

Prabuddha Bharata

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य वरान्निवाधत ।

Katha Upa. I. iii. 14.

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

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

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RAJA YOGA

BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

The following notes as also those which will be published in our future issues, are of some class talks which the Swami gave to an intimate audience in the home of Mrs. Sara C. Bull, a devoted American disciple. These were preserved by her for her personal use and were finally printed in 1913 for private circulation among friends. These are now being presented to the public for the first time. Readers will find in them many valuable hints of practical spirituality.—*Editor.*

Raja Yoga is as much a science as any in the world. It is an analysis of the mind, gathering the facts of the supersensuous world, and so building up the spiritual world. All the great spiritual teachers the world has known said, "I see and I know." Jesus, Paul and Peter all claimed actual perception of the spiritual truths they taught.

This perception is obtained by Yōga.

Neither memory nor consciousness can be the limitation of existence. There is a superconscious state; both it and the unconscious state are sensationless, but with a vast difference between them,—the difference between ignorance and knowledge. Present Yoga as an appeal to reason, as a science.

Concentration of the mind is the source of all knowledge.

Yoga teaches us to make matter our slave, as it ought to be. Yoga means *yoke*, to join, that is, to join the soul of man with the Supreme Soul.

Mind acts in and under consciousness. What we call consciousness is only one link in the infinite chain that is our nature.

This "I" of ours covers just a little consciousness and a vast amount of unconsciousness, while over it, and mostly unknown to it, is the superconscious plane.

Through faithful practice, layer after layer of mind opens before us, and each reveals new facts to us. New worlds are as it were created before us and new powers are put into our hands ; but we must not stop by the way, or allow ourselves to be dazzled by these "beads of glass" when the mine of diamonds lies before us.

God alone is our goal ; failing to reach God, we die.

Three things are necessary to the student who wishes to succeed.

First. Give up all ideas of enjoyment in this world and the next, care only for God and Truth.

Second. Intense desire to know truth and God. Be eager for them, long for them, as a drowning man longs for breath.

Third. The six trainings: First—Restraining the mind from going outward. Second—Turning the mind inward, fastening it to one idea. Third—Suffering everything without murmuring. Fourth—Want only God, take nothing else ; let not seeming cheat you any longer. Turn from all and seek only God. Fifth—Take the subject before you and think it out ; never leave it. Do not count time. We are to know truth, not for enjoyment ; leave that to brutes who enjoy as we never can. Man is a thinking being and must struggle on until he conquers death, until he sees the light. He must not spend himself in vain talking that bears no fruit. Worship of society and popular opinion is idolatry. Soul has no sex, no country, no place, no time. Sixth—Think constantly of your real nature. Get rid of superstition. Do not hypnotize yourself into a belief in your own inferiority ; tell yourself day and night what you really are until you realize, actually realize, your oneness with God.

Without these disciplines, no results can be gained.

We can be conscious of the Absolute, but we can never

express it. The moment we try to express it, we limit it and it ceases to be absolute.

We have to go beyond sense limit and transcend even reason, and we have the power to do this.

RECONSTRUCTING INDIA

BY THE EDITOR

It is undeniable that there has been a general awakening of our countrymen to the consciousness of the urgent necessity of national service. It is felt that if India is to be saved as an integral nation, high in honour and utility, we must lift up the nation from its present degradation. The policy of drift will not do. Enthusiasm we have to a certain degree, though much more and a more sustained variety of it is still wanted. *What is urgently needed is a clear understanding by our workers of India as a whole.* There are many who are content with mere political work. There are others who are busy with the economic aspect only. Others are given to education, others again to mere spiritual service. It is true that all these are useful works and are serving to bring about national rehabilitation ; and also that decentralisation in national work is necessary. But it is not less true that there should be a co-ordination of the different sides of the work, and that all workers, especially the leaders, should have a clear idea of India as a synthetic whole, of the interrelations of its various aspects and especially of India's future. We must learn to infer what the future of India and the direction of its development will be. It is the vision of the future that can truly guide our present activity and tell us which tendencies are to be curbed and which to be developed, and shed light in the darkest hours of despair. We shall try, according to our light, to envisage the future and point out its direction, and suggest ways and means in general terms.

If India is to rise as a nation, a united whole, the very first necessity is the unity of the different warring communities. That unity can be brought about by two means : by pacts, that is to say, on political and contractual basis ; or by evolving a unitary synthetic consciousness among all races and creeds, which of course can only be spiritual. The first method, though it will be necessary to a certain degree, especially in the

material affairs of the nation, concerns, in our opinion, only a fraction of the main problem. No nation can stand on mere pacts. There must be an inner consciousness of a common ideal, common struggle and common feeling among the different constituents of the nation. That indeed is true nationhood. What can be the power behind this unity of purpose and striving? Many suggest that the consciousness of the common mother-country or the common state should be that motive power. We think that this is quite a flimsy basis and can scarcely supply the power and inspiration required to build up the common nationhood. We must specially remember that the consciousness of the supreme and ultimate reality of the spiritual quest is so strong among all sections of the Indian people that patriotism will scarcely be able to supplant it in their mind. The only possible course therefore is to make the spiritual quest itself the motive power of Indian nationalism. The ideal and the inspiration of all our national struggles should be the realisation of spirituality, whatever the form the striving may take. All national functions should be made to contribute to this realisation as far as possible, for, of course there are certain collective functions which can but be predominantly material in form and purpose, such as national defence, expansion of commerce, diplomacy, etc.

How to bring about this spiritual unity? Fortunately, every community in India already believes in the spiritual ideal of life. What is wanted is the intensification of this belief and the removal of the fanciful bars that now needlessly separate the different communities and do not allow them to feel the unity of their ideal and collective purpose and of their struggles, individual and collective. Who will undertake the clearance of these imaginary barriers? Of course all communities can and must do and are actually doing it to a certain degree. But it can be fairly stated that of all races and creeds in India and abroad, Hinduism is most suited and able to take up this work. Hinduism is most synthetic in genius and outlook and most intensely spiritual. Its history and aptitude both fit it to take up leadership in founding the basis of Indian nationhood. The idea of the harmony of religions has to be spread broadcast, showing the equal efficacy and validity of all religions and religious cultures and the stupidity of religious antagonism. This will produce a mental change in the communities and bring them closer. But mere mental change is not enough. Some change in the externals is also necessary. What is wanted is a unitary body, one both in spirit and form.

Not mere co-ordination, but synthesis is what is wanted. To that end, we must conceive an all-India society of which all the different races and creeds will form parts. That is to say, we want not merely spiritual synthesis, but also social synthesis. In this Hinduism alone can be useful. Hinduism is ready to admit Christian, Muhammadan or Zoroastrian religious ideals as components of herself. In fact all these ideals already exist in Hinduism in one form or another. New forms of spiritual realisation also Hinduism is ready to assimilate. So also the different scriptures. No other religion possesses the assimilative genius in the same measure as Hinduism. In fact all except Hinduism are dogmatic and fixed in their conception of religious ideals. So Hinduism must assimilate other religions, not by destroying, but by making them component parts of itself. This will furnish the basis of Indian unity and even world unity. The Hindu religious outlook admitting the truth and efficacy of all religions, will furnish the spiritual basis of the synthesis ; the Vedanta philosophy synthesising all different religious ideals into a system, will furnish the intellectual basis ; and the institution of caste, allowing social and cultural autonomy to the different constituent races and communities, will furnish the social basis.

We must not forget, however, that Hinduism in the present ultra-conservative mood, is scarcely fitted to undertake and accomplish this great task. Before it can assimilate other races and creeds, it itself must become liberal and resume its historical function and elasticity. We have shown in some of our previous articles that such assimilation of new elements is nothing new with Hinduism. Hinduism has done this time and again ; and had it not been for the interposition of the British rule, the work of assimilating Muhammadanism would have been far advanced by this time. The advent of the Christian power has added only one more element to the task of Hinduism. The disruption of the Mughal empire and the establishment of a new sovereignty paralysed the collective functioning of Hinduism for a time. Hinduism has waked up again and resumed its ancient function, the assimilation of new races and creeds and cultures. What is the assimilative method of Hinduism ? This is nothing but the enunciation of Hinduism as the fundamentals of spiritual life. It is by emphasising the essentials of spirituality, *in profession as well as practice*, that Hinduism becomes attractive and assimilative. We have to emphasise the essentials again and enunciate Hinduism as it really is, that is, as basic principles of all religious ideals and

methods ; which means that we must minimise ritualism. In *practice* also, the essentials of spirituality must find clearer and more direct expression.

We must first unify Hinduism. The ritualistic differences that divide the different sects have to be reduced to the shortest limit possible. The different sectarian scriptures have to be synthesised. We know how Swami Vivekananda discovered the common bases of Hinduism and preached the unity of the different Hindu philosophies. He thereby indicated the way towards Hindu synthesis. He said that in one, the most essential respect, all the different Hindu sects are one ;—it is in the conception of the Atman. Amidst all the different ways of expressing it, there is the common idea that the goal is that realisation in which one finds oneself endowed with perfection, infinitude and all blessed qualities. The Advaita philosophy, of course, enunciates the nature of the Atman in the most logical fashion. But in spite of formal differences, all the various sects substantially agree. So we must minimise ritualism, feel the unity of the different sectarian scriptures, and last of all, preach the glory of the Atman. This last item, we shall see later on, has great significance and importance.

The self-assertion of Hinduism as essentials of spirituality will react on two planes. It will, on the one hand, assimilate alien cultures and religious ideals, and on the other, produce internal social liberalism and assimilate alien social units. When the Hindu outlook has freed itself of narrownesses, it will discover a close similarity between its own spiritual ideals and those of other races and nations. Hinduism will also become bold and will not seek to merely protect itself with crude devices of "don't-touch-ism." It will clear off those accretions that are obstructing the free flow of its life. It will also become socially adventurous ; it will not fear to shake off its internal weaknesses ; it will at once promote many castes to higher social positions for which they are fit and insistent. It will do away with what Swami Vivekananda used to call 'kitchen religion' ; and will remove the innumerable social barriers that have weakened the society and is obstructing the growth of unity in the everyday practical life. It will also easily allow new races to find admission into its social fold.

This, in our opinion, is the only possible way to achieve real national unity. We are aware that this will be a slow process. Political nationality will be quicker to achieve. But political nationalism is only the surface of that real nationhood which we have in view. Even political workers must not forget

this. They must remember that what Indian history is aiming at is not mere political nationality, the establishment of a mere state in India by means of pacts and compromises, but a solid, real, spiritual nationality ; and that the realisation of this nationhood is possible only through the reawakening of Hinduism as an all-India spiritual and cultural synthesis and through assimilation by it of the outlying races, creeds and cultures.

The second problem that faces India is how to accumulate such amount of strength as will succeed in achieving all the political, social, industrial, educational, cultural and spiritual progress that is needed to make India stand the onslaughts of foreign peoples and grow into the greatest and most prosperous of nations. Strength, infinite strength is wanted to achieve all this. No, India will not remain a hermit nation ; she never was and never will be. India's ideal is all-round development. India shall be politically, industrially, socially, intellectually, culturally and spiritually great, as great as the greatest of nations. India does not lack means and materials. Which land is so endowed with every facility as India? What is wanted therefore is an upheaval of tremendous *rajasic* activity. Unfortunately we are so placed that our beginning must be through a call on the power of the spirit. When other, external, sources of power have gone dry, our only resource is to invoke that which is the repository of all strength, the spirit, the Atman. It is by appealing to the infinite potentiality of the spirit that we shall succeed in getting the power requisite for the above-mentioned purposes. Therefore we must appeal to the Atman. We must go from door to door and tell all men and women, high and low, that they have infinite strength lying within them, and that they must call it forth and apply it to their daily life. They must be filled with the idea of the infinite power of the spirit that they may overcome all fear of obstructions and may not give way to despair. This is the main way in which the nation can be endowed with requisite strength to fight its way on ; and this will bring back the lost prosperity to the land.

We are inclined to believe that the next hundred years in India will be a period of tremendous *rajasic* activity. India is bound to be industrialised and will most possibly follow the West in this respect. Education will be wide-spread. Social cohesion will greatly increase, and there will be a mighty growth of military power, for India's geographical position is such that it can scarcely save itself from another fall without military

greatness. These changes will undoubtedly bring great material happiness to the nation. But there is also the fear of a danger, that of eventual neglect and rejection of India's eternal spiritual culture. But of course there are also some safeguards. First of all, *much depends on the motive power of the upheaval*. If it be predominantly political or industrial, as in Japan, the degradation of the spiritual ideal is inevitable. If, however, the national awakening is brought about through spiritual resurgence, by the awakening of Hinduism through spiritual means and by the evoking of power through preaching the Divinity of the human soul, *the upheaval of rajasic activity is bound to be, to some extent, idealistic in nature and content, and lead, when material prosperity has been gained, to pure spiritual heights*. Secondly, the national workers may be expected to be guided more and more by the spirit of Karma Yoga. This also will have a restraining effect. Thirdly, there is that in India's atmosphere and tradition, which will not allow India even in the heyday of material prosperity to forget its divine tendencies and mission. This is a great hope indeed. But these indirect and passive safeguards are not enough to keep India faithful to its eternal ideals. The future Indian nation is bound to be democratic in outlook ; and when prosperity and opportunity for material aggrandisement will come, the masses may probably follow in the wake of the West and enact the policy of Japan. And also unfortunately the Brahman-Non-Brahman quarrels and the rigours of untouchability which are so slow in yielding to sanity, are embittering the minds of the lower classes who will naturally have a strong and determining voice in the future state, and they may, unless they are assuaged in the mean time, vent their bitterness in an antagonism to spiritual ideals generally associated with the higher castes.

For all these reasons, it is necessary that from the very start there should be also a strengthening of the direct safeguard which is nothing but holding the spiritual ideal pure and bright before the rising and growing nation. That is to say, there must be a section of the people who would essentially dedicate themselves to the spiritual ideal and will at the same time embody the best aspirations of the nation. Other-worldly spirituality will fail to attract the homage of the nation and become its guide at this juncture of its history. For this, therefore, there should not only be a large number of monks, spiritual, learned, cultured and active in the spirit of Karma Yoga and serviceful to the nation in every respect, but also a large

number of householders who would be equally spiritual and serviceful as the monks. They will guide the national strivings in the proper direction and save them from the dangers of materialism.

It is our belief that after this century of rajasic activity and achievement, the Indian nation will be filled with a predominance of *sattva*, spiritual strength, calmness and illumination. By that time, it is hoped, the other parts of the world also will come to realise the futility and stupidity of material aggrandisement and remodel individual and collective life on spiritual foundations. India then will be able to realise and settle down to a more peaceful social economy and political activity. Till other parts of the world have risen to the spiritual plane, India cannot live an entirely spiritual life, much though it is desirable. *It is therefore the further duty of India to instruct the world in the spiritual ways, for her own sake, if not for theirs, and help them to realise a nobler conception of life.*

We have so far discussed the *spirit* of the future development of India. But mere spirit is not enough in this world, though it is no doubt essential. It is true that when the spirit wakes up, it finds suitable forms for itself. But the wastage of experiment and repeated rejection which precedes the final discovery of the suitable form, is often very great and entails great loss of power and time. National workers therefore must also give earnest attention to the *forms* which the rising spirit of the nation should be given. Unsuitable forms often strangle the spirit and obstruct its manifestation. India therefore must discover most suitable forms for the renascent Indian spirit.

In our opinion, Swami Vivekananda has already given us the forms which the future nation should take. This great prophet of Indian nationalism has not only bequeathed to the nation knowledge and strength but also the forms in and through which they are to work out the destiny of India. Swamiji once remarked that renunciation and service are the two national ideals of India, and India being intensified in those channels, the rest will take care of itself. Renunciation stands for the goal of the nation, the pure spiritual illumination, and service for the methods, especially Karma Yoga, by which the goal is to be attained. All activity is to be conceived as service of the Divine in man. If that is so, the forms of the ideal and the method become at once determined. The one is to be monasticism and the other is to be worship in work, or as we say, *Math* and *Mission*. We must explain the

terms before our meaning can become clear. *Math* stands predominantly for spiritual forms proper, outside the pale of society, devoting itself essentially to spiritual and intellectual culture. But it does not stand aloof from the society, unconcerned with its needs and aspirations. Remaining outside, it yet mixes in the affairs of society in the spirit of pure service, attending to its physical, mental and spiritual needs and teaching it to guide its daily life and individual and collective activities in fealty to and inspired by the ultimate spiritual ideal. When the Math thus concerns itself with the life of society, it becomes the *Mission*, and then it co-operates with the members of society to realise society's ideals and fulfil its wants. Of course in the Mission the members of the Math take a leading and guiding, but not dominating, part, for they often happen to embody the ideal in a greater degree and do social services in a truer spirit. It will be admitted that so far as the representation and realisation of the ultimate national ideal goes, monasticism is its highest and clearest expression. We therefore think that the Indian nation, in the final realisation of its goal, cannot do better than advocate the monastic form. What is to be the form of the collective activities of those who do not bid for the highest goal, who are yet on the way and in the world? This, we think, can be nothing better than the Mission. Suppose every group of villages were to have a Math where would live those who are devoted to the practice of the highest ideal; and along with the Math there were to be an Association, of which all men and women of the villages and the Math were members, devoting itself to the promotion of every good of the villages, educational, sanitary, medical, industrial, economical, social, cultural and spiritual, fulfilling those functions through an elected executive. This Association would be a Mission centre. The executive body being under the guidance of the Math and inspired by it, will fulfil its function from a true spiritual motive. It may for convenience's sake have sub-committees looking after the different functions of the community. But through this Association, there will be a fruitful co-ordination of the entire social life; and *what is more important, every work will be done in the spirit of worshipful service which the connection with and the guidance by the Math will create and maintain.* This will be, we think, the future organisation of our rural and urban communities,—all social service, in order to be truly performed, affiliated to the pure spiritual principle. Thus there can be any amount of rajasic activity for achieving material

good,—its direct and intimate relationship with the spiritual ideal will carefully restrain its forward step from straying away from the true path. If the whole country were to be dotted over with such Maths and Missions, will not India have regained both its spirit and form?

The object of the Ramakrishna Order is nothing short of this achievement. It wants to honeycomb India with its monastic and service centres. The ideal of its centres of service is the enrolment of every man and woman, of every caste, creed and race, Hindu, Muhammadan and Christian, as its member, and the performance of *all* services, social, economical, educational, industrial, sanitary, medical, intellectual, cultural and spiritual, through the agency of the centres, so that the whole community consisting of the different credal, racial or caste groups may be organised into real unity, stimulated and sustained by India's spiritual ideal. We do believe that national striving cannot do better than help the establishment of such centres. Our use of the words *Math* and *Mission* must not be understood to mean that we want all such centres to be under the guidance of *our* own Order. What we intend is that the Math and Mission centres, as conceived by Swami Vivekananda, offer most suitable models for national organisation. Let there be many such organisations all over India, under any guidance ; only let them be faithful to the Ideal in profession and practice, and let the work be done in the spirit indicated above ; that is enough. In many places organisational work is being undertaken ; and we are happy to note that similar Ashramas and service associations are being started by other agencies than ourselves. This is a movement in the right direction. Let us hope greater advance will be made and much more rapidly.*

REMINISCENCES OF THE HOLY MOTHER

FROM THE DIARY OF A LADY DISCIPLE

(Continued from the January issue)

Then for many days, in the pressure of school duties, I could not visit the Holy Mother. When at last I went, she received me with great affection. Bhudev, Mother's nephew, was reading from the *Mahabharata* ; but he was very young

* *Erratum* : *Prabuddha Bharata*, February, Page 75, Footnote, read 1927 for 1917.—*Ed.*

and was halting in his reading. It was nearing dusk ; so Mother asked him to transfer the book to me that I could finish the chapter quickly, after which Mother could go to other duties. I had never read before Mother,—shyly I went through the reading. Mother saluted the book, and we all repaired to the shrine to attend the evening service. Mother sat down to her *japa*.

After *japa*, she bowed before the Master and distributed *prasada* to all. Then talk began and Mother said : “One must always work. Work keeps both body and mind sound. While I lived at Jayrambati, I worked day and night. Never would I go to neighbours’ ; for if I went, they would say, ‘Alas, Shyama’s daughter has been married to a mad man.’ I would not visit anywhere lest I had to listen to these things. Once at Jayrambati I fell seriously ill, and I could not be cured. At last I went to the temple of Mother Simhavâhini and remained prostrating and praying at the door. This cured me. . . . ”

There was a small field in front of the Udbodhan office, where resided some poor families hailing from different provinces of India. They all lived by labour. Among the men was one who lived with a concubine. She had fallen ill. Mother referred to this and observed : “How he is nursing her ! I have never seen the like of it. This indeed is serving ! This indeed is love !”

One of the women from the field came to Mother with her ailing child to beg Mother’s blessings. Mother blessed the child, saying, “He will get well,” and gave some grapes and pomegranates for the child, after they had been offered to the Master. The woman went back happy after repeatedly saluting the Mother.

The 28th *Magha*, 1318. As I sat after saluting the Mother, she said sorrowfully : “Girish Babu* passed away four days ago. They came to-day to take me to his place. But how could I have the heart to go there now that he is no more ? How deep was his faith and devotion ! Have you heard that story of Girish Ghosh ?—He asked the Master that he (Master) should be born as his son, to which the Master replied, ‘I do not care a straw for being born as your son.’ But shortly after the Master’s passing, a son was born to Girish, and the child did not

* Girish Chandra Ghosh, one of the prominent householder disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, was a great playwright and actor of Bengal. Sri Ramakrishna highly praised his faith and devotion.

·speak for four years, expressing himself only by gestures. Girish and his family served him as the Master himself. They arranged for everything separate for him,—glasses, dishes, clothes, etc. which none else were allowed to use. Girish used to say that the Master himself had been born as his son. Who can tell?—the prayers of a devotee are indeed powerful. One day when he came to my place with the child, the child became restless to see me, pulled at every one and pointed upwards to where I lived. At first he was not understood, but afterwards he was brought upstairs to me. Such a small child, but he made a deep bow at my feet, and going downstairs began to pull at Girish to bring him to me. Girish began to cry aloud, saying, ‘Oh, how can I go to see Mother,—I am a great sinner.’ But the child would not give in. Then Girish came trembling upstairs, with tears flowing from his eyes and the child in his arms. He prostrated before me and said, ‘Mother, this child has made it possible for me to see your blessed feet.’ The child died when four years old.

“Before this incident, Girish and his wife had one day got upon the roof of their house. I was also at that time walking on the terraced roof of Balaram Babu’s house. But I did not notice that I was visible to them. Afterwards I learnt from his wife that she had told Girish about my presence there, on learning which he had turned away from my direction and replied, ‘No, no, mine are sinful eyes,—I will not look at Mother in this secret way,’ and had gone below.”

1st *Ashada*, 1319. In the afternoon when I went to Mother, I found her sitting with a number of lady devotees, some of whom were known to me, and talking smilingly with them. Seeing me she said, “You are come! come, mother, sit down.” I had a copy of *Nivedita* brought from the office downstairs, with the intention of reading out a few passages from it to Mother. Seeing the book, Mother asked, “What is this book?” “*Nivedita*,” I replied. “Read out a little,” said Mother, “let me hear. One copy of it has been presented to me also, but I have not yet had it read out to me.” Mother and all present listened intently as I read and all eyes glistened and tears flowed from Mother’s eyes when I read the passage which described Sister Nivedita’s devotion. Mother said: “How wonderful was the devotion of Nivedita! In her eagerness she would not know what she would do for me. When she came at nights to see me, she would screen the lamp of my room that its light might not hurt my eyes. She would

bow at my feet and take the dust from them* with a handkerchief with great care and devotion,—it seemed as if she was afraid even to touch my feet.” So saying, Mother became silent, absorbed in the thought of Nivedita. One of the ladies said: “It is a great misfortune to India that she passed away so young.” “She was indeed of India herself,” remarked another. “She herself would say so. On Saraswati Puja days, she would put on the *Homa* mark on her forehead and walk barefooted.”† Even after the reading was over, Mother grieved for her for sometime and said at last: “Do you know, mother, one who is a good soul, is mourned by the Great Soul (the inner self) himself.”

Then came the afternoon service in the shrine, and Mother distributed *prasada* to all.

One of the ladies said: “Mother, I have five daughters. None of them has been married yet. This has made me anxious.” Mother replied: “Why are you anxious if they have not been married? Send them to the Nivedita School. They will be educated and live happily.” At this another lady said to the anxious mother: “If you have faith in Mother, do what she has said,—this will surely be to their good. Since Mother has said so, why should you fear?” But the lady did not seem to appreciate the advice.

Some one said: “Now-a-days, bridegrooms are hard to get. Many young men now refuse to marry.” “The boys are growing in wisdom,” returned Mother, “they are coming to feel that the world is transient. The less they are attached to the world, the better.”

(To be continued)

WOMAN IN MODERN INDIA

BY SISTER NIVEDITA

The saying that Indian regeneration will come through Indian women is growing hackneyed. The words are found on the lips of many who have not troubled to think clearly what they mean. The fact is, by the education of women we mean to-day her civilisation. The problem of the age, for India, as we have constantly insisted, is to supersede the family, as a motive, and even as a form of consciousness, by the civitas,

* This is the traditional Hindu way of showing profound respect.

† As orthodox Hindus do.

the civic and national unity. This cannot be done by men, as men, alone. It is still more necessary that it should be done by women. In all questions of the moral and personal life, woman is a far greater factor than man. In her care lies the synthesis of life. As she determines the character of the home, out of which man goes forth to his day's labour, so also it is her conception of what life as a whole should be that dominates and creates the world. Man is only a clever child ; in woman's care and keeping is the well of life. It follows that while man must always take the lead in special departments of activity it is at the same time of the highest importance that the general scheme of life should be understood by the women of a community, and should not be such as to shock and outrage their sense of right. We all know how important it is to individual happiness that men and women should be in substantial accord, and we can well believe that if a community is to put forth its utmost energy in any given direction, it will be necessary that its men and its women should be combined in the one great effort.

This is our position to-day. We are determined to initiate new developments. For this, it is essential that we make our own material, and of all our material, none is in this sense so important as the women. A great deal of our nationalising energy, therefore, has to be given, during the coming years, to making the women of our families more devoted to the country than they are even to their fathers, husbands and brothers, and qualified to judge still better what will serve the welfare of the nation, than as to that of the family. This is all, the essence of the whole matter. It amounts to the reception of a new idea, for our women have not been accustomed to think much of larger areas than the village at utmost. The impingement of new ideas creates enormous energy. It is likely, therefore, that those who are really touched, will show the fact at once, by an eagerness to be taught reading and writing. It is obvious that if they can once read they will be in a position to feed their own national sense for themselves. But many will be too old, or will not have the faculty, to master the new methods of knowledge. Not on this account are any to be passed by. Reading and writing are not in themselves education. The power to use them well is vastly more important than the things themselves. A woman in whom the great compassion is awakened, a woman who understands the national history, a woman who has made some of the great *tirthas* and has a notion of what her country looks like, is much more truly and deeply educated than one who has merely read much. "Awake! Awake!" means, first

of all, awake to the great multiform consciousness, let everything that is Indian breathe and work through you. Identify yourself, in thought, day by day, with all sorts of strange beings and strange interests, recognising that they, with you, possess equally the common home. Dedicate some part of every puja, to this thought of the Mother who is Swadesh. Lay a few flowers before Her, pour out a little water in Her name. Think of Her children, your own kindred, who are one in need. Let your hearts go out in infinite pity. "Mother and Motherland," says the proverb, "is better than Swarga!" Ah, the sorrow for those who are ahungered, and cannot feel this joy! "Awake! Awake!" Rise up and get ye knowledge, womanhood of India! womanhood of Bengal! Learn of your own past. Only so can you realise your future. Learn of your country and her needs. Only by this can you train your judgment, your will and power of choice. Only by growing knowledge can the heart be enriched, and thought become clearer. "Awake! Awake!" Be free and work. Let selfishness guide the hand, and love inspire the will. So shall no sacrifice be defeated, and every movement shall avail. No bondage shall hinder those who have risen to this height. No ignorance shall stand. No vastness of the task before them shall dismay. "Bande Mataram." All the problems of to-day have to be attacked on a national scale. The problem of problems is the achievement of nationality itself. But in this matter of the education of women, it will be well if our men can remember exactly what part of the task is its core and essence. Let us talk with our womankind about the affairs of the country. Let us appeal constantly to the growing judgment and enthusiasm. Let us create those qualities in them, if they do not already exist, by believing steadfastly in the Atman who is within all. The doctrine of the divinity of the human soul has no meaning whatever if it is not this, that each one of us, man or woman, high or low, learned or ignorant, is in spirit the Pure, the Free, the All-wise, and that the one help we can render another is to evoke this realisation in its fulness.

Daily the life of our Indian womanhood is shrinking. Day by day, their scope is being lessened. Unless we can capture for them the new world of expression, they will steadily continue to lose more and more of the world they had. If Sita and Savitry are ever to be born of Indian mothers, we must create new types for them, suited to the requirements of the modern age. Gandhari must live again, with new names to think of, but all the ancient faith and courage, steadfastness and sacrifice.

Damayanti must return, and Draupadi, fit wife for Yudhishthira, king of justice. Awake! Awake! greatness of Indian womanhood must be the cry of Indian men.

VEDANTA AND CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

BY MADELINE R. HARDING

It is said that a rolling stone gathers no moss. This may be true in many directions in material things but the contrary in spiritual ; for it is those who are prepared to follow Truth wherever and however expressed who become rich in spiritual experience and understanding, and who at last see in all religions and all creeds a part of the One Great Whole.

This realisation, however, comes only to those whose minds are set on assimilating whatsoever is good, whatsoever is Truth, wherever found, and not to those who are out for so-called investigation.

Such a realisation came to Sri Ramakrishna, when intent on discovering the truths contained in Christianity he made himself receptive to Christian thought and ideals and was rewarded with a vision of Jesus, a vision so vivid that he exclaimed, "This is the Christ Who poured out His heart's blood for the redemption of mankind and suffered a sea of agony for their sake. It is none else than that Master-Yogin in eternal union with Godhead—Jesus the embodiment of Love."

In the same way he identified himself with other religions and in the words of Swami Vivekananda, "To his astonishment found that, when faithfully carried out, these devotional methods led him to the same goal he had already attained. He came to know that the goal of every religion is the same, the difference being largely in method."

The quest of the Eternal seems ever to need some form of expression, some particular path to tread to the goal of realisation, to the Absolute Being, the Alpha and Omega, but as the Bhagavad Gita so beautifully expresses it—

"However men approach Me, even so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine."

Yet, no doubt, all the sects and schools of thought are based on one great fundamental Truth whether we speak of the Supreme Being, the All-pervading Spirit, the Absolute, Eölin, Ormazd, Ahura Mazda, the Architect of the Universe. And

it is well to realise our indebtedness to that one all-embracing fundamental Truth.

Sir Oliver Lodge said recently in relation to Science—

“It is necessary to try to find an explanation, a theory, to promote an understanding of the facts, because disjointed facts, like beads that are not threaded upon a string, are very difficult to absorb and deal with. They cannot be called Science. Science means ordered knowledge. It is our business to thread the beads on a string. If we thread them on a feeble string it may break, but a weak string is better than none at all; it gives some kind of order.”

And just so it would seem there must needs be some great and all-embracing understanding of God which is broad enough to encircle all smaller conceptions made up of the varied thoughts and expressions of nations and peoples; some great and unifying conception of the Absolute to which they all converge, some in lesser and some in greater degree.

We speak of dogma, of creed, of orthodoxy, of tenets, of faith and of our own particular belief, but how seldom is human thought broad enough to recognise in each a part of the whole, a part of revelation which has come to an individual or a body of men which appeals to them, and to which they conform their religious life. The trouble is that each thinks that the whole of Truth has been specially revealed to him or his sect, in fact all that is necessary, as well as essential, for the so-called salvation of mankind. In this direction the ordinary Western mind is very limited, seldom admitting the boundlessness, the infiniteness of Truth, as varied as the minds of men who receive it.

When one comes in contact with different phases of religious thought one sometimes wonders where this or that conception had its birthplace. Often we know the immediate parents, so to speak, but how seldom we go back and endeavour to trace the long line of descent. All are not fortunate enough to have come in contact with Indian literature, but when one begins such a study one recognises first one little gem and then another which have been, as it were, detached from the string and which we have known as such and such a denomination or sect, and on this one gem we find some church has been found. And just as the Bhagavad Gita declares with relation to the different paths of approach to the Infinite—“All this is threaded on Me, as rows of pearls on a string,” so can the Vedanta be called the String to which the many and varied expressions of Truth belong.

This is clearly seen in the so-called orthodox religions of the West, and it is particularly interesting to trace in some of the newer movements of the West their close identification with the Vedanta.

In this little article we will trace a few of the similarities in the teachings of the Vedanta and a comparatively modern expression of some of its truths known as Christian Science. Other movements may be dealt with in future articles.

During comparatively recent years certain minds have outgrown the limitations of Western orthodoxy and thousands have sought to know God by other and newer means. They have wanted proof that God is and that He has a part in the lives of men and women to-day. They crave for a demonstrable understanding, not merely faith in events and happenings of centuries past. To many, Christian Science has given this satisfaction.

Without going into all the details around which controversy has waged incessantly as to whence came the conception, suffice it to say that in the year 1875 a book was published entitled "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, by Mary Baker Eddy", and its teachings were called "Christian Science".

The term Christian Science which Mrs. Eddy used, does not appear to have been original, but the supporters of this faith ever close their eyes to facts, and it is sufficient for them that the author says, "In the year 1866 I discovered the Christ Science or Divine Laws of Life, Truth and Love, and I named my discovery 'Christian Science' ". We find in "The Quimby Manuscripts" however,—a book which was published two or three years ago when it became almost impossible to longer suppress facts, and with a view to quelling the controversy as to Mrs. Eddy's claim to be the discoverer—that Dr. Quimby applied the term Christ Science, Divine Science, Science of Health to his method of healing and that as far back as 1863 he used the actual term *Christian Science*.

We need not here go into all the wonderful teaching of Dr. Quimby as to Reality and Unreality on which this science was based, nor quote letters still extant, written by Mrs. Eddy acknowledging her indebtedness to Dr. Quimby. Our desire now is to show the relation of Christian Science to the Vedanta. To do this fully a book might be written, therefore we propose to take only a few of the outstanding features of similarity.

The term "Key to the Scriptures" is not altogether correct; the key does not fit in every instance. It unlocks the

door to a great deal which appears difficult in the Christian Bible, but also a great deal has to be taken for granted, or because Mrs. Eddy says so, and we have to spiritualise much which is not intended to be other than material. At times it has seemed that there must be deeper truths of a more mystical nature than those contained in our Scriptures and to which the 'Key' would be a better fit.

And so in the course of time we were able to know a little of the teachings of the Vedanta and we found the 'Key to the Scriptures' a much better fit to a great deal of the teaching in these ancient sacred writings than to the Bible; that it is largely a key to many of the great truths which have been more or less hidden from the West. In many ways the ancient wisdom of the East is finding its way to the West in ever widening streams.

Things were very dark in the history of suffering India when "Science and Health" was being compiled, and it would appear that except just to those few who had previously come across some of the wonder and beauty of her literature, the channel was effectively closed. Bitter feelings, based on one-sided reports were still at their height—reports which a few noble souls at intervals have endeavoured to rectify, a notable instance being the comparatively recent book, "The Other Side of the Medal". The year 1857 might well have appeared as the death knell of India's religious thought so far as influencing the West was concerned. But many gems had already found their way here, rare specimens had already taken root in a few eager souls, and truth being eternal will ever send up shoots of fresh life.

And so to the Science of Health, or Christian Science taught and practised by Dr. Quimby as far back as the fifties which was used by him for bodily healing only, Mrs. Eddy added a religious system so similar in its basic thoughts to Vedantic truths that we wonder why its source was never divulged or credit given to that great Eastern people to whom the whole world, more or less, owes its religion. But no, again and again, when one and another recognises the similarity and makes it public, it is the duty of one or other of the Committee on Publication to contradict it in such terms as the following, among many other contradictions which have appeared quite recently:—

"In a recent issue of your paper a minister, speaking on Hinduism, is credited with the statement: 'The philosophy of India is reappearing in America in new forms. It is seen in

Christian Science, in which some of the fundamentals have been borrowed from Indian philosophy.' If the minister is correctly quoted, his statement indicates that he is ignorant of the tenets, the teaching, and the practice of Christian Science. Christian Science is a religion based upon the Bible, particularly upon the teachings of Christ Jesus; and it neither resembles nor is indebted to any mystic philosophy or religion in India or elsewhere. This fact can be verified by any honest investigator."

This gentleman has evidently never investigated Indian philosophy or religion as the minister who made the statement appears to have done. Moreover it is against what is permitted by the Christian Science Church to study anything which is not pure Christian Science ; it is part of 'error' to be avoided.

From the writings of Swami Abhedananda we learn that in the early editions of "Science and Health" Mrs. Eddy quoted from the Vedanta philosophy and he says that in the 24th Edition of "Science and Health" there was a chapter, now entirely suppressed, which began with four quotations from Vedanta philosophy. That also in that same chapter Mrs. Eddy quoted from a translation of the Bhagavad Gita by Charles Wilkins, published in London in 1785 and in New York in 1867. These quotations are now omitted. There are merely one or two veiled references to Indian thought in "Science and Health" as when the author says, "The Indians caught some glimpses of the underlying reality when they called a certain beautiful lake 'The smile of the great Spirit.' " And in another place, "Those natural Christian Scientists, the ancient worthies", etc.

Before proceeding to deal with just a very few of the extraordinary number of similarities between Vedanta and Christian Science teaching, it may be of interest to make some mention of the extent of the Christian Science organisation ; it has spread practically throughout the world.

The Christian Science Mother Church is in Boston, Massachusetts, and America is the chief stronghold of Christian Science. At the present time "The Mother Church has 2,277 branches. There are also twenty-nine colleges and university organisations". Sunday schools are attached to the churches. The registered practitioners, who can be called upon for the healing of disease and sickness—in fact disharmony of any kind—run into many thousands. The publishing and literature departments are extensive. The chief periodicals are the monthly Journal, the weekly Sentinel and the daily Monitor. Their circulations are enormous. The books and writings on

Christian Science are numerous, many of them published in various languages. The financial position of the organisation is in a flourishing condition. The figures of its various departments we cannot give here ; suffice it to say that last year the receipts of the Mother Church General Fund alone were \$1,378,973,83. This apart from Trust Funds and many other sources of income, as well as the wealth of all its other departments. There is a Board of Lectureship whose members, and they only, are authorised to give lectures. "During the last twelvemonth . . . members of the Board of Lectureship of this church delivered 3,573 lectures". These were given in almost every country of the world. No matter what the capacity of the hall in which a lecture is to be given, it is invariably crowded. "This year the Mother Church enrolled the largest number of new members in its history". But the extent and activities of this organisation are too vast to go into here in any adequate way, moreover figures are not as a rule interesting except to see beneath them some cause for the abundance they represent.

When considering all this something seems to say : What a monument this vast organisation might have been to the teachings of the Vedanta. And then again it sometimes comes to one : Perhaps one day the truth of the similarity of the teachings will be realised and acknowledged by all and the hands of East and West will be clasped in brotherhood in a way never dreamed of before, for after all it is the recognition of Spiritual oneness, not political, which so to speak brings about heaven on earth.

Let us now look at a few of the chief similarities between the teachings of the Vedanta and Christian Science, remembering that where it is possible to give here perhaps only one instance on a particular point, there are hundreds which might be selected.

In answer to the question, "*What is God*", "*Science and Health*"—the Christian Science text book—says, "Incorporeal, Divine, Supreme, Infinite Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love . . . these synonyms refer to one *absolute* God . . . the *wholeness* of Deity. The great I AM, the all-knowing, all-seeing, all-acting, all-wise, all-loving and eternal, all-substance. Mind or Intelligence, the Source and Giver of life. Nothing has life apart from God."

And what is the teaching of the Vedanta on this point gathered so far as one has been able from the study of expositions?

In one treatise the Supreme is spoken of as the "Absolute Spirit, the Infinite Being . . . the eternal absolute oneness of the Supreme Spirit . . . one stupendous indivisible whole . . . the Impersonal Absolute", as the Bhagavad Gita says—"Whose SELF is the SELF of all beings". Indeed 'The Lord's Song' is so full of this teaching of the real SELF of man as opposed to the material that it is useless to attempt to select extracts from it. It is on this point—the denial of the material and the realisation of the spiritual—that the Christian Science claim of destruction of sin and sickness is based.

Also in another Vedanta exposition we read, "He is the Soul of my soul as well as the Soul of the universe". Again, "Can there be two infinities? There can be only one. This one is the one infinite Atman, everything else is its manifestation".

What is man? Christian Science says: "Spiritual and perfect . . . eternal, not a single quality underived from Deity, possesses no life, intelligence nor creative power of his own, but reflects spiritually all that belongs to his Maker. Man is incapable of sin, sickness and death. The Real Man cannot depart from holiness . . . God and the Real Man are inseparable" etc.

The Vedanta as we have already seen teaches the perfection of man (the Real Man)—that he is pure and perfect.

What are the teachings of Christian Science as to the *phenomenal world and mortal man*? 'Science and Health' answers, "Illusion, the opposite of Truth, the opposite of Spirit, the opposite of God; that of which immortal man takes no cognizance". Again, from other writings: "The material world is a world of illusion where men dimly perceive their true selfhood as spiritual light dawns upon them and dispels the veil of illusion". It teaches, "The unreality of what is revealed by the material senses, that God is the only Absolute however real this world and its attendant evils may seem in human experience".

The Vedanta teaches that "The whole of nature is like a screen which is hiding the reality beyond. Every good thought that you think or act upon is simply tearing the veil, as it were, and the Purity, the Infinity, the God behind, manifests itself".

Then if we take the point of *Birth and Death*. Christian Science speaks of them as illusion . . . "any material evidence of death is false, for it contradicts the spiritual facts of being".

The Vedanta teaches, "Man is neither born nor dies, nor goes to heaven births and deaths are changes in Nature which we mistake for changes in us".

Regarding *mortal man* Christian Science says, "It is really a self-contradictory phrase for man is not mortal, neither indeed can be". In the words of the Christian Science scientific statement of being: "There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-all. Spirit is immortal Truth; matter is mortal error. Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal. Spirit is God, and man is His image and likeness. Therefore man is not material; he is spiritual".

The Vedanta says: "The more this present self rolls away, the more the Real Self becomes manifest in its full glory". The distinction made between the spiritual and the material, the Real and the unreal in relation to man and the phenomenal world is perhaps the most emphatic of all the similarities between Christian Science and the Vedanta.

And then that distinctly Indian thought which could never have been gathered in the West from the teachings of our Scriptures—the aspect of God as Mother. Christian Science says: "Mother—God; divine and eternal Principle; Life, Truth and Love".

Indian teachings as to the worship of God as Mother we all know too well to need to give any isolated instances.

It is impossible here to deal with the many points of similarity—they extend over almost the entire teachings. Just as Mrs. Eddy retired from the world for some two or three years in order to perfect the Christian Science text book, so it would take almost as long to attempt to compare the similarities of thought between the Vedanta and Christian Science. Whether we look at some of the less prominent expressions such as "The pairs of opposites", we find it in the Christian Science text book under "Contrasting pairs of terms". In each set of teachings we find sin referred to as ignorance, and so on almost *ad infinitum*.

This article is not written with the idea of depreciating the value of Christian Science nor of taking from Mrs. Eddy the credit of putting these deep truths in such a way that men and women can avail themselves of them for practical use in daily life. We know the power which the understanding of this teaching has in the healing of sin and sickness, and the help which it can give in times of stress and trial. With

wonderful material at hand Mrs. Eddy has done a great service. She admits that she simply *re-discovered* the teachings of Jesus the Christ, and we know that His life and teaching can be explained only as we understand something of older Indian teaching, for as St. Augustine said, "What is now called the Christian religion has existed among ancients and was not absent from the beginning of the human race, until Christ came in the flesh, from which time the true religion, which existed already, began to be called Christianity".

As *re-discoverer* from the standpoint of practical application, we can be thankful to her but we need not make her almost an object of worship as so many Christian Scientists do or force ourselves into the belief that the 'little book' mentioned in the Christian Bible, in Revelation, is necessarily 'Science and Health'. We need not refer to her with adoration, sometimes it would seem in a way which surpasses that rendered to the Master, Jesus the Christ. The constant reference to the name 'Eddy' at all the services becomes truly wearying to many of us. Neither need we try to spiritualise the most ordinary events in her life as many of her followers do, and as is done in her authentic biography. Her three marriages appear to be the most ordinary everyday affairs needing no spiritualising, and her earlier life was that of an ordinary person. But she had time and ability for investigating certain principles of healing as practised by Dr. Quimby, through whom Mrs. Eddy was herself healed as her own letters testify.

The basis of Christian Science understanding is the Allness of God and the nothingness of matter ; that God is All-good knowing no evil, and that through this realisation the action of God takes place destroying all that is unlike God, good, whether it be sin, sickness, limitation, lack, or disharmony of any nature whatsoever.

Here perhaps is the difference in the *realisation* of Christian Science and the *realisation* of the followers of the Vedanta. The former teaches that the realisation of God, good, should bring about perfect harmony in all one's surroundings. The latter that the realisation of God should mean disregard of the material. However, whichever path we choose, it seems indisputable that a much clearer understanding of the teachings of Christian Science can be gained by a study of the Vedanta philosophy, particularly through the study of the Bhagavad Gita. Seeing many failures in Christian Science healing one often felt during those years that there was a missing link somewhere, that the explanation of *lack of understanding* on

the part of the practitioners did not cover the whole ground, that there was something yet to be discovered. After searching several years, the nearest approach to discovering the missing link so far, seems to be in the realisation of the Atman.

A LETTER OF ROMAIN ROLLAND

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH

[I wrote to M. Romain Rolland early last year asking his opinion about the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in whom, I knew, he was deeply interested. In answer, I received a most cordial reply which I publish below. I have since received a few more letters from him, all of which, I am sure, will interest the readers of *Prabuddha Bharata*. I hope to publish them by and by.—*Swami Ashokananda.*]

26th June, 1927.

DEAR SIR,

A year ago some pages of Dhan Gopal Mukherjee revealed to me the great soul of Sri Ramakrishna, and this revelation has excited me to know more of his life and his thoughts. For several years my sister and myself have read books published by the Prabuddha Bharata Office or from the Ramakrishna Mission, that our Indian friends were kind enough to send us. The last month we had a visit from Miss M. and during the days we passed together we often spoke of the Swami Vivekananda.

I look upon the Swami Vivekananda as a dynamo of spiritual force and Sri Ramakrishna as a river of Love. Both of them reveal God and life eternal. And the most genial is Vivekananda. But Ramakrishna is above him in genius.

I wish to dedicate to them a book which would make them known to the great masses of the West. The task is long and very difficult. There is in their rich thoughts multitudes of different elements of which the classification does not appear to me to have been made in that spirit of order which claims the intelligence (or even the heart) of the West. One part of these elements has a character very specifically Indian. Another part is universal, and it is that part which I wish to emphasise.

Now we are in Europe and in the whole world at an hour of social tempest coming out from a tempest of action, and on the eve of a new cyclone of action, still more formidable than

the preceding one, in which millions of men are seeking for a direction. One must try and give it to them as clearly, as simply and as shortly as possible and without waiting, for the cyclone will never wait.

For which cause it is necessary to allow the entrance of the Sun of Truth, whose rays enlighten the road where these people will have marched. I am convinced that the Swami Vivekananda would have aided them powerfully if he had lived at the hour in which we live to-day. But at the hour of his death and above all at that of Sri Ramakrishna the maelstrom of the world had not yet affected all peoples by its turbulent outbreak ; it was still the heavy night in which the storm was gathering itself in silence. At present we must think of all those who will perish (I am speaking of the death of the soul) if one does not render them assistance.

My sister and myself have a very keen desire to enter into relations with Sister C. of whom we have heard people speak with tenderness and veneration. Few souls, I think, have had the privilege of being so close to that of Vivekananda as hers. We should be happy if we could correspond with her by letters with the hope that one day we shall have the pleasure of meeting her.

We have been told also that at the Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas there was a learned man, B.,...an ardent disciple of Vivekananda. We should like to know him and of his interpretation of the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda on science.

As I can understand them (and as my thought tells me), science is one of the roads towards God and it is the road by which the West will march with the greatest surety towards Him, if it could be better guided. It would be useful to know if Vivekananda had the opportunity of expressing himself about this and in what work.

I address to you, dear Swami Ashokananda, to you and to your brothers my brotherly salutation. I feel that I am united with you in the contact of that divine unity of which Sri Ramakrishna has been the Song of Songs become man.

To you all, affectionately,
ROMAIN ROLLAND

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE EDUCATIONAL WORK OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION—I

BY SWAMI NIRVEDANANDA

(Continued from the last issue)

(iii) VOCATIONAL

Education must be both individual and communal in its outlook. Every individual must be allowed to grow as much as he possibly can and contribute his maximum towards the weal of the community. At the same time it would undoubtedly be a serious mistake if special care is not taken to look at the community as an organic whole and provide for a proportionate growth of its various parts. Hundreds of vocations are required for a community in these days, and all of them do not require the same type of education, nor do they require the same measure of intellectual attainments. A system of education, which can help turning out men for the various functions with different types and grades of education suited to each, is what a community requires for its existence.

Distribution of vocations in this country was made in the past according to caste, and education was likewise adjusted. But now-a-days we talk of labour class, middle class and aristocracy as if these are the three classes in the country, and we really find that a new assortment of vocations as well as corresponding education is every day coming into vogue between these three divisions of our people. These three divisions are becoming more and more demarcated; their basis we should note is money and not caste. We won't err much if we state that the primary and minor schools in villages are meant mainly for the children of the craftsmen and the peasantry and high schools and colleges for the middle class and aristocracy. Nowhere in these schools and colleges is there any provision for specialisation in vocations except medicine, law and engineering which are forbidden grounds for the poorer section of the community. Some of the castes are still retaining their hereditary occupations, but they have no school where their boys may learn to improve their vocation in the light of modern sciences. Some of course are making a bid for high education and trying to enlist themselves in the middle class. Such is the influence of the present-day schools that a boy sent there is invariably lost to his ancestral trade. Education in these institutions is somehow associated with freedom from manual labour. While acquiring literacy, the

child coming from a labour class family becomes more and more unfit for his father's trade.

This state of things has to be materially changed. The elementary and minor schools in villages have to make provisions for compulsory vocational training. Agriculture being the mainstay of the labour class including craftsmen, scientific agriculture, dairy-farming and agricultural industries should be made compulsory subjects for vocational training. Optional courses for various handicrafts (such as weaving, tanning, carpentry, basket-making, toy-making, smithy, pottery, masonry, survey, repair of stoves, watches, cycles, musical instruments and various other articles of use, etc.) should be open to the pupils. While choosing the optional course the pupil may be encouraged to specialise in his father's trade but certainly nothing should be forced upon him against his guardian's will. These vocational courses in village schools must necessarily be of an elementary nature and graded according to the age and capacity of the pupils. *These village schools should be principally industrial schools, where academic education will be only a subsidiary factor.*

High schools which are mainly intended for middle-class boys should also provide for a higher standard of training in improved farming, commerce, banking, insurance, book-keeping, and modern industries such as chemical industries, motor-mechanics, etc. *High schools should be essentially academic and industrial training should be a subsidiary part of the curriculum, so that the boys may just develop a taste for practical work, but there should be arrangements within these schools so that after finishing the academic course most of the boys may receive a thorough and systematic training in one or more of these vocational courses. Separate industrial schools may also serve the purpose; but at the present stage when education in high schools and colleges has acquired a peculiar prestige, industrial courses ought to be taught and patronised by these institutions. For this will go to dignify vocational training in the eyes of pupils as well as guardians.*

(iv) CHARACTER-BUILDING

Education is a misnomer unless it helps one to build one's character. By character we mean here only training of the will, which implies strengthening the will and directing it properly. Will may be said to be a force on the mental plane having both magnitude as well as direction and character-

building signifies increasing the magnitude and adjusting the direction of this mental force. A man of character wills loftily and honestly and has the firmness to execute his will in spite of resistance from within or without.

It is interesting to note that character-building was given a prominent place in the Hindu scheme of education. It was recognised by our ancient educators to be the immediate aim of education; for without character, without a thorough training of the will, they observed correctly, no one can be fit for utilising in life any knowledge that may have been imparted to him. Moreover they found that even to qualify anyone for acquiring knowledge of any kind a preliminary training of the will to a certain extent was a necessity. The mind as an important instrument of knowledge and as the mainspring of all actions drew the devoted attention of our early educationists more than anything else and they have left for us a precious lore about mental training, which we can ill afford to ignore.

Will is strengthened by the practice of concentration and self-control and chastened by a culture of refined and lofty sentiments. This is all that our ancients found essential for character-building, and perhaps no modern educationist can add a whit to this so far as principle is concerned.

No less astounding was their discovery with regard to the method of imparting this training. The very conception of the Brahmacharya Ashrama reveals how our ancient educationists were conscious of the value and importance of 'self-activity' as an effective educational method and also of the potency of 'environment' for rousing self-activity.

In the light of our ancient teaching, we need attach more importance to character-building than to the stuffing of information in the pupil's brain, which is tending to be the sole concern of educational institutions of our country.

For strengthening the will *systematic practice of concentration and self-control* must be provided for and it should be remembered that examples, and not mere oral instructions, are required of the teachers. This practice will also be of immense help in sharpening the intellect and developing different faculties. This must be looked upon as an indispensable factor of any healthy education.

Fickleness and irresoluteness are almost synonymous with restlessness of mind. Will-force is bound to be dissipated when the mind runs after too many things at a time. A mind agitated by too many thought-waves cannot be fixed on any

object with unflinching devotion. Such a mind has to be calmed and mental energy has to be conserved before the mind may flow mightily in any given direction. *For this a systematic practice of concentration is a necessity.*

Self-control is a healthy exercise of the will against baser instinctive impulses, and undoubtedly this goes to develop the will considerably. Discipline of any kind is nothing but a lesson in self-control, and surely *Brahmacharya*, (abstinence) on account of its physiological as well as psychological effect, *must be considered as the very basis of all kinds of discipline.* The various vows or *Vratas* of our girls have their educational value in so far as they develop the will through self-control and they should find a place in any modern scheme for our girl-education, of course, with necessary modifications by way of eliminating crudities. Boys and youngmen also should be made to practise occasional fasting and silence. Moreover struggles against instinctive inertia, for maintaining a high standard of active, methodical and well-regulated life, as mentioned in the topic on practical education, will also contribute a good deal towards developing the will-power.

Now, besides strengthening the will we have to give it a proper direction and for this the heart has to be chastened and inspired with noble sentiments. *Verily, love excavates the channel along which will flows.* Love for flesh, lucre and fame determines the will-path of the ordinary man of the world, while love for God, humanity, country and community directs the will of noble souls. A man is said to be elevated in proportion as his love for the little self is replaced by a higher form of love. Character-building therefore requires that pupils should be trained to feel for others, and their love should be gently led, away from their little self, to higher and higher spheres, family, neighbours, community, country and humanity, which are like so many "altar-stairs that slope through darkness up to God". This will undoubtedly purify their heart and help them to be really noble and heroic in their deeds. Sister Nivedita has put it very nicely to give an idea of the educational value of this love :

"Even an ignorant mother, by teaching her boy to love and to act on his love, can be the finest of educators. It is this that makes so many of our great men of to-day attribute so much to their mothers."

Pupils should be made conscious of their environment and helped to feel that their education is meant not for the good of themselves alone but also for the good of *Jana-desha-dharma*. They must be made to feel that their development is intended

for the benefit of the environment. A healthy education must let them know that "no man liveth to himself alone," and it must stir up in them 'the desire to serve, the longing to better conditions, advance their fellows, and lift the whole'.

(i) Now, *love is awakened by faith and developed by service*. Children should be early taught to respect their parents and superiors and to perform every day as a rule little acts of service by way of helping members of their families or schools as well as neighbours. The schoolmaster should make it a point to take note of these acts and encourage his pupils by awarding prizes for "Service".

(ii) No education can be called national unless it inspires love for the country. Sister Nivedita writes emphatically :

"Let love for country and countrymen, for people and soil, be the mould into which our lives flow hot."

For this the first thing necessary is to instil into the students a faith in their country and their people. A proper presentation of history which may introduce students to the glorious achievements of their forefathers, will certainly arouse their faith and admiration. They must be made conscious of the precious contributions of their motherland to religion and speculative philosophy and also of the propagation of her cultural ideals beyond the borders of India even in the hoary past. They should also know how these contributions are valued by modern thinkers, how Vedanta philosophy as well as Buddhism have become important subjects of study and research even in the academic circles of the West. Then our students should also be made to see for themselves in museums and art-galleries or through pictures and lantern-slides the characteristic beauty of Indian painting, sculpture, and architecture, and in this connection they should be made familiar with the appreciatory remarks of modern connoisseurs. For is there anyone whose heart is not filled with admiring love for our country when he reads passages like the following from the pens of Mr. Harvel and Mr. Percy Brown or even when he simply hears the import of such a passage?

"Their art, used only in the service of truth and religion, has made their hands obedient tools of a heaven-sent inspiration; and their unique power of realising this, with a depth and sincerity unsurpassed in the art of any land, or in any epoch, gives them a right to rank among the greatest of the symbolists in the whole history of art."—*Indian Sculpture and Painting*.

"The oldest painting therefore at Ajanta represents no primitive beginning, but an art of some maturity; not the first efforts of indivi

duals groping in darkness of inexperience, but the finished work of a school of artists trained in a high art, manifesting great and ancient traditions."—*Indian Painting*.

Then the students should also be made to feel the grandeur of their early literature, specially of the two magnificent epics, and in this connection also they should be made to know how the literary merits of these early productions have been appreciated by modern critics. Ours students have also to be made conscious of the contributions of our forefathers to positive sciences as described by Sir Brojendra Nath Seal, Sir P. C. Roy, S. J. Radhakumud Mukerjee, and others. They need also feel proud of the contributions to political, economic and sociological science as contained in the Shanti-parva of the Mahabharata and in Kautilya Arthashastra, which have opened an immense and fruitful field of research before the modern scholars of this country.

All these will undoubtedly awaken faith in the country and love for the people. Every effort should be made to deepen the love thus awakened by training students to serve the people. Enrolling batches of students as volunteers for Seva-work during floods, famines, epidemics, should be made a factor of our education.

In this way systematic efforts have to be made to rouse a burning love for their community and their country. Emancipation of sympathy and intellect is of course a necessity. So while calling up love for their country or community, care must be taken to convince them of the fact that they have no reason to hate other communities or countries. They must be made to feel that under the diversities of faiths, customs, histories, and traditions, the same human heart beats everywhere, and thus they should be led to feel for humanity as a whole. But in this we must always remember that *one who cannot love his community cannot love his nation, and without loving the nation one cannot possibly feel any kinship with humanity.*

More important than any one of these forms of love as a purifier of the heart is the love for God. All the remaining forms are comprehended in real love for God. One who can love God surely feels for all. Systematic efforts for developing love for God and religion should be made. This should be made the central gem as it were of the characteristic Hindu heart. Elucidation of our sacred texts, exposition of the lives and sayings of saints and seers, presentation of ideal spiritual lives from Puranas and History, excursion to holy places and

holy men, spiritual lives of the teachers themselves and the spiritual environment of the school or residence of the students, all these are necessary for awakening this love. Moreover, students have to be disciplined through regular prayers, hymns, worship, etc. in certain forms of ceremonials graded according to their age and capacity.

These different forms, as it were, of love will go to chasten the heart and give a proper direction to the will. In this connection we need add that a *development of the aesthetic sense* is also a mighty agent for chastening the heart. Love for the beautiful is already in man; this has to be drawn out by making the pupils feel and appreciate the beauties of nature. They should be trained to observe and enjoy Nature's bounteous beauty by taking them to lovely spots during excursions. They are to be helped further to take delight in artistic expressions of the beautiful through poetry, music, painting, moulding or sculpture. They should be encouraged and helped to express their own refined ideas and emotions through their own productions of fine arts. Regular lessons in Drawing, Painting, Modelling, Music, etc. go a long way to refine feelings. A flower garden in the school reared by students will be found to be highly useful in calling up the aesthetic sense. It must be noted that the environment of the school or residence of the students should be alive to aesthetic requirements.

If we seriously intend to see that our boys and youths develop character, our education must provide all these for a systematic training of the will.

The glaring omissions in the present system of education described in this article, together with the fact that nearly ninety per cent of our population do not receive any education at all, make the immensity of the task of properly educating our countrymen obvious. In the next article we shall determine how we may fully utilise our strength and resources to put in our maximum contribution towards the solution of this task.

(Concluded)

THE WORK OF SWAMI TRIGUNATITA IN THE WEST

[PERSONAL REMINISCENCES]

BY HIS WESTERN DISCIPLES

AMERICA

When Swami arrived in the Western metropolis there was a group of loyal friends and students of Vedanta to greet him, and he was taken at once to the home of Dr. M. H. Logan, the president of the San Francisco Vedanta Society, and a few weeks later to the home of Mr. and Mrs. C. F. Peterson, where he was to make his headquarters. At once old and new students of Vedanta began to come from all directions. The news that another Swami, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, had come to take up the work, spread far and wide and very soon Swami's time was filled to overflowing.

Classes were organized and a hall secured in the downtown section where lectures were given on Sunday afternoons. The home of the Petersons soon proved too small for the augmenting attendance at the classes, and the decision was made to find more commodious quarters. A flat was taken in March, 1903, at 40 Steiner Street, with two front rooms opening into each other, giving larger space for the classes and lectures and with ample living rooms for Swami and Mr. and Mrs. Peterson and their son.

Classes were regularly held on Monday and Thursday evenings for members, the study of the Gita on Monday evenings and the Upanishads on Thursday evenings, with morning and evening lectures on Sunday. Music, of course, was a part of every service, and almost from the inception of the work under Swami, the women members of the Society who were gifted with musical talent supplied the instrumental music and singing at the lectures and classes, with the exception of the Sunday evening service, at which a quartette of the young men sang for seven years. All the musical programs for the Master's birthday and other leading events were arranged by the women, adding much to the enjoyment of such occasions through their whole-souled devotion.

In the year 1904, in response to calls Swami found a fertile field for work in the city of Los Angeles, 425 miles from San Francisco, in Southern California, and after organizing classes there, found a difficulty in carrying on the work at that distance, so in the same year Swami sent to India for an assistant Swami

to take charge of the work there. The Math sent Swami Satchidananda, who came to the quarters at 40 Steiner Street and received a hearty welcome. He stayed for a time under Swami and then left to take up the work at Los Angeles, but at the end of the first year, for reasons of health, he was compelled to return to India.

THE FIRST HINDU TEMPLE IN THE WESTERN WORLD

In 1904 the work had grown to such proportions that Swami felt the time had come when the Society should have a suitable building of its own. With Swami, to think was to act, and a committee was at once appointed to look for a suitable site. Led by Swami, the committee traversed every section of the city, finally selecting the site on which the Temple stands at present. A meeting of all the members was called, the choice of the committee was approved, the funds were quickly raised and the site was purchased in the name of the San Francisco Vedanta Society.

Plans were immediately commenced for the building, under the supervision of Swami, and at last took form in what was to be known as the first Hindu Temple in the whole Western world. The call for subscriptions went out and almost without exception the entire membership, with many friends of the movement, responded. Rich and poor, old and young, came with their offerings and before long sufficient funds were subscribed to commence operations. On August 25th, 1905, with appropriate ceremonies, the cornerstone was laid. In a metal box in the cornerstone, Swami placed pictures of the Master and the Holy Mother and other pictures, that on such a blessed foundation the work might grow in power and ever increasing usefulness. Here at last, in San Francisco, the city beside the Golden Gate, a permanent center was established, a channel through which the Truth could flow to quench the thirst of thousands of world-weary souls with its life-giving waters. With regard to the future of the Temple, Swami said, "I shall not live to enjoy, others will come later who will enjoy," and with particular reference to his own participation he boldly proclaimed, "Believe me, believe me, if there is the least tinge of selfishness in building this Temple it will fall, but if it is the Master's work it will stand." The building still stands on the corner of Webster and Filbert streets.

The Temple was dedicated to the cause of humanity on January 7th, 1906, bringing to the special service many of the out-of-town disciples of Swami Vivekananda and Swami

Turiyanarda. The first services were held on Sunday, January 15, 1906.

The Temple building was hardly finished when a great idea was born in Swami's mind—the establishment of a direct branch of the Ramakrishna Mission in San Francisco, to be the headquarters for America. He had no ambition for himself ; his high aim was to induce Swami Brahmananda to come and take full charge of the work in America. His faith and reverence for Maharaj were very great and he believed that if he could be persuaded to come, the work in America would receive a tremendous impetus through the impelling force of his great spiritual power. In pursuance of this idea he added a third floor to serve as living quarters for Swami Brahmananda.

When the addition with its roof and towers was completed, Swami decided to hold a service in which to re-dedicate the Temple as a whole. The re-dedication ceremony was duly announced for the evening of April 5th, 1908, and a special program prepared, consisting of appropriate music, songs and chants, and the distribution of *Prasada* in the form of light refreshments. When the hour arrived the auditorium was filled to overflowing and hundreds were unable to gain admission. After the service in the auditorium was ended, the audience was invited to look over the Temple and then go to the roof where Swami performed Aratrika, "ceremony of waving of lights," in one of the towers, amid the wondering interest of the Western audience. Many that evening received an altogether new impression of the Hindu religion in its application to everyday life and as a practical medium for the universal culture of every sincere spiritual impulse.

THE EXPERIENCE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA

BY D. S. SARMA

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"The bee buzzes round a flower," says Sri Ramakrishna, "only *before* it tastes the sweetness of the honey within. But when it is inside the flower it quietly drinks the nectar." I am sure there are many who are every day quietly tasting the sweetness of Ramakrishna's soul. I should therefore crave the indulgence of these silent admirers and disciples while I, a beginner, buzz for a short time round the flower.

The standard biography of the saint which was published last year by his reverent disciples is a very curious document—quite unlike anything to which English readers are accustomed. The book is written in English. But the world that is revealed to us by the book is most interesting. It is a typically Hindu world having for its nucleus a famous temple, a bathing-ghat, and a sacred river, with all the holiness and filth that these usually involve. It is the haunt of beggars, holy and profane, and of pious worshipers and soulless priests. Here come *sādhus* from distant places with matted hair and long-grown nails and in all degrees of nakedness and illumination. Some pretend to have discovered the philosopher's stone and cheat the innocent village folk of a few annas. Some go about stark naked, but can boast of psychic powers gained after years of grisly toil and meditation. Some carry their sense of equality so far as to eat the leavings of beggars' meals along with dogs, while others laugh and roll themselves the whole day in the dust, out of religious intoxication. There are again some *sādhus* whose intoxication is less spiritual, as it proceeds out of *bhang* and wine. And finally there are among them some *sannyasins* true and pure like Tota-puri—the *guru* of Ramakrishna. Thus the background of the picture presented to us in the biography of the saint is the life in a Hindu temple as it has remained unchanged probably for the last two thousand years. In the course of the narrative we no doubt hear of gas lamps, of pilgrimages by rail, of Christian missionaries, and of the Brahmo Samaj. But we easily forget these marks of the nineteenth-century civilization.

Against a somber background of sublimities and horrors, of uncanny disciplines and rare realizations associated with a Hindu temple, stands the simple, childlike figure of Sri Ramakrishna. In those wonderful visionary eyes of his, which are trained to look upon eternity with a steady gaze, we see, as it were, the experience of all the Hindu sages from the time of the Rig-Veda. It was inevitable, of course, that he should be subject to the limitations of his environment. But it is marvelous how, after his illumination, he transcends them all; and, with the quietness and assurance of one who has seen truth, he gives a message which modern India sorely needs. Like many a *sādhu* of his time, he went through various kinds of uncanny discipline attended by supernatural visions and experiences, but he finally condemned the hankering after occult powers. Like many a *Sakti* devotee, he worshiped

Káli to the end, but he incessantly taught that every religion is only a partial representation of the ineffable Absolute. Like many an orthodox Brahman, he began his life with a strict observance of caste rules in the matter of food, choosing to cook his own meals on the banks of the Ganges rather than eat the *prasadam* of the temple ; but he ended by making his disciples cosmopolitan and permitting them to receive food from the houses of all, irrespective of caste.

I

The life of Ramakrishna is a drama in three acts. The first act begins with the building of the Dakshinesvar temples by Rani Rasmani in 1855, and the appointment of Ramakrishna as a priest in one of them. The early years of the saint, before this date, form a sort of prologue. They were spent mostly in his own village of Kamarpukur. During that time his life was that of any poor Brahman boy in an Indian village even today. He learned very little at school, but a good deal from Puranic recitals, folk songs, and village theatricals. But everyone who was acquainted with him knew that he was an extraordinary boy of a peculiarly sensitive religious temperament. He was often subject to trances, the first of the kind occurring as early as his seventh year. When he was sixteen years old he was obliged to go to Calcutta to help his brother in discharging his duties as a *purohit* among some of the respectable families of that city.

Ramakrishna and his brother struggled on for three years as family priests in Calcutta, and after the construction of the Dakshinesvar temples, they became temple priests.

Then began the period of storm and stress in Ramakrishna's life. The duties he was called upon to discharge in the temple brought to a focus the vague yearnings and the half-satisfied longings of the preceding years of boyhood. From this time onward he spent twelve years in search of God, with an astonishing tenacity of purpose. The experiences of these years are most harrowing to read. We are told, for instance, that for half this period he did not close his eyelids in sleep. Unconscious of hunger and thirst and unaffected by the incidents that happened around him, the young aspirant spent his days more or less like a lunatic. He would meditate for hours midnight under an *amalaka* tree in the Panchavati garden, without his clothes, and even without his sacred thread. He would at times weep profusely like a child and often rub his face against the ground in misery. According to an oft-quoted

passage, when the peal of the evening bells in the temple announced the close of day he would become sadder still, and cry, "Another day is gone in vain, Mother, and I have not seen thee. Another day of this short life has passed, and I have not known the truth." Sometimes doubts would harass his soul and he would exclaim, "Art thou true, Mother? Or is it all a fiction of the mind? Is religion a phantasy, a mere castle in the air?" "Oh! What days of madness I passed through," said the saint in his later years. "You cannot imagine the pangs I felt owing to the separation from Mother." He could not conduct the worship in the temple in the prescribed manner. During the evening service, when he had to wave lights before the goddess, he would go on waving them, forgetting when to stop. When making the offerings he would remain gazing at the image as if it were going to eat the food. After some months of this intense state of feeling came the first flash of illumination, of which he has left us a vivid record in a passage which is of great interest to students of mysticism. He says :

I was then suffering from an excruciating pain for not being blessed with a vision of the Mother. I felt as if somebody was squeezing my heart like a wet towel. I was overpowered by a great restlessness, afraid that it might not be my lot to realise her in this life. I could not bear the separation any longer and thought that I had no more need to live. Suddenly my eyes fell on the sword that was in the Mother's temple. Determined to put an end to my life, I jumped like a mad man and seized it—when, all on a sudden, the buildings with their various parts, the temple and all, vanished from my sight, leaving no trace whatsoever; and in their stead I found a limitless, infinite, effulgent ocean of consciousness or spirit, and, as far as the eye could reach, its shining billows were madly rushing toward me from all sides with a terrific noise to swallow me up. In the twinkling of an eye they were on me and engulfed me completely. I was panting for breath. I was caught in the rolling waves and fell down senseless. What happened outside after that, I did not know, nor how that day or the next passed. But within me there was a steady flow of undiluted bliss altogether new, and I felt the direct presence of the divine Mother.

In mystic literature this experience is called the awakening. The emergence of mystic consciousness, sharply marked off from the long dim struggles that precede it, is usually attended by violent bodily changes. After the shock of the first vision, Ramakrishna was unable to exert any control over his body. St. Paul, after a similar experience, was, we know, struck blind. Suso, a German mystic of the fourteenth century, suffered at the time of his awakening so greatly in body

that it seemed to him that none even in dying could suffer so much in so short a time. Richard Rolle of Hampole has recorded that his heart burned with a sensible fire, "truly not imaginably." Ramakrishna, too, tells us that in subsequent years of storm and stress he felt a burning sensation all over his body, as if his skin had been painted with a caustic lotion. He was also attacked with a ravenous appetite, and no amount of food could satisfy him for some days.

With the first vision of the divine reality begins what is called "the Game of Love" in mystical literature. God plays "hide and seek," as it were, with the new-born soul. Or, in more scientific language, the mystic consciousness comes and goes, leaving the subject miserable and panting in the dark intervals. He begins to interpret his flaming experience in theological terms. He uses the language of the religion he has been brought up in or is acquainted with. St. Paul calls it the Christ. Chaitanya called it Krishna. The saints of southern India call it Siva. Christ calls it the Father. Ramakrishna calls it Kali, the Mother. In all these cases the reality, which is behind the shows of life, is apprehended by the mystic as a person. Consequently the reaction of the soul upon the uprush of the new truth takes the form of passionate love. An intensely human relationship is established between the soul and God—whether it be that of the son to the parent, or that of the servant to the master, or that of the lover to the beloved. These are the three well-known types of mystic devotion. But the reality may be apprehended in other ways also. It may be apprehended as a place instead of a person. The Sufi mystics of Persia describe it as a distant goal, the way to which lies through seven valleys. Dante, in his *Divine Comedy*, following popular theology, also represents it as a place. So does Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress*. In all these cases the soul is regarded, not as a child, nor as a servant, nor as a lover, but as a pilgrim. A third way of representing the reality is to describe it as a state or a condition of the soul. Philosophical mystics of the type of Sankara who have the strength to contemplate on *avyakta* or Godhead always represent truth as an ineffable state to which we are to be awakened from the nightmare of life. In this case the soul is regarded as a dreamer or a sleeper. From the sleep of *ajnâna* one has to be awakened into *jnâna*.

After the mystic's experience is thus crystallized into a definite theological or poetic concept, he begins to adjust his

life and character to the new light. He imposes upon himself terrible disciplines to make himself pure and sinless. He cuts new channels in his mind and violently closes up the old. Anything which is likely to draw away his energies from the new center is relentlessly removed. Those earthly connections that bind him most to selfhood are rent asunder. Family, friends, riches, comforts—all are forsaken. Even the formalities of religion are laid aside. In fact, the first touch of the true religious spirit in every case results in death, the death of the seed before the plant begins to sprout. "Leave all and follow me," says the Light; and the injunction is literally followed by every mystic in the first stage of his journey, which Western writers call the purificatory stage and which we call *sadhana* or *tapas*. It is a period punctuated by visions and voices, temptations and lapses, which are personified into angels and evil spirits in popular literature. Christ was tempted by Satan. Buddha was tempted by Mara, and Visvamitra by Menaka. Ramakrishna, too, had some of these experiences. He saw spirits and heard voices, and frequently fell into trances. The momentous struggle that was going on in his soul between the old and the new was often objectified, and the whole drama enacted before his very eyes. One day as he sat down to meditate he found a *sannyasin* emerging out of his body with a trident in his hand. The figure directed him to concentrate his mind on God and threatened that otherwise he would plunge the weapon into his body. Presently another man—the *pāpa-purusha*—came out of his body and was killed on the spot by the shining *sannyasin*, who, after this exploit, re-entered his body. In fact, this part of the saint's biography is a supernatural romance in which his mind is described as moving in a world of abstractions and spirit-voices, while his body remained so dead and motionless that birds would perch on it and serpents crawl over it.

At the same time Ramakrishna was disciplining himself in a most drastic way. He would clean closets like a scavenger. He would eat food cooked by the lowest classes. He would eat the leavings of dogs. And he would make no difference between sandal and filth. No wonder therefore that everyone thought he was mad. He himself feared that his mind was going to pieces. In the agony of his heart he cried, "Mother, is this the result of praying and wholly surrendering myself to thee?" But in the very next moment he would say, "Let it be as thou wishest. Let this body go to pieces, but leave me not. Reveal thyself to me; be kind to thy help-

less son, O Mother. I have taken shelter at thy lotus feet. Thou art my only refuge.”

His prayer was heard at last. For a female *sannyasin* came on the scene. She understood Ramakrishna's case and began to help him in his devotions. Under the direction of the Brahmani, as she was called, the saint passed through the tantric *sadhana*. The philosophy that underlies the system seems to be that sensuality must be met on its own ground and that deification of the objects of desire would lead to the realization of God more swiftly than the renunciation of them.

The most remarkable feature of the purificatory period of Ramakrishna is that he was not satisfied with any one system of discipline. Scarcely had he finished his tantric *sadhana* when he began to experiment as it were with the various types of Vaisnava *sadhana*. Fortunately, however, he was led on from emotional mysticism, in which many a weak-brained *sadhaka* is engulfed, to a more virile experience. An itinerant monk called Tota-puri arrived at Dakshinesvar and by a single glance he discovered that Ramakrishna was an advanced seeker after truth. Would he learn Vedanta? Ramakrishna readily consented, and was soon initiated. He joined the sacred order of *sannyasins* and began to learn Advaita philosophy. We are told that, on the very first day on which he practised Advaita *sadhana*, he got into *nirvikalpa samadhi* and remained in that state for three days. The *guru* stood by wondering and exclaimed, “Is it possible that this man has attained in the course of a single day what took me forty years of strenuous practice to achieve?” Tota-puri remained with him for eleven months and taught him the philosophy of Sankara in detail. Ramakrishna henceforth became a *jnani* as well as a *bhakta*. Reality became as much a state of his own soul as a beloved person outside it. In one of his sayings he clearly brings out the relation between *jnana* and *bhakti*. He compares the former to a terrace and the latter to a staircase. Both are made of the same materials. The terrace is the Absolute realized in *samadhi*, in which the self and the world are blotted out. The staircase is the world of names and forms—the manifestation of the Absolute to the human sense. We go up and down, sometimes resting on the terrace, and sometimes on the steps of the staircase.

Ramakrishna's religious training was thus complete. But under the stress of the terrible *sadhanas* that he had passed through his health broke down. After a long *samadhi* of six months, during which he sat still like a dead body, uncon-

scious of the passing of day and night, he had an attack of dysentery. He suffered from it for many months and was taken out of Dakshinesvar to his native village for a change. This ends the first act of the drama of his life.*

(To be continued)

HINDU MYSTICISM †

A copy of *Hindu Mysticism* by Prof. Surendranath Das Gupta has been lying on our table for some time. Prof. Das Gupta delivered six Harris lectures on the development of Indian mysticism at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, U. S. A., in 1926, and they have now been published in the form of this volume. The term mysticism covers a very wide ground and it is as rich and complete as life itself. He has therefore confined himself to the delineation of only the main types of Indian mysticism in their mutual relations. Mysticism, in his opinion, means "a spiritual grasp of the aims and problems of life in a much more real and ultimate manner than is possible to mere reason." Thus the author in course of his six lectures has very ably dealt with the flowering of human life in its varied aspects, its gradual ascent in the scale of spiritual values, experience, and spiritual ideals.

I

In the first lecture he has described the sacrificial mysticism which, though not a mysticism of a superior order, develops, without doubt, many features of the higher types and marks the starting point of the evolution of Indian mysticism. The Vedic hymns—the earliest records of humanity—are nothing but the spontaneous outpourings of the heart of the primitive people of India, who were deeply impressed with the magnificent panorama of Nature's beauty. The fervid imagination of these ancient sages afterwards freed itself from the entanglements of natural phenomena and turned to the forces behind them as personified deities and ultimately arrived at a synthetic conception of the unity of Godhead. But when we come down to the sacrificial stage of development we find that the hymns uttered in praise of the deities came to be used as mere commands or injunctions for the performance of certain sacrificial duties. For with the Vedic people the sacrifices performed in strict accordance with these formulæ were more powerful than the Gods who could be propitiated or displeased by the mere performance

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† *Hindu Mysticism* by S. N. Das Gupta, M.A. Ph.D. (Cal.), Ph.D. (Cantab.), Late Lecturer in the University of Cambridge, England; Late Professor of Sanskrit, Chittagong College, Bengal; Professor of Philosophy, Presidency College, Calcutta. Published by the Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago; London. Pages xx + 168. Price \$2.00.

thereof. These commands were thus conceived as self-revealed, unalterable, transcendent and omnipotent and as capable of conferring material advantages upon individuals, if faithfully adhered to. Thus the assumption of the mysterious omnipotence of the sacrifices performed in accordance with the Vedic injunctions, independent of reason or discursive thought, forms the salient trait of the mysticism of the Vedic type. But human imagination went beyond this crust of objective law realistically conceived, and intellectualised the material sacrifices by the process called "substitution-meditation." The mystical powers were supposed to dwell not in external performances but in specific forms of meditation, which were thought to produce results equally beneficial. In this way from the continuous meditation of one entity burst forth in the minds of Vedic thinkers the highest idea of Self and the world-mystery. When the conception of the Highest was once formed, a natural tendency to search after Brahman also sprang up in the inmost chamber of their heart.

II

In his second lecture the author goes on to the discussion of the type of mysticism of the Upanishads which form the concluding portions of the Vedic literature. The Upanishads are but mystical experiences of the soul gushing forth in an unceasing stream of beauty. As a matter of fact, it is in these Upanishads that one meets with the earliest instances of a sincere quest after Brahman—the Highest. The Upanishads reveal to us the different phases of thought and experience. In the whirlpool of fleeting pleasures, the real content of human existence is altogether lost sight of. We live more for the body than for the soul. Thus in our mad pursuit after the phantom shows of worldly vanities we fail to realise that the dull and insipid life we are living has had the effect of stifling the spiritual instincts and longings of the soul. The beautiful stories such as those of Virochana and Indra, Yama and Nachiketas as found in the Upanishads serve only to accentuate the transitoriness of worldly objects and the ultimate reality of Brahman, the realisation of which cuts the Gordian knot of the heart and dispels all doubts from the mind for ever. In fact, the Upanishadic mysticism consists in the earnest quest for the spiritual illumination—the realisation of the absolute truth. The Self or the Brahman can be intuited only by the person to whom it reveals its own nature. It is beyond the ken of human intellect or reason;—it is, in short, an ineffable experience where all ordinary experiences are submerged and one infinitude of blissful experience exists at this stage of non-conceptual intuition of the Self.

III

The author in his third lecture on Yoga mysticism lays some stress on the question of the fundamental conditions requisite for the perception of the ultimate truth. The Shastras boldly assert that the soul and the mind are not one and the same thing; it is only the creative ideations of the mind that seem to obscure the spirit; but when the

coloured dome of mind will be broken, in other words when all mental processes will be quashed, the light of spirit will shine forth in all its native glory. The Yoga system of Patanjali prescribes some processes such as postures, breath-control, breathing exercises, washing of the impurities from all the important cavities of the body, as ancillary means to the removal of the veil of nescience that screens the self-luminous spirit from our blurred vision. *Yogā* means the disintegration of the mind in one vast ocean of ecstatic beatitude; and to attain to that blissful stage, disinclination (*Vairāgya*) to all worldly pleasures and sense-gratification is absolutely necessary; and the non-conceptual vision of the spirit is granted to the aspirant only when he is able to bring his unwieldy mind under perfect control. Thus in short, the process of Yoga described in the Yoga mysticism consists of a threefold course viz. high moral elevation, physical training of the body for the Yoga practice and steady mental concentration, which ultimately leads to a knowledge of reality as it is.

IV

The Buddhistic mysticism—the subject-matter of his fourth lecture—consists in a belief in the essenceless state of Nirvana as the ultimate perfection to be realised by the complete extinction of desires and supra-intellectual wisdom of the Yoga-practice. The system of Yoga enunciated by the Buddhists is very much akin to that of Patanjali though there is a good deal of theoretical difference between the two. The highest perfection with the Buddha is absolute extinction whereas with Patanjali it is the liberation of the spirit as self-illumination. The ultimate mystic stage of Buddhist Nirvana has been described in some passages in the Buddhist literature as “blissful” and in other passages it is held to be like the extinction of a flame. However, it is to be admitted that both are too deep and unfathomable for ordinary comprehension and as such are transcendent in their nature though the methods of their realisation are largely similar. Asceticism or self-mortification is also advocated as one of the means to the extinction of desires; for desirelessness which stops the accretion of the fruits of Karma (actions) is held to be an indispensable ethical desideratum for all spiritual achievements.

V

His fifth lecture is mainly confined to the classical forms of Devotional mysticism. The classical mysticism i.e. the mysticism of the Gita and the Bhagavata Purana advances a compromise between the worldly life of a householder and that of absolute renunciation though it leaves sufficient room for any aspirant to lead a life of absolute renunciation apart from society or social obligations. It discards self-mortification and believes in the three kinds of *tapas* viz. physical discipline, speech-discipline, and mental discipline which lead to the purification of the mind. The mysticism of the Gita lies in “a belief that the performance of allotted duties without any tinge of personal attachment and with the dedication of all fruits of the action (*karma*)

to God leads a man to the highest realisation ;” in the Bhagavata Purana on the other hand the superabundance of love for God has been given a superior place. To the eye of the true Bhakta (devotee) though all beings are but manifestations of God’s power, yet for all empirical purposes they are quite different from God. The love which is not motivated by any prospect of personal gain and manifests itself in the soft melting of the heart, in tears, etc. was best illustrated in the life of Chaitanya—the Love-angel of Navadvip in Bengal. The ideal of liberation paled into insignificance before the maddening passion of love for the Beloved Lord of Brindaban, the soul-enthraling music of whose divine flute was a perennial spring of inspiration to him. In this scheme of life even the ideal of the extinction of desires as enjoined in the Gita is replaced by that of participation in the drama of divine joy and the desires or sense-inclinations are given a full play in the direction of God.

VI

The last, though not the least, is the popular form of Devotional mysticism. The author has so far confined himself to the treatment of the different forms of mysticism as portrayed in Sanskrit writings; but in this last lecture he deals with the mysticism of divine love that found expression in the vernaculars of North India and of the South. The author has, moreover, enriched this chapter with a pen-picture of the holy life and religious beliefs of the great saints whose doctrines served only to swell the tide of Hindu religious thought rolling down from time immemorial in an unbroken stream of continuity. At the very outset he refers to the Alvar saints of the South whose doctrines were more or less similar to the Bhakti mysticism of the Bhagavata Purana and the Gita. The Bhakti movement of the South, says the author, dates from Jnaneswar and Namdeva to Tukaram (i.e. from the 13th to the 17th century), while that of North India is represented by Kavir, Nanak, Tulshidas, Mirabai and the like. The essence of the different systems is gradually filtering down into the minds of the people in general. The spontaneous love for the Beloved is not bound by any earthly limitations. In the tiller and the grocer, in the educated or in the uneducated, it springs forth in its native spontaneity and sweetens the myriad troubles in which they drag on their existence. The all-consuming passion of love for God is the Bhakta’s eternal stay in Him and an end in itself and is dearer to him than liberation or any other goal of religious realisation. The Bhakti cult has thus watered the hearts of the masses of India irrespective of caste or creed and still finds an eloquent expression in the pastoral mystical songs of the love of Krishna and Radha.

In conclusion the learned author justly regrets that it is only “the educated or Anglicized Hindu who dazzled by the gay colours of the West turns a deaf ear to the old tune of his country—the flute of Krishna calling from afar through the rustling leaves of bamboos and green groves of the village-homes.” He asks, “What have you gained if you have never tasted in your life the deep longing for deliverance or

divine joy? What have you gained if you have not tasted the joys of self-surrender, if your heart has not longed to make of you a flute in the hands of Krishna, that master-musician of the universe, and if you have not been able to sweeten your life with a touch of the Beloved?"

This, in short, is a brief summary of the author's book on "Hindu Mysticism"; and his beautiful exposition of the various phases of the development of Indian mysticism testifies, without doubt, to his thorough grasp of the leading principles underlying the religious movements of India from the Vedic age up to the present day. The style of the author is lucid and refreshing; and in view of the beautiful arrangement of the subjects, their intrinsic worth and masterly delineation, the volume is indeed a welcome addition to the stock of philosophical treatises. We gladly recommend the book to the enlightened public.

J. C.

NEWS AND REPORTS

Swami Vireswarananda

Swami Vireswarananda, President, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, has been touring in the Andhra province for the last six weeks. The main purpose of the tour has been to popularise our literature among the people, and so far he has been eminently successful in his efforts. He visited Ichchapuram, Berhampore, Parlakimedi, Chicacole, Vizianagram, Vizagapatam, Rajahmundry, Bezwada, Ellore, Anantapur and Cuddapah; and in many of these places he delivered lectures and gave discourses on the ideals of Vedanta, and also held private conversations to explain them to interested people. The Swami is expected to extend his tour further south, and we are sure his travel will succeed in widely propagating the ideals of the Ramakrishna Order.

Swami Paramananda

Swami Paramananda of the La Crescenta Ananda-Ashrama and the Boston Vedanta Centre, arrived at the Belur Monastery on the 14th February. He came via Pacific and touched at Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Penang and Rangoon on the way. The Swami had a very crowded programme in each place. At Singapore he had to deliver as many as twelve speeches. At Rangoon he spoke thrice on the same day. Everywhere people received him with great kindness and enthusiasm and gave him addresses of welcome.

This time the Swami's stay in India will not be long.

R. K. Mission Flood Relief in Gujerat

Having carried on the flood relief for full six months Sri Ramakrishna Mission has closed the work of all the five centres on the 5th February. The total number of houses constructed and repaired in British, Baroda and particularly in Cambay State villages amounts to 916. The Relief party arrived at Bombay on the 7th February.