similar meaning, *Adhyâsa*, has been defined by Sankara as “स्मृतिरूपः परत्र पूर्वदृष्टावभासः”—“The apparent presentation, in the form of remembrance, to consciousness of something previously observed in some other thing.” As for instance, we find the appearance of silver in mother-of-pearl or water in the mirage. The Vedanta Philosophy explains the universe as a result of the false imposition upon Reality of some attributes which do not really belong to It. This appearance of the universe is due to *Mithyâ-jnâna*, ‘false knowledge.’ What is *Mithyâ-jnâna*? It is indescribable. One cannot trace it to any fundamental source, for it vanishes with the awakening of Knowledge. Nor can it be said that it is absolutely unreal because its effect, the universe, is a matter of every-

* Written in June, 1899, on her way to Europe.—Ed.

day experience. This *Mithyâ-jnâna* has been defined in the five following ways by Vedantic philosophers :

(1) “सदसद्विलक्षणत्वं मिथ्यात्वम्” (Padmapadacharya)—*Mithyâtwa* or *Mithyâ-jnâna* is other than what is existent and non-existent.

(2) “ज्ञाननिवर्त्यम् मिथ्यात्वम्” (Prakashatma Yati)—*Mithyâtwa* is that which is refuted by Knowledge.

(3) “प्रतिपन्नोपाधा त्रैकालिकनिषेधप्रतियोगित्वं मिथ्यात्वम्” (Prakashatma Yati)—It means this: *Mithyâtwa* is not altogether non-existence. It comes under cognition when limitation (*upâdhi*) is superimposed upon Absolute Existence (*Sat*). The substratum which is Brahman is *Sat* or Existence. Limitation is superimposed upon It. There was, is or will be no *Mithyâ-jnâna* in the substratum, just as in our illusion of a snake in a rope, the snake is never actually present. But the appearance of snake in the rope is due to illusion at the time of cognition. Therefore *Mithyâ-jnâna* is the negation of the negation of attributes in the Brahman at all times.

(4) “सद्भिन्नरूपत्वं मिथ्यात्वम्” (Anandabodhacharya)—*Mithyâtwa* is what is other than Existence.

(5) “स्वात्यन्ताभावाधिकरण एव प्रतीयमानत्वं मिथ्यात्वं” (Chitsukhacharya)—*Mithyâtwa* is the appearance which is in reality totally absent in the *Adhikarana* or substratum. The phenomena are really absent in the substratum which is Brahman. Ignorance can never inhere in Knowledge.

Thus according to these definitions Brahman is free from *Mithyâtwa* or ignorance at all times. Nor does it inhere in any part of Brahman for Brahman has no parts. He is ever free from ignorance. But we impute to It the limitations of time, space and causality through ignorance and see It transformed to phenomena. This illusion which cannot be explained is timeless and is causing the *Adhyârôpa* or false imposition of unreality upon what is Real.]

वस्तु सच्चिदानन्दमद्वयं ब्रह्म; अज्ञानादिसकल-

जडसमूहोऽवस्तु । ३३ ।

33. Reality¹ is Brahman² which is without³ a second and is Existence,⁴ Consciousness⁵ and Bliss.⁶ Unreality⁷ is nescience⁸ and other material⁹ objects.

[1Reality—The word means Atman or Self which does not undergo any modification at any time.

2 Brahman—It is synonymous with Self.

3 Without etc.—Comp. the scriptural passage, “एकमेवाद्वितीयम्” “It is one without a second.”

The appearance of many is due to the limitations (*उपाधि*) of time, space and causality. There is only one sun but there appear ten suns when it is reflected in the waters of ten pots. There remains only one reflection when nine pots are broken and when the last pot is also

broken, only the real sun shines in the sky. Similarly the one Brahman appears to be many when looked upon through the many limitations of the universe. When all the limitations vanish, the real Brahman shines in Samadhi.

4 *Existence*—Which is never contradicted by time or space. Comp. “सदेव सोम्य इदमग्रं आसीत्”—“O good one, this universe was in the beginning as Existence.” “सत्यं ज्ञानम् अनन्तं ब्रह्म”—“Brahman is Truth (Existence), Knowledge and Infinity. Such a passage of the scripture as “असदेव इदमग्रं आसीत्”—“This universe was in the beginning as non-existence”—refers to the unmanifested state of Brahman when name and form did not evolve.

5 *Consciousness*—Comp. “विज्ञानम् आनन्दं ब्रह्म”—“Brahman is Vijnâna (Consciousness or Intelligence) and Bliss.” Unless the Self is ever-conscious such perception as “I am the knower” could never arise. The apparent consciousness of the phenomenal objects is, in reality, reflected consciousness of Brahman.

6 *Bliss*—Comp. “विज्ञानमानन्दम् ब्रह्म” । Brahman is the most beloved of all things because It is sought after by the sages when they are disgusted with the pleasures of the world.

7 *Unreality*—अवस्तु or unreality means an indescribable state (अनिर्वचनीयम्), i.e., that which is other than existence and non-existence (सदसद्भिन्नत्वम्). This unreality has Brahman for its substratum. Ignorance (अज्ञानं) is not based upon nothingness, for we could not then at all perceive phenomena. Brahman is imagined, though falsely, as Jiva. The agency etc. which we ascribe to Jiva, are really imputations to Brahman through limitations. Therefore ignorance has Brahman for its substratum. In the case of a rope when we mistake it for a snake, the real process of illusion is this: The perception of snake is due to अज्ञानम् or illusion which is based upon चैतन्यं or consciousness that pervades the rope. This perception of snake is not based upon nothingness. Therefore अज्ञानं or ignorance is not a negation but has positive existence for its substratum. Therefore Brahman alone is real and ignorance as well as the entire material phenomena of the world which are its products are only superimpositions upon Brahman.

8 *Nescience*—See notes of the following text.

9 *Material objects*—The objects such as sky, etc. which are the products of अज्ञानं are unreal on account of their being illusory, objects of perception, and endowed with parts, and further because they undergo modifications and depend upon something else for their existence.]

NOTICES OF BOOKS

GODS IN EXILE by J. J. Van der Leeuw. Published by the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras. Price board Re. 1-8, and cloth Rs. 2. Pp. 129.

Based on an awakening of “Ego-consciousness” which came to the author some little time ago.

NIRVANA by G. S. Arundale. Published by the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras. Price board Rs. 2-4 and cloth Rs. 2-12. Pp. 219.

The author says that he had one night an experience of "Nirvana" and "as time passes more and more of Nirvanic consciousness penetrates my being." The present work is an effort to describe the changes and the new outlook that resulted from the Nirvanic perception. The author's "Nirvana", however, must not be understood in either the Hindu sense of Brahma-Nirvana or the commonly accepted meaning of the Buddhistic Nirvana. Nicely got-up and illustrated.

THE MEDIATOR by C. Jinarajadasa. Published by the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras. Price board Re. 1-4 and cloth Re. 1-8. Pp. 95.

A collection of twelve essays, pleasant and profitable-reading, written in the author's characteristic beautiful style. They will benefit also those who are not avowed theosophists.

THE VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY by Sridhar Majumdar, M. A. Published by Surendra Nath Bhattacharya, M.A., Professor of Sanskrit, B. N. College, Bankipur, Behar. Price Rs. 5. Pp. 770+24.

We congratulate Mr. Majumdar on his excellent performance. He intends his book for the common reader and not the learned specially, and we are sure it will fulfil its purpose. The book contains the original Sutras in Sanskrit and English, and their word for word meaning as also explanatory scriptural quotations, all of them having been translated into English. The translation of the original aphorisms have been followed by lucid and brief commentaries mostly based on Nimbâr-kâchârya, but the views of Sankara also have been given in cases of material difference.

The philosophical view of Nimbarkacharya is peculiarly suited to the modern taste. To quote from the foreword of the book, written by the great Vedantic scholar, Kokileswar Sastri of the Calcutta University, "In this school Brahman is regarded as both the Efficient and Material cause of the universe, Brahman is both Nirguna and Saguna, as It is not exhausted in the creation, but also transcends it. The universe is not, according to this view, unreal or illusory but is a true manifestation or Parinama of Brahman.....The universe is both identical with, as well as different from, Brahman, even as a wave or bubble is the same as, and at the same time different from, water. The individual souls are parts of the Supreme Being and are controlled by It. The Emancipation lies in realising the true nature of the Spirit.The individuality (*Jivatva*) of the finite self is not dissolved even in the state of Mukti."

The book is nicely printed and contains a good glossary of Sanskrit terms, and each of the sixteen sections of the book is prefaced by a short sketch of its subject-matter.

THE PYTHAGOREAN WAY OF LIFE by *Hallie Watters*. Published by the *Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras*. Price board Re. 1-4 and cloth Rs. 2. Pp. 70.

It is a brief history of Pythagoras and his philosophical movement and was originally submitted to the Leland Stanford Junior University for the degree of the Master of Arts. In addition to the biographical sketch of the great philosopher, the book contains the "Golden Verses" ascribed to him and lucid commentaries on them by the author. There is also an excellent bibliography at the end. A nice handbook of the Pythagorean movement.

WESTERN CIVILISATION by *Chandra Chakraberty*. Published by *Vijaya Krishna Brothers, 5 Maniktolla Spur, Calcutta*. Price Re. 1-4. Pp. 92.

By Western civilization is meant here the civilization of England, France, Germany, Scandinavia and the U. S. A., and in the five chapters contained in the book, the racial characteristics, culture, capital cities, social behaviour and the future outlook of those countries have been described. The chapters are full of information, but the treatment of the subject is not deep enough. An evaluation of a culture or civilization must be made by other standards than mere material efficiency.

NEWS AND REPORTS

Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore

We have received a detailed report of the work that is being done by the Ramakrishna Ashrama at Mysore. The Ashrama was started about the middle of the year 1925. Within this short period, it has achieved nobly and exerted a noble influence on the local public life. Its activities are various. In addition to the daily puja and bhajana and celebration of important religious festivals and birthdays of Saints and Incarnations, it holds regular classes on Hindu scriptures and maintains a free reading room and library in the Ashrama premises. The Swami in charge also conducts classes in various places in the town and organises public lectures. But that is not all. The Ashrama offers free lodging to students and gives free tuition to many S. S. L. C. and University Entrance students. The boys of the locality have been organised into the Vivekananda Rover Troop and have specialised in various works of service, and there is a *Akhada* in the Ashrama, exclusively prepared and organised by the Scout Troop for physical exercise. There is also a debating society conducted by students.

The Ashrama is thus serving Mysore physically, mentally and spiritually with great credit and efficiency. We do hope it will progress more and more and the public will come forward with all necessary help for the furtherance of its noble and beneficent aim.

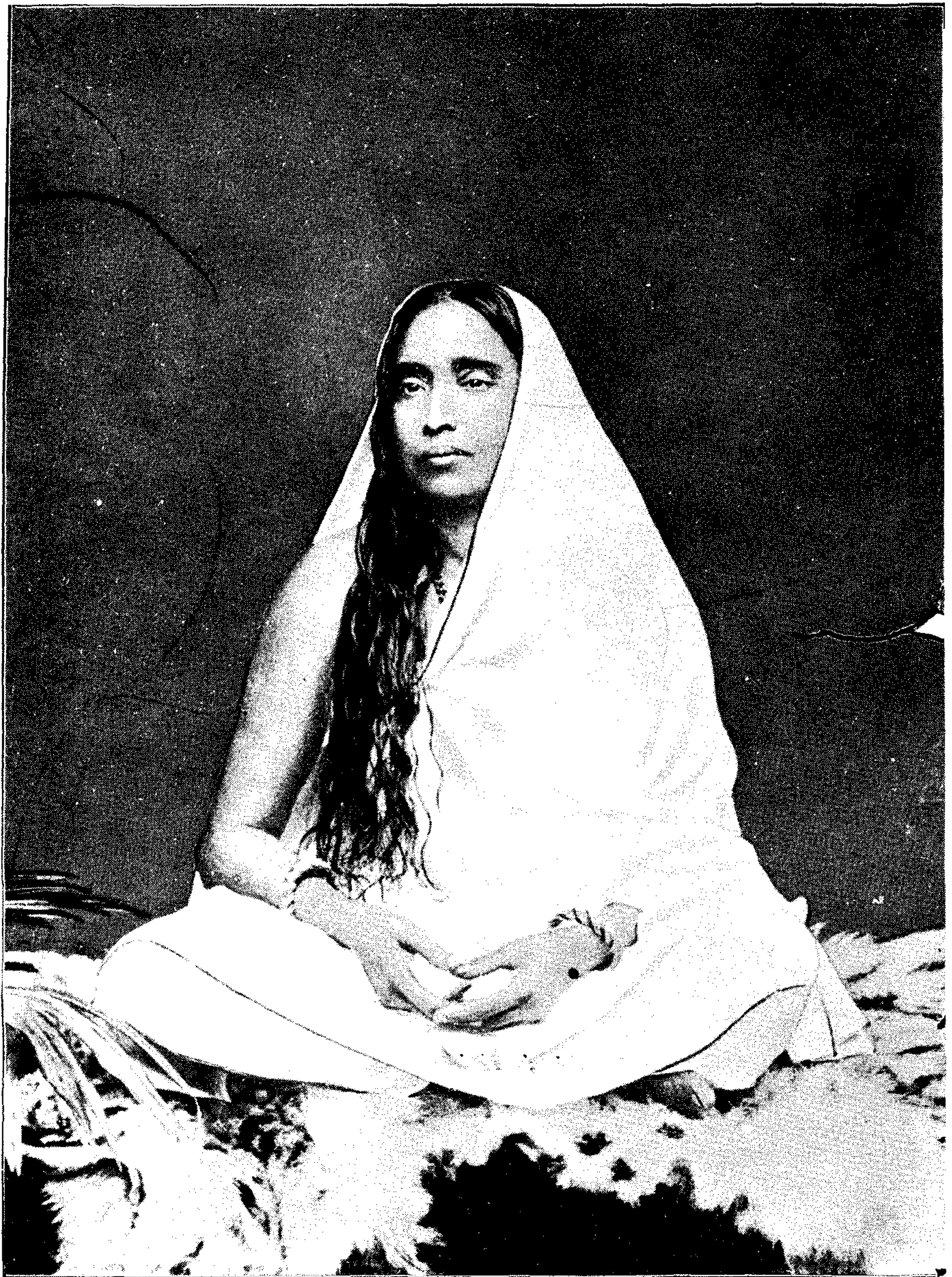
Sri Ramakrishna Math, Delhi

An Ashrama of the Ramakrishna Order was formally opened by Swami Sharvananda on the 4th May at Delhi in a house at 996, Gariston Road. Delhi, the metropolis of India, urgently needed a non-sectarian religious centre, and we are glad to learn that the Ashrama is already attracting a good deal of attention of the local Hindu public. Three classes are held every week by a Swami of the Ashrama in different parts of the city which are all very well attended. We wish this new centre every success and prosperity.

Winter Activities, Boston Vedanta Centre

Since his coming to Boston, Swami Akhilananda has been conducting two Services on Sundays and classes on Gita and Upanishads on Tuesdays and Thursdays respectively. The report of his first Christmas celebration in America* has already been published. On Jan. 26th the Swami represented Hinduism and spoke on "Fundamentals of My Faith" at a religious conference in the Central Church under the auspices of the Fellowship of Faiths. Nearly a thousand people crowded the big auditorium to its utmost capacity. Many people were standing and several were squatting before the pulpit. All the representatives of different religions explained their faiths and expressed beautiful spirit. On February 27th the Swami spoke on "Co-ordination of Life" in the New Thought Forum. The hall of the Forum was filled. Another interesting meeting was organized by the Fellowship of Faiths on the 16th of March, when the Swami was one of the eight representatives and had to speak on "Who is my Neighbor?" in Mount Vernon Church. All these lectures of the Swami were highly appreciated by the audiences.

The Centre celebrated the birthday of Swami Vivekananda on the 25th of January, when Swami Akhilananda cooked several Hindu dishes and served dinner to the friends of the Centre. There was a special devotional Service in the evening. Swami spoke on Swami Vivekananda's contribution to world thought on Sunday, January 30th, the day of the public celebration. The most interesting and inspiring day was the 13th of March when the Centre celebrated the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Paramananda who was then at Boston, conducted the Services. He spoke on the life of Sri Ramakrishna at the morning and on his teaching at the evening Service. His speeches were very impressive. Swami Akhilananda spoke on "His Message of Harmony of Religions" at 3 P.M. Special music was arranged. The picture of Sri Ramakrishna was tastefully decorated with flowers, greens and fruits. The Services were well attended. The Centre celebrated the special day of Sri Ramakrishna's birth on the 5th of March, when a devotional Service was conducted by Swami Akhilananda at 6 P.M. After the dinner the Swami gave an intimate talk on the religious practices of Sri Ramakrishna.



THE HOLY MOTHER