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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।”

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

GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

KARMA-YOGA

Sri Ramakrishna: ‘A Sannyasin has to give up all hankerings after lust and gold. He cannot again go after them. One cannot swallow back what one has spat out. If a Sannyasin helps anybody with anything he does not arrogate the virtue of the act to himself. Mercy belongs to God alone. How can a man be the author of mercy? Acts of mercy or charity take place in accordance with the will of Rama. A man of true renunciation relinquishes all desire for enjoyment both in mind and practice.

‘Men of the world require money; they have to maintain their family. They have to earn and make provision for their wives and children. A bird and a Sannyasin do not lay by anything. But when young ones are born a bird gathers and brings food for them with its beaks. Even for it there is then necessity for storing.

‘A man living a household life but endowed with pure devotion performs

his duties without any attachment. All fruits of actions—loss or gain, happiness or misery—he resigns to the Lord, and prays to Him day and night for devotion at His feet. He has no desire for anything else. This is called Nishkama Karma or work without any desire. The works of a Sannyasin also are free from desires. But unlike the householder he does not engage in any worldly activity.

‘If a householder makes charity to anybody without any motive or desire, the good he renders thereby is to none else but to his own self. He serves the Lord who resides in the heart of all. And to have the privilege of serving the Lord is beneficial to the man who serves and not to others. So, by practising charity he does good to his own self and not to anybody else. If a man serves the Lord who dwells in the heart of all—man, animal and insect—and if he does not want any name or fame, or even heaven, or any

return from those whom he serves, his work is truly desireless. Such selfless work does him immense good. This is called Karma-Yoga and constitutes a path for the realization of God. But it is a very difficult path and is not suitable for this iron age.

‘So I hold that a man who shows mercy to others, helps the needy, and undertakes similar other works disinterestedly renders good really to himself. It lies only in the power of God to do good to others. He has created the sun and the moon, given father and mother to all beings, and has provided them with fruits, flowers and food. The love and affection that parents bear towards their children have been supplied by Him for the preservation of all living beings. He is the source of the kindness that manifests itself in kind people. He has provided for the protection of the helpless by endowing the beneficent with mercy. He can have a hundred ways to get His will done irrespective of whether you show any mercy or not. His decree can never remain unfulfilled.

‘What then is the duty of a man? It is this: He should take refuge in God and pray to Him with all the earnestness of his soul to bless him with His vision and realization.

GOD ALONE IS REAL, EVERYTHING ELSE UNREAL

‘Shambhu told me, “I have a great desire to set up some hospitals and dispensaries so that there may be some relief for the poor.” I replied, “Yes, it is good if you can do it without any personal motive. But it is very difficult for one devoid of sincere devotion to God to be perfectly selfless. Moreover, if you are involved too much in work you are very likely to be caught unawares in the meshes of desires. We

often think, when we undertake a work, that we are doing it quite disinterestedly, but we do not know how the desire for name and fame has already crept in. Moreover, excessive work leaves one no time to think of God and thus makes him forgetful of Him.” I told him further, “Shambhu, let me put you a question. If God appears before you what will you ask of Him? Will you ask for some hospitals and dispensaries or for a perpetual vision of Him? Nothing else can attract you if you see Him once.”

‘Those who build up hospitals and dispensaries and take delight in it are, no doubt, good people. But they belong to a different class. A man of pure devotion wants nothing but God. If he is entangled unavoidably in excessive work, he prays yearningly to the Lord saying, “Lord, have mercy on me and reduce my work. My mind should ever be devoted to Thee; but contrary to this, it is shedding all its energy in useless pursuits, in the thought of worldly things!” People of pure devotion are a class by themselves. Pure devotion can hardly be attained unless one realizes the fact that God alone is real and everything else is unreal, that the nature of the world is fleeting and transitory, while God who has created it is eternal and everlasting.

‘Janaka and others carried on work, because, they were commissioned for it.’

SCIENCES AND REALIZATION OF GOD: WHICH FIRST?

Sri Ramakrishna (to Bankim): ‘There are people who think that the realization of God remains unattainable till one acquires the knowledge of scriptures and other sciences.

They believe that the knowledge of the world and its beings and the study of different sciences form the first step towards the realization of God. (All laugh). They hold that God cannot be known unless His creation has been known. What do you say? Which should be known first—sciences or God?’

Bankim: ‘Yes, we should first gather a fair knowledge about the world. How can we expect to know God unless we know at least a little about this world? One should study and know of the world first.’

Sri Ramakrishna: ‘How in the same groove all of you move! But it was God who existed first and then followed the creation. Know Him first and then you can know everything if you like.’

‘If you can, by some means or other, manage to have a talk with Jadu Mullick, you can know from him, if you like, how many buildings and garden-houses he possesses and how much Government Paper he has got. Jadu Mullick himself will supply you the information. But if you do not call on and talk to him, or are not allowed access to him by the gatekeepers, how can you get the true information? Everything can be known when He is known. But you will have no inclination then to know of other trivial things. It has been said so in the Vedas also. People talk of the good qualities of a man so long as he is absent from the spot. But as soon as the man makes his appearance all these talks come to an end and the people oblivious of everything else become absorbed in talks with him. Nothing else can then hold their mind.’

‘God should be known first and then if you choose you may pay attention to His creation and other things.’

Valmiki was initiated with the Rama-Mantra but he was asked to repeat the word Marâ. Ma means God and râ the world. So, the knowledge of God is ever followed and never preceded by that of the world. If you have the knowledge of one you can have the knowledge of many. One followed by fifty zeros makes a huge number. But omit the one and the zeros lose their value. So it is the one that makes the many. The many always follow and depend on the one. Similarly creation both animate and inanimate occupies a subordinate place to God.

‘You are to know God. Why do you trouble yourself so much with the world, its creation and the sciences? You like to eat mango. What necessity is there for you to know how many trees are there in the garden, how many branches the trees have got, and how many leaves are there on the branches? You have come to eat mango and so pay your attention to that. Human life is meant for the realization of God. To forget this and divert the mind to other things is not good. If you have come to eat mango devote yourself solely to that!’

Bankim: ‘But how to get the mango?’

Sri Ramakrishna: ‘Pray to Him with your heart and soul. He will surely listen to you if you are sincere. He might even be pleased to place you in some good company that will render the attainment of your goal easier: Or it may even happen that somebody might come and give you definite direction in the words, “Follow this and you will realize God.”’

Bankim: ‘Who is he? Spiritual preceptor? He will reserve the good mangoes for himself and offer me only the rejected ones.’ (Laughter).

Sri Ramakrishna: ‘Why? He gives

to each what is suitable for him. Can the children. For a son weak in health rich dishes be digested by all? If a fish and suffering from stomach troubles, she is brought to the house the mother does prepares a simple dish. But does she not prepare the same rich curry for all love him less for that?

CELESTIAL JOY *

Truth, and celestial Joy,
 And heaven-born Love Thou art,
 Bright Star, whose steady beams
 Our living gloom destroy!
 He solely in whose heart
 Thy pure reflection gleams,
 Can bear the weary weight
 Of human misery!

What rapturous delight
 To sit and meditate
 Upon Thy constancy,
 And feel Thy secret might!
 Only Thy Bhakta knows
 The bliss of Thy embrace:
 Yet only through Thy grace
 Even his rapture grows!

—John Moffitt

* Translated from a Bengali Poem by JOHN MOFFITT.

THE SCIENTIST AND THE MYSTIC

Since the time of the ancient Greek philosophers the West is credited with the possession of the scientific outlook and the 'unchanging' East has in all ages been held up as the custodian of the spiritual treasures gathered by mystics and seers. These popular judgements are, of course, based upon broad generalizations. Plato and Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, Jacob Boehme, and Ruysbroeck of ancient times as well as Emerson, Blake and others of modern times have shed their brilliance appearing in the western firmament and have guided many a soul in the pathway of the spirit. Turning eastwards we find that Kanada, the founder of the Vaisheshika school of philosophy, Varaha-Mihira, the mathematician, the alchemists of Medieval India and others have pursued the study of external nature and the tradition set up by them has been maintained by learned savants such as Dr. P. C. Ray, Sir J. C. Bose, and Sir C. V. Raman. Pure science is the common property of all mankind; it knows no geographical barriers and will continue to have its votaries among all the nations of the world. Pure mysticism likewise would blossom in all climes and in all ages in the hearts of those fortunate souls which the Supreme Spirit has chosen for its own. In spite of the universality which we ascribe to both science and mysticism, we recognize an element of truth in the popular judgement that classifies the outlook of the West as material and that of the East as spiritual. The judgement is not that of a scholar who traces the history of science or mysticism and brings to light the names of

the illustrious men and women who by their devoted labours have advanced the realms of knowledge in these two great departments of human endeavour. With that unerring instinct that helps an individual to detect his neighbour's attitude towards life, the common people of both the hemispheres have passed judgement upon themselves and upon their neighbours on the other side of the globe, each party claiming priority of place to that which it considers peculiarly as its own. What are the premises from which the common man has drawn his conclusion? The common man is not expected to be conversant either with science or mysticism. For a matter of that, the demagogue who denounces religion as the cause of national decay and his equally vociferous opponent who condemns the science laboratory calling it the devil's own workshop only exhibit their ignorance of the achievements of scientists and mystics, who are among the greatest, the noblest and the best flowers of the human race. We admit the common man's ignorance, and we also accept the possibility of his judgement being vitiated by his incapacity to differentiate between the true scientist and the pseudo-scientist and the true mystic and the pseudo-mystic, but we credit the common man with that instinct which finds out the general attitude towards life which large numbers of his neighbours happen to possess. He meets his neighbours in the shrine as well as in the beer-shop, in the market-place as well as in the factory, in the seclusion of his home as well as in the public square where the demagogue attempts to guide the country's

politics. The daily press and the small talk of his neighbours convey to him valuable information. If our common man belongs to one of the materially successful nations, he becomes imbued with a certain amount of racial pride and ascribes all kinds of virtues to his own people tracing them all to the nation's special attitude towards life.

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Men who suffer under political domination, unless their souls are dead, have also their own racial pride that emphasizes the cultural achievements of their own past. The course of world history during the past two or three centuries marks out the nations of Eur-America as the possessors of material wealth and the power that it conveys. The tide may turn to-morrow and put power into the hands of the ancient nations of the East and the infant nations of Africa. But to-day as things are, the power-intoxicated nations of the West claim that science has led them to the peak of prosperity. The higher values of life appear to be forgotten. The discovery of America, the rise of industrialism, and the rapid expansion of trade have been the cause of material prosperity as well as of spiritual decline. The disillusionment is bound to come sooner or later. In the meantime, the common man's judgement that the scientific West is material and the mystical East is spiritual holds good. The true scientist is often as 'other-worldly' as the true mystic when he concentrates his whole attention on the search itself. After the nugget of gold has been discovered, both the scientist and the mystic return to the plane of everyday life and with commendable practicality order the common concerns of life. Both are valuable to human society, for man sharing the characteristics of the angel and the

brute needs sustenance for his soul as well as for his body.

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Words often exaggerate or minimize the true import of the objects which they signify. The natural sciences have appropriated to themselves the name science. Etymologically the word signifies knowledge. When the ancients spoke of grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy as the seven terrestrial sciences and civil law, Christian law, practical theology, devotional theology, dogmatic theology, mystic theology, and polemical theology as the seven celestial sciences, they used the word in its original meaning as covering all knowledge. Monks were the founders of the first universities both in the East as well as in the West. When secular power took possession of the centres of learning, less attention was paid to the celestial sciences and the branches of knowledge which were grouped under terrestrial sciences came to be subdivided under the heads of the humanities and the sciences. The original meaning of the word, however, stuck on to it and thus by a mere philological illusion and the natural indolence of humanity men came to believe that the natural sciences covered the ground of all that was to be known and what lay outside their scope was mere speculation not worthy to be classed as true knowledge. The brilliant achievements of the scientists and the extreme conservatism of the theologian confirmed people in the belief that the scientist was the only man of knowledge and the doctor of religion was at best a nincompoop and at worst a sheer fraud.

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The political domination of the West and the consequent cultural domination made the young generation that is

growing up in India to accept the current coin of the West at its face value. It is quite in the fitness of things to pursue the study of the natural sciences and apply them to the development of the resources of the country. But it is entirely wrong and unworthy of the traditions of this great country to confine liberal studies to the narrow circle of the natural sciences and to speak as if there was nothing in heaven and earth beyond the limits covered by them. The world turns to the East and particularly to India for the inner light that will dispel the darkness of materialism and help man to see life in its true perspective. Will the descendants of ancient Rishis pay no heed to the appeal of the world? The securing of political emancipation and the solution of our country's economic problems may loom large before our eyes. These are undoubtedly urgent problems. But is this country's soul so dead as to make it turn a deaf ear to the call of a world that has lost its way in the blind alleys of materialism. By parting ways from secular science Christianity appears to have lost its hold on the intelligentsia of the West. The time seems to be most propitious for Eastern thought to step in and effect a harmony between the 'terrestrial' and the 'celestial' sciences and thereby give fresh vigour to both.

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Let it be remembered that the mystic thought of India has never been mere speculation or mere emotional rapture wholly devoid of intellectual content. Its method was all along something similar to that of modern science. Hypotheses were submitted to rigorous tests. The mind itself constituted the laboratory. A thorough-going discipline of body and mind were considered essential for the practice of Yoga. The details regarding the discipline and the

practices have been handed down through a succession of Gurus and disciples beginning from the hoary past. The tradition is still alive. Even as physical energy and material wealth should be accumulated before one thinks of distributing them, so also the treasures of the spirit should be patiently gathered before a person can qualify himself as a teacher of the eternal wisdom. The feverish frenzy that characterizes the modern man is not the way to achieve the higher things of the spirit; it is not even conducive to higher secular learning. The would-be Yogi as well as the would-be scholar should discipline the surging passions of the mind and make it as calm as a deep mountain-lake, the unruffled surface of which mirrors the blue sky, stars and mountain peaks. It is not easy to establish communion with the eternal source of all knowledge and all power; but it can be done and has to be done by the aspirant who desires to realize the supreme values of life. Take the lives of the great prophets, Muhammad the prophet of Islam spent a long time in the mountains far away from human habitations; Jesus retired into the solitude of the desert; Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree with the firm determination to realize the truth or die in the attempt. Even the busy man who lives in a crowded city can have a secluded room set apart for prayer and holy meditation. Think of the amount of time and effort which a person gives to the mastering of a subject like law or one of the several branches of physical science. Should he not give more time and spend more effort in mastering the laws of the spiritual realm and the supreme science of soul-making?

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Secular learning forms the steps of the ladder that reaches from earth to heaven.

The prophet of Islam exhorted his followers to cultivate learning and the ancient sages of Hinduism were the teachers of both forms of knowledge, the sacred and the secular. Auguste Comte, the founder of the positivistic school of philosophy, spoke of three stages of thinking or philosophizing calling them the theological, metaphysical and the positive. Let us not be misled by his terminology; by theological Comte meant primitive religious and such other faiths which call upon their adherents to accept dogmas and doctrines without submitting them to the light of reason. Vedanta, the science of reality, occupying the highest place in the hierarchy of sciences accepts reason and in doing so accepts all the sciences. Its transcending the limitations of science should be interpreted not as rejection but as renunciation after acceptance and fulfilment. The illustration of the ladder may help us once again. The man who has reached the topmost rung of the ladder cannot be said to have rejected or discarded the lower rungs that helped him to ascend the ladder. His action towards the lower rungs may be more correctly described as acceptance, fulfilment and renunciation. Men that seek the higher have to detach themselves from the lower; there is no other way. One cannot serve both God and Mammon. Comte admirably describes the lower rungs of the ladder of knowledge. The simplest science and therefore the one that should be mastered first is the science of number—Arithmetic and Algebra. These constitute the first philosophy, the lowest and therefore the most fundamental rung in the ladder of knowledge. The second is Geometry which presupposes a knowledge of the laws of number. Rational Mechanics is the next higher rung and it presupposes a knowledge of the first two. Astro-

nomy is the next higher rung. Physics is the step above it. Above it stands Chemistry, for it presupposes a knowledge of Physics. Biology is the next higher rung. Social Physics or Sociology is the highest rung as conceived by Comte. The Upanishadic thinkers and Plato accept all these and proceed a step higher by proclaiming the supreme value of self-knowledge, Atma-Jnana. 'Know thyself' is the dictum that exhorts the aspirant to seek the highest. 'What doth it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?'

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There is a kind of completeness, a consummation in each one of the lower levels. The mathematician would reduce to numbers, forms and formulae all objects, relations and phenomena that he can possibly tackle with the help of his powerful tool. Certain values such as the concept of beauty and phenomena such as the reproduction of living organisms elude his grasp. The physicist too attempts a complete explanation of the riddle of the universe, but stands utterly confused when he finds that the gentle eyes of a comely maid has enough power to upset the gravity of a learned professor. He fails to understand in the light of his chosen science the tremendous power lodged in a pair of eyes. The biologist steps in next and realizes that the activity exhibited by living organisms, transcend the mathematician's abstractions and the various forms of energy formulated by physicists. He discovers the laws of organic life. Like Sir J. C. Bose he may extend the principle of response to stimuli to crystals and metals also. Still the riddle remains unsolved. That species of animal known in his terminology as *homo sapiens* eludes his grasp. Human behaviour can be studied only in the

social group and consequently the sociologist steps into the arena and ably aided by his brother the anthropologist studies the evolution of the social group. The behaviour exhibited by certain individuals known as prophets and seers and the remarkable power exhibited by them in moulding the destinies of individuals and nations are subjects which he cannot honestly tackle. One such prophet appears in the desert regions of Arabia. 'One spark, on a world of what seemed black, unnoticeable sand. But lo the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Grenada. Allah-ho-Akbar! There is nothing great but God.' (Swami Rama). Another appears among the priest-ridden ignorant men of Judaea. His people disown and crucify Him. But that is not the end of the episode. The power that arose from Him changes the face of whole continents. The ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome tumble down like a house of cards before this tremendous power. Can the sociologist explain a Muhammad and a Christ? Calling their followers imbeciles or fools or calling the prophets impostors or maniacs does not explain anything. It only exhibits the poverty of thought and bad breeding of the so-called scientist.

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The science of psychology and a branch of it known as psycho-analysis are very much in vogue at the present time. The two brilliant men Jung and Freud with whose names psycho-analysis is associated studied pathological cases and have formulated certain principles underlying the behaviour of demented persons. It is illogical and unscientific to apply the principles they enunciated for sub-human and abnormal tendencies to the elucidation of superhuman and supernormal beha-

viour exhibited by the prophets. The jeweller who knows the worth of precious stones does not class them with pebbles, in spite of the fact that the physicist may see only the same kind of atoms and molecules in both. There is such a thing as value and it cannot be overlooked with impunity. The poet's song, the maiden's eyes, the painter's masterpiece and the words of the prophets are objects possessing value. Their effects are seen, although they themselves elude all efforts of objective analysis. The scientist attempts to grasp the meaning behind the universe by dissection and analysis. The beauty of a perfect rose with the drop of morning dew shining on it like a precious stone ceases to be, the moment the dissecting knife of the scientist touches its soft petals. We can only tell the scientist, 'Step aside and take off thy shoes, friend; knowest thou not that thou standest on holy ground?' The poet himself does not know all the power that is lodged in his burning words. The psycho-analyst may call the poet a mad man. What about the power of those undying words that go down to generations yet unborn and effect a transformation in the lives of thousands of human beings? Would not one like to be that mad poet that gave utterance to those burning words than be the cool-headed scientist that botanized over his mother's grave? Tastes and ideals differ, of course.

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The mind of the artist and the mystic sees things whole and thereby succeeds in grasping the essence and the soul of things. Having grasped the essence of the whole it proceeds to examine the relationship of the parts to that whole and wonders how beautifully Nature or Nature's God has fashioned a thing of beauty, a thing of joy. The mystical

mind has that power known as creative insight. Perception to the mystic is the same thing as creation, reproduction. In life this process becomes *being* as distinguished from *knowing*. The myriad-minded Shakespeare was Othello and also Desdemona. He was Julius Caesar who defied death and also Mark Antony who mourned the loss of a noble friend. When the Prince of Denmark speaks out words of hesitation, we hear the voice of Shakespeare and when Lady Macbeth gives the decisive word urging her husband to action, we catch another phase of that master-mind. Shakespeare created immortal characters because he first became those characters. Something similar seems to be the procedure, if procedure we may call it, of the working of the mystic mind. The great mystic does not merely see truth, he identifies himself with truth, he becomes the truth which he contemplated upon. He does not merely perceive beauty and holiness, but becomes one with them. If we are fortunate to come face to face with a mystic and are sufficiently receptive, we too get some glimpses of the beautiful and the true and effect a transformation in our own lives. The social reformer does good deeds according to his own lights. The mystic becomes goodness itself. His holy contact fires men to perform good deeds. The heavenly compassion of a Buddha still lives in the Buddhist monk whose mission is the relieving of human distress. Water can flow only from a high level to a low level. When we see a disciple's work, do we not see some glimpse of the Master's hand? If we cannot see something at least, we must consider ourselves altogether blind to the higher realities of life.

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If all human beings stand at the level in which the mere biologist sees them,

our fair earth would be nothing better than a bear-garden. The biologist with his pernicious doctrines of 'struggle for existence' and 'survival of the fittest' has already converted the erstwhile smiling fields of Europe into something worse than bear-gardens—we are tempted to say 'hell.' There is nothing wrong in studying the partial truths taught by science, but the mischief comes in when these partial truths are held up as the whole truth and the only truth. When the biologist attempts to explain to us the mystery of the birth of a new life by pointing to the parents of the babe, we refer him to the mathematician who might tell him that if two objects coming together can give rise to one or more other objects which possess the same potentiality of reproduction, then the force that acted through the medium of the two original objects must be classed as one possessing infinite potentiality. The reproductive germ-cell, the biologist himself tells us, is transmitted from parent to child in succession. Tracing backwards we come to the beginning of life. The question as to how life first originated remains unanswered by the biologist. The mystic does not evade the question, he approaches the fountain of all life and finds that love begets life. He gets into communion with the source of all love and brings down to us that potentiality which goes to regenerate a fallen people.

* * *

'Dive deep, brother, the pearl of great price will also be yours,' is the exhortation which the mystic gives to seekers of true wisdom. The power which the mystic holds for transforming men carries conviction to his words: Love, truth, and beauty are not things to be merely heard or thought over. They have to be integrated into life itself. Life alone can touch life. We do not call a man educated, if his learning

is limited to the reading of books. We expect him to have got into touch with a living teacher or teachers. If this is true for secular learning, is it not truer for spiritual wisdom? As we have already shown, it is not a question of merely knowing, but being and becoming. If one half of the thinking world is busy discussing external nature and finding out the relationship between physical objects and their movements, is it not proper that the other half should carry on the important task of making investigations into internal nature and discovering the hidden forces that make the mortal immortal, infuse the eternal essence of beauty into

evanescent objects and assist thought itself to transcend its own limitations? If one half of the thinking world is using its scientific knowledge to forge engines of destruction and to manufacture poison gases for mutual slaughter, should not the other half utilize its mystical knowledge to tap the sources of more abundant life in the form of religion, altruism, poetry and the fine arts and help to regenerate a fallen world? We need not pause for an answer; for the answer is most obvious.

Mayavati
16 April, 1941

THE MESSAGE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

BY SACHIVOTTAMA SIR C. P. RAMASWAMY AIYAR, K.C.S.I.,
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[The following is the substance of an address delivered by Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, Dewan of Travancore, when he presided over a public meeting held at the Victoria Jubilee Town Hall, Trivandrum, under the auspices of the local Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, in order to celebrate the 106th birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna.—Ed.]

I had the inestimable privilege of acquaintance with Swami Vivekananda and with the group of people whom he gathered around him for the purpose of propagating the message of Sri Ramakrishna. I am, therefore, happy to associate myself with celebrations designed to bring that great soul back to our memories and to keep alive his recollections.

The message and the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa is not a message addressed to any group of people or to any race—and one may go further—or to any creed. Speaking for myself, I regard that message as universal in the truest and the justest sense, and I hold also the view that all the great religions of the world have their own part to play in the enlighten-

ment of mankind and in the leading of them on the right path. But there are certain special contributions which the genius of India has made to religious thought and religious endeavour, which thought and endeavour have been roused to a wonderful degree by Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and their disciples. The message of Sri Ramakrishna is a message whose reality and whose urgency at the present moment is one of the fundamental things of to-day and of to-morrow.

It has been one of the peculiar privileges and glories of this ancient, and oftentimes distracted, land that throughout the ages there have come into birth in this country men, not only of the most acute and refined intellect but men who have glorified in

those ideals of renunciation and of dedication, without which no great work and no great man is adequately recognized in India. If to-day we find that the one man whose influence and power for good are widely recognized not only amongst those who are his immediate followers but amongst all classes, if we reflect upon the secret of his greatness and of his influence, if we seek to analyse what Mahatma Gandhi means to India, how can we analyse the position save by granting that he is a man who has tried to typify in his own life and in the pursuit of his own ideals, those dedications, those renunciations and those asceticisms which are the characteristic features of the Indian Yogi and are inherent in the very breath of India and all that is loved in India.

Now Sri Ramakrishna was one of that long line of authentic saints of India who have stood for those ideals of renunciation and dedication. But if he were only that, he would be only one of thousands and tens of thousands, because the Rishis that have flourished in this country, that have made their contribution to the sum total of the spirituality of the world, are manifold as the sands of the sea. But why is it that with a particular poignancy, with a particular affinity, modern India turns to Sri Ramakrishna and the movement for which he stands? It is because, in my humble opinion, he signifies to the fullest possible degree, the one thing in respect of which India has been unique and by reason of which the spirit of India, the mind of India, the effort of India, the aspirations of India, will live for ever, as long as humanity is alive in this distracted globe—and that is the sense of immanence, the sense of divinity and the sense of the universality of human effort and life.

Now we are apt to repeat often, too often, what is called the toleration or the universality of the Hindu faith? Let us consider for a moment why it is that we are entitled to claim in that way? There have been great religions, great revelations; and if we are true disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, if we are true Hindus, if we are true Indians, what we must not forget, what we cannot but admit, and what we should not gainsay at any time is this—that every one of those revelations is authentic. Whether those revelations come from Israelitish channels, through Egypt, through Confucius or through Christ or through Buddha or Ramakrishna, every one of those revelations meant something to the suffering humanity, and was a true gospel. Too often, in the history of the world, this truth has not been borne in mind; and essentially in the human mind there is a natural antithesis which has been most beautifully expressed by one, whom I am proud to call a distant kinsman of mine—I mean Appaiyah Dikshitar. He speaks thus in one of his wonderful verses. ‘O Supreme Being, You are formless; and yet, with every thought of mine, with every meditation of mine, I bestow on You a form. O Great and Eternal One, You are beyond description; and yet, with every praise of Thine, with every prayer that I utter, I give unto You the habit or the faculty of being describable. You are without features, You are Omnipresent; and yet, whichever temple I go to, whatever holy place I visit, whichever holy man I essay to reach, in that way and to that extent I give unto You features and a place of residence. Thus in these three several ways, day in and day out, throughout my life I have been guilty of a great sin. May I be pardoned.’

रूपं रूपविवर्जितस्य भवतो ध्यानेन यत्कल्पितं
स्तुत्यानिवचनीयताखिलगुरो दूरीकृता यन्मया ।
व्यापित्वञ्च निराकृतं भगवतो यत्तीथयात्रादिना
क्षन्तव्यं जगदीश तद्विकलता दोषत्रयं मत्कृतं ॥

In that way Appaiyah Dikshitar expressed what I have ventured to call the essential antithesis of the religious life, namely, the impossibility of the human being grasping the Eternal in its essence, and therefore having recourse to various forms, various methods, various prayers, various expedients for reaching out towards the Eternal. And all the religions of the world, all the cults, wise or unwise, cruel or kind, merciful or the reverse, all these are the reachings out of the human mind for something beyond it and above. Therefore in the efforts of a suffering, imperfect and necessarily sinful humanity, in its wormlike crawling towards its goal, every path is worthy of praise, because like that great Roman philosopher we are bound to say that everything that humanity has done is good to humanity. It is in that spirit that Sri Ramakrishna approached the Divine. He, in his life, made no distinction between the Muslim, the Christian and the Hindu, or between the Vedantin and the follower of the Bhakti cult; and that is one of the great glories of the message of Sri Ramakrishna. In other words, he brought into real being those traditions and those beliefs which I hold and contend are parts of the tradition of Hinduism and of Indian life. Where else would it be possible to find one like Buddha, who sought to annihilate formalism, the sacrifice of living beings for the sake of appeasing divine or quasi-divine agencies; who sought to annihilate the arrogance of the priestly class; who sought to make out that wisdom is not the prerogative of birth but is an achievement, a path to be trodden by the lowest as well as by the

highest? And yet that Buddha became, and was recognized, and is recognized to-day, as one of the incarnations of Mahavishnu. So we find that our great singers and seers have throughout, with a few exceptions—exceptions because human history is always unequal and full of travail and full of inconsistencies—proved that the history of India is a history of complete assonance with the inherent longings of the human soul. And Ramakrishna, it may be said, was one of the culminations of that spirit and that outlook.

The other aspect of Sri Ramakrishna's message is its dynamic spirit. It was Swami Vivekananda who said that real Hinduism, well understood, well speculated upon, is not a religion of passivity. It is not a religion of yielding. It is a religion of assertion, the assertion of the dignity of the human soul, 'Tattvamasi.' Which religion has asserted that the suffering sinful humanity has not only the possibilities of reaching the Supreme but is part of the Supreme? That has been the message of this land. Therefore when Ramakrishna and Vivekananda said that manliness, assertion, is and should be the watchword of our faith, they spoke a truth which, I trust, will gather momentum day in and day out, and will make of us real missionaries—missionaries not in the sense of adding convert to convert for the purpose of arithmetic but in the sense that we are convinced of the Truth and we wish to share that conviction, not in a spirit of aggressiveness or antagonism but in the spirit in which a generous man full of treasure goes out and asks others to share that treasure with him, just in the spirit in which it is said in our ancient scriptures that when the breakfast time comes the householder should go out into the street, look north and south and east and west for people

because it is not the Dharma of the Indian to eat alone and by himself but he should share the good things of the world with his Atithis or guests. It is in that capacity that we shall offer our goods to others and ask them to share those goods and share those beliefs, those assertions and those realizations which are parts of our faith and our traditions and our genius.

Sri Ramakrishna was in his life a bundle of contradictions. He was born in a very religious Brahmin family. In Bengal, throughout many centuries, the spirit of Chaitanya has been one of the most potent, the spirit of Chaitanya being the complete annihilation of self in the contemplation of the Ishtadevata (Chosen Ideal). Kabir, Tulsidas and Ramakrishna belong to a great hierarchy of Bhaktas (devotees). Ramakrishna gave up everything in the contemplation of the ineffable Supreme. But in addition to that, and in the spirit of the true Indian tradition, he was not a mere dreamer. He was not a mere venturer into those misty and shadowy regions where reality and non-reality blend in some confusion. He was a descendant of the Vedantins. Vedanta is the most daring, is the most adventurous excursion of the human spirit into the unknown—Vedanta which claims the union of the human soul, the imperfect sinful human soul, with the perfect Supreme; Vedanta which dares to deny all distinction between the Self and non-self. Being a true follower of Vedanta also, in addition to being a true Bhakta, he was able to carve out a message for modern India.

And what is the message of Sri Ramakrishna which has been sublimated, which has been made very practical, which has been made the path for us to tread? That message to India may

be summarized thus: India will be untrue to itself if it gives up its age-long faith in the superiority of the non-material to the material. It is for lack of that faith, it is for not recognizing the truth of that maxim that the modern nations are where they are. Economics, markets, conquests, the empire following the conflict or the conflict following the empire, balance of power—all these slogans which have disfigured the history of Europe during the last one hundred or two hundred years are but abbreviated versions of the doctrine of inherent and almost arrogant selfishness. That selfishness arises because Christian nations have forgotten Christ—Christ, the great communist, the great rebel, the great man who chased money-lenders out of the temple at Jerusalem, the man who pleaded for poverty saying that it is easier for a camel to enter the needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the portals of Heaven, Christ who was thoroughly impractical and an idealist and a dreamer. In spite of what his followers may preach, Christ, it must be remembered, was a true Vedantin. It has been recently shown in one of Sir S. Radhakrishnan's works that Greek thought, Egyptian thought, Palestinian thought and Christian thought have owed a great deal to those underlying philosophical truths and beliefs which are the heritage of the eastern world. It has been forgotten that Christ is an Asiatic, that Buddha too is an Asiatic. And that is why it is yet true to say that light goes from the East, while laws come from the West. When I say this I am not original in any way, because it was many years ago that the saying originated:—*Ex occidente lex ex oriente lux*—'Out of the East came light; out of the West came the laws.' And that is one aspect of the life and message of Sri Rama-

krishna, namely, that behind all human endeavour for advancement there is one danger to be dreaded, one evil to be avoided, one plague to be shunned, and that is the acceptance of grandeur and acquisition of territory or of goods as the sole end of mankind. This is easy to say but difficult to practise. For it is one thing to preach and quite another to practise; but there must be somebody to preach for people to practise. That is the first message of Sri Ramakrishna.

The second point in his message, I take it, is that it does not matter to what religion you belong, it does not matter in what creed or race you are born, provided you seek to realize something beyond and outside your little self and follow your ideal. It was in some such spirit that the poet Wordsworth said at a time when Europe was not so sophisticated, so aeroplane-ridden or bomb-ridden as it is to-day :—

The world is too much with us; late
and soon

Getting and spending, we lay waste
our powers

Little we see in Nature that is ours?
We have given our hearts away, a
sordid boon.

This sea that bares the bosom to the
moon,

The winds that will be howling at all
hours

And are up-gathered now like sleep-
ing flowers,

For this, for everything, we are out
of tune;

It moves us not—Great God; I'd
rather be

A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn,
So might I, standing on this pleasant
lea,

Have glimpses that would make me
less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the
sea;

Or hear old Triton blow this wreathed
horn.

What he said was—If I was given some belief, even if it be in a false God, that is much better than the absence of belief, than that scepticism which envelopes us. It is that aspect of the matter, namely, the absorption in something outside and beyond your little self which is the second message of Sri Ramakrishna.

The last message may be described as the assertion of the manliness, the glory, the might and the significance of India as such. Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda were two of the great apostles of modern India, in the sense that they made us self-respecting, that they made us realize that we have something to give and that we are not mere beggars at the doors of the great races and the nations of the world; and that something we give not in a spirit of churlishness, not in a spirit of patronage, not in a spirit of aloofness, but in a spirit of friendliness and fraternal sharing of spiritual goods.

These three are the messages of Sri Ramakrishna. He lived an unknown life. He was one of the many Bhaktas who are amongst the glories of our race and tradition. There are such Bhaktas to-day. There have been such Bhaktas throughout the history of India. But some Bhaktas, coming into being at critical moments in the history of a nation, are able to infuse into that nation a new spirit, a new spark. And all that Sri Ramakrishna has done is essentially due to his great disciple Swami Vivekananda. In this respect, you will see that all through the ages these great Bhaktas and these great prophets have always been wonderfully fortunate. Putting it crudely, it has been most wonderfully providential that their messages have been sublimated by their disciples. That was the

great good fortune of Buddha. That was the great good fortune of Jesus Christ, who without St. Paul would not have been able to clothe his message in that philosophical garb which we now know as Christianity. Similarly, in the case of Ramakrishna it needed Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Mission to do that. The most transcendent message was the message of the two combined, namely, that religion is not an escape, that religion is an emergence, that by religion is not meant going away from the world, that it means working amongst the masses in the market, in the hospital, in the refuges of the poverty-stricken, the diseased

and the distressed, working amongst them by self-sacrifice, working social good amongst them and so making it possible for the eschewal of all that is ugly and all that is diseased in the physical body, then in the mental body and then in the spiritual body and making an integral healthy whole, healthy in body, in mind and in spirit. It is that aspect of dynamic social service, social service as a form of Yajna, as a form of prayer, as a form of Tapas—it is that message, that great teaching which constitutes the gospel of Vivekananda as derived from Ramakrishna. It is for that great contribution to human life and thought that we honour Ramakrishna.

ART IN ASIA

BY N. C. MEHTA, I.C.S.

[This article, the substance of which was broadcast from the Lucknow Radio Station, is printed by courtesy of the All-India Radio.—Ed.]

Laurence Binyon delivered a course of six lectures in 1933-34 to the Harvard University, which are recorded in a delightful book entitled *The Spirit of man in Asian Art*. Here he passes in review the salient features of the arts of India, China, Japan and Iran. Says he, 'Looking on our world as it is, there are moments when one may be provoked to think that the most conspicuous characteristic of mankind is a gift for making a prodigious mess of its affairs, even one might think, an unteachable stupidity, with all the cruelties directly and inevitably springing from that stupidity.' This stupidity or want of an integrated vision is responsible for looking upon Art as something alien to or apart from Life's normal activities.¹

Binyon combines the rare gifts of sound aesthetic judgement and felicitous writing. He goes on to say: 'There is no history of human happiness. Of wars, plagues, and calamities; of crimes, conquests, and adventures; of enactments, of voyages, inventions, and discoveries; of these the pages of historians are full. But of the immense, silent, intangible life behind these resounding efforts and events, how little, after all, they tell us! And yet, if

pictures says: 'The Universe has its only language of gesture, it talks in the voice of pictures and dance. Every object in this world proclaims in the dumb signal of lines and colours the fact that it is not a mere logical abstraction or a mere thing of use, but it is unique in itself, it carries the miracle of its existence. . . .

'People often ask me about the meaning of my pictures. I remain silent even as my pictures are. It is for them to *express* and

¹ Rabindranath Tagore writing in his Chitra-Lipi-reproductions of eighteen of his

there is no written history, there is a record of human happiness, of human joy; the record is man's art. And that record has one great advantage over the history of historians; it is true.'

When Binyon goes on to discourse about the art of Iran, we immediately come to a phase of Asiatic art, at once intimate and familiar to us, for Iran and India have met in fruitful contacts at various periods of their histories in the past. The pictorial art of Iran, deriving its primal impulse from China appears to have matured rapidly and also declined with equal celerity and suddenness, almost because it was precocious and glorified the achievements of its Sasanian heroes who ruled between the third and the seventh centuries A.D. The impact of Islam, while limiting its subject-matter, failed to repress the passionate love of the Iranian for resplendent colour, the garden, the trees, flowers and above all running water. His inborn romanticism asserted itself and we have got some marvellous pages of pictorial splendour by Bihzad Mirak and other celebrities of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

'There is no gross transcript of everyday vision, it is an almost dazzling revelation of a world washed clean, where every object flows like pebbles in transparent water and is made precious to the eye.' The Iranian above all is a

not to *explain*. They have nothing ulterior behind their own appearance for the thoughts to explore and words to describe and if that appearance carries its ultimate worth then they remain, otherwise they are rejected and forgotten even though they may have some scientific truth or ethical justification. . . .

'Love is kindred to art, it is inexplicable. Duty can be measured by the degree of its benefit, utility by the profit and power it may bring, but art by nothing but itself. There are other factors of life which are visitors that come and go. Art is the guest that comes and remains. The others may be important, but art is inevitable.'

colourist. He places his characters amidst scenes of supreme splendour. Flowers and trees and running streams are all resplendent, picked out in colours of unsurpassed purity and brightness. In sheer accomplishment the pictures can only be compared to their counterparts in poetry and even in carpets, and are superb in sheer artistry. But it is an art, because of its very brilliance and glittering surfaces it has from certain limitations. Practically all that the artist wants to say is explicit on the surface. There is 'no passion, like the Chinese, for great spaces and solitudes where the winds blow out of far horizons.' For the Iranian, as for European artists, man is the centre and dominates the stage. And running through Persian art is a lively sense of drama.

Iranian painting was in great vogue in this country with the rise of the Moghuls to political power at the beginning of the sixteenth century; and like Persian poetry it enjoyed in full measure the prestige and patronage of the court. But the fashion particularly for Iranian painting barely lasted for more than half a century, for Indian traditions proved too strong for this outlandish but exquisite display of *joie de vivre*—of life lived in the noontide of adolescence and Shah Abbas, the contemporary of Jehangir, actually borrowed the services of Bishandas, a painter of the Moghul *atelier* for making a portrait of himself. Such was the renown of the Indian portrait painter, which remains unsurpassed even after the lapse of three centuries and more.

If Indian art, which primarily means the religious art of India, has been significant and of such profound influence over the art and culture of the entire Asian continent, it is because of its unique integrity and instinctive understanding of the unity of life. Roger

Fry is correct in saying that it is an art entirely dedicated to the glory of God, and that it escapes altogether from the influence of propaganda and the desire for prestige and eschews the defects of an official art. What, however, strikes him as pornographic imagery or intense voluptuousness is only a measure of the difficulty that a Western scholar of great sensibility finds in appreciating artistic traditions of India and which was characteristic of the earlier European scholars who appraised too highly 'the incessant repetition of ebullient and pasty forms' of Gandharan sculptures. Binyon rightly remarks that the immense series of Ajanta paintings holds the central place in the pictorial art of the East and that at Ajanta all seems spontaneous and instinctive. . . . 'The ease and mastery of the brushwork are astonishing. The painter seems as if unaware of difficulties. It is like a natural eloquence. And yet there is no callousness such as so often, in a ripe art, comes with the pleasures of mastery.' He goes on to describe the famous fresco at Bagh which consists chiefly of a festive procession of people on horseback, on elephant and on foot. 'Dancers are surrounded by circles of girl musicians. It may seem a strange embellishment of a monastery wall. But in India religion is not something set apart from daily life, but inseparable from existence as the perfume from the flower. . . .' The maturity of the Bagh frescoes is rightly characterized as 'a flowering of the mind in form.' And while it is true that the subject of the Bagh frescoes is not so sublime as the subject-matter of the Buddha's life at Ajanta, there is infinitely greater charm and beauty of the rhythm and natural perception of the human pose and gesture. 'Above all there is a perfect fusion of the sensuous and the spiritual.

The spiritual significance of life is not emphasized so as to become disdainful of the lovely body and the warm earth; it is felt rather as something which pervades and perfumes all that breathes, like the light touch of wind blowing from we know not where; something which unites and does not divide.' Art has no existence apart from the bodily senses and yet it is a spiritual activity, for the object of it is ultimately the same as that of all human endeavour. Hence Indian scholars have always thought of aesthetic appreciation as something akin to the realization of Brahman, the great Reality. But spirituality as the Indian instinctively understood was not something separate from or opposed to sensuousness. The quest therefore was always for the harmony of spirit and sense. And Indian art therefore strove to express spiritual impulse of man through the sensuous rhythms of form. It was an art which embodied the desires, the exultations and the agonies of the spirit of man, and, to quote the words of William Blake, 'it furnished a means of conversing with paradise.' Binyon refers to the lyrical quality of the tiny paintings of India which were produced in such profusion from the seventeenth till the middle of the nineteenth century. In these pictures 'the line flows over all the accidents of forms like a stream, and refuses to be impeded by them. . . . Is there anything in the art of the world so like a song that sings itself?'

He has rightly emphasized the seminal character of Indian art which migrated to China and dominated for centuries the art of almost the entire Continent, because of the spiritual message that it had to give to the great and ancient civilizations of China and Japan. China, above all, had experimented for centuries in the various media and proved her capacity for

accomplished workmanship, instinctive taste and capacity for impeccable workmanship and sublime ideas. If she, too, came under the sway of Indian Dharma it was because the message of the great Buddha imparted just that ferment and inspiration which enabled the Chinese imagination to flower in the immortal creations of the T'ang period. It was not a question of influences or imitations; it was a case of spiritual conversion. And the Chinese genius rose to its greatest flights in interpreting the message of the Great Master. The charity, the compassion and the repose of the Buddha were translated with the instinctive Chinese sense for design, form and rhythm. The spiritual impulse, which with the Indians was all-pervasive and inseparable from artistic expression, became with the Chinese something more than remote and unearthly. Binyon has rightly contrasted the effects of this meeting between the Indian and Chinese cultures with the evolution of the debased art of the Gandharan period.

In a brilliant analysis of Chinese landscape painting, Binyon brings out the characteristics of Asian art and the spiritual unity of all aesthetic expression in the Asian conception of things *vis-à-vis* the traditions of the West. 'One of the greatest conceptions of Indian art is the image of the Buddha sitting in ecstasy, still as a flame in a windless place, an ecstasy which has consumed the world to thought.

'The attitude of Lao-tze seems to have much in common with the Indian attitude, yet it is, I think, more accessible to our ways of thinking. Indian art and poetry are full of delight in the beauties of this world, because in each glory of sound and sight and smell is found a manifestation of the joy of the Infinite Spirit. But with all that sensitiveness to nature there is no

passionate study of nature as a whole. There is no development of pure landscape art, as in China, where there is a deep and abiding sense of the companionship of earth and man. The habit of regarding the world of appearances as illusory is too strong.' How the philosophy of the race affects this artistic expression, is clearly brought out in the Chinese treatment of empty spaces, 'Hollowness, emptiness—these are words, these are ideas, from which our instincts recoil; they are repugnant,' because it is not realized that space is not something like an enclosure but the Akasha, the Infinite, the home of the liberated spirit, where it flows with the flowing of the eternal spirit: the universe is one unbounded whole. This is the inspiration of the landscape art of China. To use the words of Lao-tze, 'Clay is moulded into a vessel; the utility of the vessel depends on its hollow interior. Doors and windows are cut out in order to make a house; the utility of the house depends on the empty spaces. Thus, while the existence of things may be good, it is the non-existent in them which makes them serviceable.' At once we find ourselves seeing things from a fresh angle. . . . It is hard to think of any Western painting in which the empty spaces are made as significant as they are here: one would almost say even more significant than the figures. The intervals seem brimmed with a listening silence. You feel that the artist dwelt on them, so as to draw 'out their eloquence. It is, so to speak, space spiritualized.'

We in this country never cultivated the art of landscape painting as in China or in Japan, for our emotional outlook was essentially different. To the Chinese or the Japanese flowers and birds were not mere pleasurable accessories of human life, but were contemplated as living things of a dignity not

less than that of human beings. The result was something extraordinary, for the world has never seen anything approaching the paintings of woods and streams, mists and vapours, mountains and rivers, birds and flowers, so suggestive, so spiritualized and so alive as those by the Chinese and the Japanese masters. In the hands of these artists a spray of blossom trembling in the wind seemed to be at once an apparition from a world of intenser life and a kind of secret thought unfolding in the heart of man. Here it was no question of mere technical skill, for the result depended primarily on the mental effort and the intellectual or the imaginative grasp of the subject. It was the translation of the Indian conception of contemplation being the first essential in the depiction of the Divine. Here was no elaboration by the busy hand, while the mind remained idle. All must be seen in memory or imagined; then the full mind's conception overbrims into form and tone. The Chinese and the Japanese attitude towards colour was also characteristic and in contrast to that of the Indian artist. The Chinese emphasis was more on form and rhythm. According to a Chinese critic, 'Colouring in a true pictorial sense does not mean a mere application of variegated

pigments. The natural aspect of an object can be beautifully conveyed by ink-colour, if one knows how to produce the required shades.' The Indian, on the other hand, loved the warm and resplendent tones of his palette. Where, however, he surpassed himself was in those tiny uncoloured drawings, depicting some Puranic myth or legend, or showing the heroine in quest of her lover, or in delineating the *Ragamalas*—the pictorial counterparts of musical themes or of seasonal ballads. Here the fluid lines seemed to jet like water from a fountain curving over as it falls. . . . Since art is sensuous, since all it has to convey must be communicated through the senses, the medium of communication is of the first importance. And in the best of these drawings the mood is communicated with no impediment in the utterance, with perfect felicity.

Such was the art of Asia, integrated into a spiritual entity by the same ethical and intellectual outlook towards life. It was an art which instinctively perceived the unity of life and expressed it with an intensity which was natural because it was true and born of the sincerity of the Spirit. Here at any rate was no scope for strife, for the object which it sought was peace, happiness and understanding.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SRI AUROBINDO

BY PROF. S. K. MAITRA, M.A., Ph.D.

(Concluded from the previous issue)

III

THE PLUNGE INTO IGNORANCE

So far our discussion has been about the nature of the Creative Principle. We have now to deal with the process of Creation. Creation is a plunge of the Spirit into Ignorance. Why, however, should it be necessary for the Spirit to descend into Ignorance for the sake of creation? Why can it not create out of the fulness of its self-consciousness? The Spirit can create, and does indeed create, out of its plenary self-consciousness, remaining throughout perfectly in knowledge. Such creation, in fact, is creation in the upper hemisphere, and represents the crown and apex of the whole creation. Our sages were aware of such a pure creation through complete self-manifestation and called it the greater world beyond the lesser, but they regarded the world in which we men live as a mixed world of light and darkness, of truth and error. The creation of such a world can only be through Ignorance; it cannot be through knowledge. But although it is a plunge into Ignorance, it is a plunge for the purpose of coming back again through the whole gamut of creation to light and knowledge. That is the meaning of the world-process: to come back to light after an initial plunge into darkness or the sea of Inconscience. Immortality and peace and harmony are not given in this world but have to be built up out of death and struggle and discord. The plunge is, indeed, for the sake of giving the world an opportunity of rising out of

ignorance and suffering and weakness into knowledge and bliss and strength. The diving into Ignorance is only for the sake of bringing up on the surface by slow but sure stages the rich treasures of the Superconscient. It is to give man, apparently a hopelessly frail creature, the very picture of helplessness and misery, the seemingly hopeless task of rising to immortality, knowledge and strength.

Creation, therefore, of the world in which we live, is the result of the plunge of the Spirit into Ignorance, but in spite of this plunge, or rather because of it, the created world carries with it the promise of the millennium, the assurance that out of its present hopelessly weak and miserable state it will emerge into one of perfect strength and bliss. It is the realization of this which, as Sri Aurobindo points out, has taken different shapes in different ages—'the perfectibility of man, the perfectibility of society, the Alwar's vision of the descent of Vishnu and the gods upon earth, the city of God, the millennium, the new heaven and earth of the Apocalypse.' It is this which has been through all ages the source of inspiration for all noble efforts and great achievements of man.

THE TRUE NATURE OF IGNORANCE

But the question that now arises is: What is Ignorance? It is not enough to say that the Absolute plunges into Ignorance for the sake of creation. What we have a right to ask is: What is the nature of this Ignorance? How

does Ignorance arise at all? The answer to this question Sri Aurobindo has given in his own inimitable way in the chapter 'The Knowledge and the Ignorance' in the first part of the second volume of *The Life Divine*.

Sri Aurobindo shows that if we look upon Knowledge and Ignorance as fundamentally opposed to each other, as the Vedanta, when it crystallized itself in the systems of the great Acharyas, took them to be, then even if we regard Ignorance as a power of Brahman, there would result no unitary conception of Reality, but rather Reality would be divided hopelessly at its source, and we should have to take shelter under the plea that the ultimate nature of Ignorance is an unfathomable mystery. Escape from this position is only possible if we take Ignorance itself to be Knowledge, no matter how partial and fragmentary and distorted it may be, and further, if we view Ignorance itself to be capable of evolving into Knowledge. What we require is to realize that Consciousness or Knowledge operates in three different ways. At the highest it is Divine Self-Knowledge, which is also Divine All-Knowledge. At the other extreme we have what seems to be a complete negation of knowledge, an 'effective, dynamic, creative Nescience.' In the intermediate process we call it Ignorance which is a sort of half-way house between the Supreme Consciousness and the complete Nescience.

Ignorance, indeed, is nothing else than the power of the Divine Consciousness to partially withhold itself, to check or regulate itself. It is not, then, in any sense a separate Power or separate Will existing by the side of, and independently of, the Divine Power.

It is also capable, without self-annulment, of evolving itself into knowledge. Knowledge is the natural culmination of Ignorance, not a violent change which it undergoes by a complete self-effacement. In fact, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, 'what is happening is that the Ignorance is seeking and preparing to transform itself by a progressive illumination of its darkness into the knowledge that is already contained within it; the cosmic truth manifested in its real essence and figure would by that transformation reveal itself as essence and figure of the supreme omnipresent Reality' (Ibid. Vol. II. Part I. p. 312).

ORIGIN OF IGNORANCE

We have not yet discussed the question of the origin of Ignorance, although we have seen the importance of this question, for all processes in the lower hemisphere are processes through Ignorance. This problem will have to be discussed from the point of view of an integral Oneness as the ultimate truth. The problem, in fact, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, is this: 'How could this manifold ignorance or this narrowly self-limiting and separative knowledge arise and come into action and maintain itself in an absolute Being who must be absolute Consciousness and therefore cannot be subject to Ignorance? How is even an apparent division effectively operated and kept in continuance in the Indivisible?' (Ibid. pp. 413-14).

It will not do, he points out, to say either that Ignorance is cosmic, as some schools of the Vedanta assert, or that it is individual, as some other schools affirm. For in either case, it will destroy the integral Oneness of the Supreme Consciousness. Still less is it open to assert a fundamental difference between the Jivatman and Brahman,

taking the former to be subject to Ignorance and the latter to be totally free from it. We have therefore to say, if we are to maintain the integral oneness of the Supreme Reality, that 'Ignorance must be part of the movement of the One, a development of its consciousness knowingly adopted, to which it is not forcibly subjected but which it uses for its cosmic purpose' (Ibid. p. 415).

But this also does not remove the whole difficulty. How can Ignorance be a part of a movement of knowledge, and what is the cosmic purpose for which Ignorance is employed?

To answer this question, we have to observe that the Absolute is not merely Chit or Consciousness but also Shakti or Power. Chit itself is also Shakti. We may call it Tapas, using the word in the Vedic sense of a conscious force acting upon itself or upon its object—the sense, for instance, in which the Vedas say that the world was created out of Tapas. If we examine our own consciousness, we find that this Tapas, or the energy of the conscious force applying itself to an object, is really the most essential dynamic force that we possess. But in us this dynamism can only work upon two objects, namely, ourselves, that is, the internal world, and others, whether creatures or things, that is, the external world. But in the Absolute reality the operation of this dynamism will be somewhat different. For there is no distinction there between the inner and the outer, between Self and not-self. Moreover, in us only a part of our dynamism is manifested in our voluntary action, the rest being to our mental consciousness either involuntary or subconscious or superconscious, but in the Absolute Reality it is not so, for all is its own indivisible self and all actions are movements of its own indivisible will.

Tapas, therefore, for the Supreme Being, 'is the integral Tapas of an integral consciousness in an indivisible Existence' (Ibid. p. 421).

Now when we further examine our own consciousness, we find that there is an active part of it as well as a passive part of it. But even in the passive part of our consciousness, if we open ourselves sufficiently to what is beyond, we feel the presence of a Power acting upon us, a Power which is transcendental and which works in us for a greater manifestation of knowledge. Thus we see the energising of Tapas both in what we call our active and our passive consciousness.

It is the same with the Absolute. Both its active and its passive consciousness are Tapas. Its active consciousness is that part of it which melts into creation. But that does not represent the whole of its being. The unmelted part of its being is the great reservoir from which proceeds its further acts of creation. We realize this very clearly in our own consciousness. Thus, when we act, there is the whole of our personality standing behind the act. But not the whole of it expresses itself in the action. Only a small fragment of it does so, the rest remaining as a source of potential power, capable of projecting itself at any moment into action. There is therefore a vast gap between the expressed part of our being, which constitutes active consciousness, and the infinitely greater part which is what we call the passive consciousness. The former is a tiny fragment of the latter, an infinitesimal part of the vast treasure-house of unspent energy which is the unexpressed part of our being.

The passive consciousness of Brahman and its active consciousness are, therefore, not two different things; 'they are the same consciousness, the same energy, at one end in a state of

self-reservation, at the other cast into a motion of self-giving and self-deploying, like the stillness of a reservoir and the coursing of the channels which flow from it' (Ibid. p. 425). There is thus not a passive Brahman and an active Brahman, but one Brahman, one Reality which we call passive when it reserves its Tapas and active when its Tapas expresses itself in action, in creation.

We should further note that the activity and passivity of Brahman do not alternate each other, as they do in human consciousness, for if they did, then while creation continued, there would be no passive Brahman in existence, all would be action, and when the universe was dissolved, there would be no active Brahman, everything would lapse into eternal lifeless immobility. For Brahman, therefore, both the active and the passive consciousnesses exist simultaneously.

The Bhagavad-Gita says: "यस्मात् क्षरमतीतोऽहमक्षरादपिचोत्तमः" The Supreme Reality transcends both the mobile and the immobile parts of its being. It is aware of both and is not lost in either. Ignorance, therefore, is not a power of the Supreme Being nor does it dwell in Him. Consequently, there cannot be any primeval Ignorance.

But neither is it an inherent characteristic of the multiplicity of souls. For if it were so, none of these souls could ever aspire to rise above Ignorance and come into the presence of Knowledge. It is only when the individual soul is in the superficial layer of consciousness that it is shut out from the larger consciousness which would show its unity with other souls and with the Supreme Being. But it has also open to it the deeper levels of consciousness where the individual soul sees himself in fundamental unity with

other souls and with the whole universe.

The origin of Ignorance must therefore be sought elsewhere. It must be sought, says Sri Aurobindo, 'in some self-absorbed concentration of Tapas, of Conscious Force in action on a separate movement of the Force; to us this takes the appearance of mind identifying itself with the separate movement and identifying itself separately with each of the forms resulting from it' (Ibid. p. 435). The result of this self-absorption of Tapas is 'that it builds a wall of separation which shuts out the consciousness in each form from awareness of its own total self, of other embodied consciousnesses and of universal being.'

But what is the nature of this self-absorption, this self-forgetful concentration? It cannot be the action of the whole being or the whole force of being, for the character of that action is whole knowledge. It must therefore be a partial movement absorbed in a superficial or partial action of consciousness which makes it oblivious of everything that is not included in its formation. Ignorance, therefore, says Sri Aurobindo, 'is Nature's purposeful oblivion of the Self and the All, leaving them aside, putting them behind herself, in order to do solely what she has to do in some outer play of existence' (Ibid. p. 438).

Man by nature is not ignorant. He has the power and potency in him of complete knowledge. It is only because for pragmatic reasons, for purposes of the superficial movements of his life, he lives absorbed in the present moment, that there is erected a wall which shuts him out completely from all knowledge of the future and also from all knowledge of the past, except for that small part of it which memory makes accessible to him. His exist-

ence for the moment is not the whole truth of his being but only a pragmatic truth which holds good for the limited purpose of his superficial life.

Ignorance, therefore, does not create any dualism. It is not something opposed to knowledge, not something which contradicts knowledge. It is a power of knowledge itself, 'a power of knowledge to limit itself, to concentrate itself on the work in hand, an exclusive concentration in practice which does not prevent the full existence and working of the whole conscious being behind, but a working in the conditions chosen and self-imposed on the nature. . . . This power of self-limitation for a particular working, instead of being incompatible with the absolute conscious force of that being, is precisely one of the powers we should expect to exist among the manifold energies of the Infinite' (Ibid. p. 457).

One cannot help being reminded here of a similar attempt made by Bergson to show that the two movements of Reality, one directed towards life, freedom, the other directed towards matter, necessity, are really not two movements but essentially one. But Bergson's critics point out¹ that he has not been able to effect a real union between the two, for he has not succeeded in showing why the free creative activity of the Spirit should reverse its current and move towards Matter. There is nothing in the nature of the Spirit, as conceived by Bergson, which warrants such a reversal of movement.

Here one sees the superiority of Sri Aurobindo's position. By conceiving the ultimate Reality as Consciousness-Force and by showing the need for the self-limitation of this Force for purposes of creation, Sri Aurobindo has been

able to get rid of a difficulty which has proved such a stumbling-block in the system of Bergson.

SPECIAL FORM OF DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT: AVATARA

We have so far discussed the ordinary form of descent of the Spirit, the descent through Ignorance, which is responsible for the creation, as well as the maintenance of the world-process. But the world-process sometimes requires a special form of descent of the Spirit. This is the descent as Avatara which is mentioned in the Bhagavad-Gita. The peculiarity of this descent is that it is a descent in human form of the whole of the Divine Personality. In the fourth chapter of the Gita the nature of this special descent as Avatara and the reason for it have been very clearly stated. The Gita clearly shows (Gita iv. 6) that there is no contradiction in the idea of God taking birth in a human form. On the contrary, it says that no knowledge of God is complete unless there is the knowledge of this kind of Divine birth (iv. 9). Sri Aurobindo has discussed this question of Avatara very fully in his *Essays on the Gita*, a summary of which I have given elsewhere (Vide my article in the *Uttara*, Bhadra 1347). As this paper has already become very lengthy, it is not possible for me to do more than merely state the most salient points in Sri Aurobindo's conception of Avatara. In the first place, Sri Aurobindo says that the upholding of Dharma is not the only object of the descent of the Avatara, for it is not in itself an all-sufficient object, but is only 'the general condition of a higher aim and a more supreme and divine utility. 'For,' he says, 'there are two aspects of the divine birth; one is a descent, the birth of God in humanity, the God-head

¹ See Mc. Kellar Stewart's *A Critical Exposition of Bergson's Philosophy* p. 117.

manifesting itself in the human form and nature, the eternal Avatar; the other is an ascent, the birth of man into the Godhead, man rising into the divine nature and consciousness, *madbhavam agatah*; it is the being born anew in a second birth of the soul. It is that new birth which Avatarhood and the upholding of the Dharma are intended to serve' (*Essays on the Gita* First Series, p. 216). He continues: 'If there were not this rising of man into the Godhead to be helped by the descent of God into humanity, Avatarhood for the sake of the Dharma would be an otiose phenomenon, since mere Right, mere justice or standards of virtue can always be upheld by the divine omnipotence through its ordinary means, by great men or great movements, by the life and work of sages and kings and religious teachers, without any actual incarnation. The Avatar comes as the manifestation of the divine nature in the human nature, the apocalypse of its Christhood, Krishnahood, Buddhahood, in order that the human nature may by moulding its principle, thought, feeling, action, being on the lines of that Christhood, Krishnahood, Buddhahood transfigure itself into the Divine' (Ibid. p. 217).

For Sri Aurobindo, therefore, the main significance of the conception of Avatara is 'the birth of man into the Godhead,' as he very beautifully puts it, and not merely the preservation of Dharma. The Avatara is born, in his view, in order to show man what he is capable of becoming. It is to give him an ocular demonstration that he can also become God without even leaving his body. Otherwise he thinks there is no necessity for Avatarhood, the ordinary way in which God reveals Himself being quite sufficient for the ordinary processes of the world. 'The

Divine,' says Sri Aurobindo, 'works behind indeed and governs its special manifestation through this outer and imperfect consciousness and will, but is itself secret in the cavern, *guhâyâm*, as the Veda puts it, or as the Gita expresses it, "In the heart of all existences the Lord abides turning all existences as if mounted on a machine by Maya." This secret working of the Lord hidden in the heart from the egoistic nature-consciousness through which he works, is God's universal method with creatures. Why then should we suppose that in any form he comes forward into the frontal, the phenomenal consciousness for a more direct and consciously divine action? Obviously, if at all, then to break the veil between himself and humanity which man limited in his own nature could never lift.' (Ibid. p. 225).

This is also what the Gita itself says. Thus Sri Aurobindo points out, 'That the Gita contains as its kernel this second and real object of the Avatarhood, is evident from this passage—

“अवजानन्ति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम् ।
परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ॥” (ix-11)—

by itself rightly considered; but it becomes much clearer if we take it, not by itself—always the wrong way to deal with the texts of the Gita—but in its right close connection with other passages and with its whole teaching' (Ibid. p. 218).

GNOSTIC BEING

I shall now conclude by giving a brief account of Sri Aurobindo's conception of the Gnostic Being and the Divine Life.

When the Supramental descent takes place, then man will be freed from the limitations of mental consciousness, and the light of knowledge will dawn upon him. In other words, he will become

a Gnostic Being. It must not be supposed, however, that there is any possibility of the whole human race being raised to the supramental level. Sri Aurobindo is very clear on this point (Vide *The Life Divine* Vol. II. Part II. p. 837); what he suggests is nothing so revolutionary and astonishing, but only 'a capacity in the human mentality when it has reached a certain level or a certain point of stress of the evolutionary impetus to press towards a higher plane of consciousness and its embodiment in the being.'

The nature of the Gnostic Being has been so exhaustively dealt with by Sri Aurobindo that it is not possible, within the limits of this paper, to give an adequate idea of all the features of it that he has so beautifully described. I shall therefore content myself by giving one or two extracts from his book which will convey some idea of its nature. Speaking of the relation between the spirit and the body in the case of the Gnostic Being, he says, 'But in the gnostic way of being and living the will of the spirit must directly control and determine the movements and law of the body. For the law of the body arises from the subconscious or inconscient: but in the gnostic being the subconscious will have become conscious and subject to the supramental control, penetrated with its light and action; the basis of inconscience with its obscurity and ambiguity, its obstruction or tardy responses will have been transformed into a lower or superconscience by the supramental emergence' (Ibid. Vol. II. Part II. p. 1056).

What, again, is the nature of the bliss which the Gnostic Being enjoys? Sri Aurobindo characterizes it as follows: 'But in the highest ascents of the spiritual bliss there is not this vehement exaltation and excitement; there is

instead an illimitable intensity of participation in an eternal ecstasy which is founded on the eternal Existence and therefore on a beatific tranquillity of eternal peace. Peace and ecstasy cease to be different and become one. The supermind, reconciling and fusing all differences as well as all contradictions, brings out this unity; a wide calm and a deep delight of all-existence are among its first steps of self-realization, but this calm and this delight rise together, as one state, into an increasing intensity and culminate in the eternal ecstasy, the bliss that is the Infinite' (Ibid. pp. 1064-65).

DIVINE LIFE

With the descent of the Supermind into the Mind, not only will our mental consciousness be transformed into Gnosis, but our life itself will be transmuted into a Divine Life, a magnificent picture of which is given in the last chapter of *The Life Divine*. This last chapter is indeed a wonderful ending of a most wonderful book. And in one of the grandest passages of this chapter Sri Aurobindo describes thus the nature of the Divine Life:

'A life of gnostic beings carrying the evolution to a higher supramental status might fitly be characterized as a divine life; for it would be a life in the Divine, a life of the beginnings of a spiritual divine light and power and joy manifested in material nature. That might be described, since it surpasses the mental human level, as a life of spiritual and supramental supermanhood. . . . But what has to emerge is something much more difficult and much more simple; it is a self-realized being, a building of the spiritual self, an intensity and urge of the soul and the deliverance and sovereignty of its light and power and beauty

—not an egoistic supermanhood seizing on a mental and vital domination over humanity, but the sovereignty of the Spirit over its own instruments, its possession of itself and its possession of life in the power of the spirit, a new consciousness in which humanity itself

shall find its own self-exceeding and self-fulfilment by the revelation of the divinity that is striving for birth within it. This is sole true supermanhood and the one real possibility of a step forward in evolutionary Nature' (Ibid. Vol. II. Part II. pp. 1181-83).

JESUS CHRIST AND HIS MESSAGE

BY S. R. DAS GUPTA, M.A., B.L.

[Address delivered on the occasion of the Christmas celebrations (1940) at the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, New Delhi.—Ed.]

At the present crisis in the world's history when the materialism of the West has almost reached its climax, when the Crucified Saviour is being re-crucified with all the barbarity and brutality which human ingenuity can devise and the principles for which he lived and laid down his life on the Cross have been put into cold storage, it seems particularly appropriate that we on this side should, while celebrating his Nativity, take this opportunity of discussing his life and his message. I do not, however, claim to have studied the Christian scriptures with that thoroughness which would entitle me to speak to you with any degree of authority or to tell you anything which you do not already know. I will only try to touch briefly on a few salient points and events of his life and share my thoughts with you in order to find out what I or any one else not belonging to the denominational or doctrinal Christian faith can learn from his life and his message.

The life of Jesus Christ, in order to be properly appreciated, has to be studied against a historical background. To the Hindu mind his advent is a

fulfilment of the message delivered by the Lord Sri Krishna in the Gita that whenever virtue declines and vice triumphs in this world the Lord incarnates himself in human form so that there may be a rehabilitation of his kingdom on earth. A close examination of the lives of almost all prophets establishes the fundamental truth of this principle, and from this point of view the birth of Jesus may be said to have been a historical necessity. The great Roman Empire which wielded power and suzerainty over a large part of the world in those days had fallen from the highest pinnacles of glory to the lowest depths of degradation. Religion at that time was at a discount and a premium was put upon all kinds of the most abominable vice. The royal courts set an example of debauchery, cruelty and the most horrible and unspeakable orgies which have ever disfigured the pages of history. In the language of the historian Tacitus, 'In Rome all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world found their centre and became popular.' The result was that the royal courts in Rome became a byword of infamy and

immorality, and the common people, as usual, were only too happy to imitate the example set by the highest in the land. In Judea, Syria, Palestine were reproduced faithfully the conditions then prevailing in Roman society. Corruption, debauchery, harlotry and vices of all kinds found a ready home, and in matters of religion the hypocrisy and sham that prevailed are brought home to us in the accounts of the Pharisees and the Sadducees in the New Testament.

It was in this eventful period of the world's history that God thought it fit to send down His beloved son in order that He might once again lead His people along the true path and deliver them from the morass into which they had fallen, and which would only have the effect of leading them on to complete destruction and annihilation. It is a remarkable fact that before coming into this world God invariably gives a warning of His arrival,—a thing which we find to be true in the lives of most of the prophets from the earliest times downwards. When he entered the womb of Mary to be born as the son of Joseph who wanted to 'put her away privily' because of shame, the Lord appeared unto him in a dream and apprised him of the real situation, telling him that the son who would be born to him was to be called JESUS. And so it happened. The events that took place after the birth of Jesus bear an almost uncanny resemblance to those that occurred after the birth of Sri Krishna. All Hindus are aware of the troubles through which the child Krishna and his parents had to pass, how the wicked king Kamsa who had been forewarned of his impending death at the hands of Sri Krishna had determined to take his life, how the Lord appeared to Vasudeva in a dream and instructed him to remove the child to

Brindavan, how the baby was then transported at dead of night to Brindavan and smuggled into the house of the cowherd Nanda, to be tended by his wife Yashoda. Substitute Herod for Kamsa and Egypt for Brindavan and you have a repetition of the incident almost to the minutest details. We read in St. Matthew of the Lord appearing before Joseph in a dream and telling him to flee to Egypt with his family in order to save the newly born child from the wrath of Herod, and of how Joseph actually fled to Egypt and Herod massacred all children below two years of age, etc. It is rather interesting to note that the other three Gospels besides St. Matthew make no mention of these events, not even St. Luke who claims to write with knowledge of contemporary events; but no great importance need be attached to that.

After this we do not hear very much about the activities of Jesus except that he was found to be a very precocious child who was gifted with a fund of wisdom which could only be characterized as supernatural. The most abstruse problems of theology which defied the brains of the wisest men in those days were solved by him with an amount of clarity which left them wondering. 'And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers' (Luke).

From the age of twelve until about the age of thirty-two when he emerged into the world we do not hear anything about him. The most diligent researches into history have failed to penetrate the veil that shrouds this period of his life. To me it seems as if this was his period of preparation, the period of Sadhana and Tapasya, the period of training for his ultimate emergence into the world like an incendiary bomb which would set the whole world on fire and in the end revolutionize it and change it

out of shape. When we find him coming out we see him undergoing the last stage of his Sadhana in the shape of initiation at the hands of John the Baptist who anointed him with the holy water of the Jordan, to be followed by a message from on high, 'This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.'

Thus equipped he comes out to deliver the message of his Heavenly Father. But he was not still free from his trials and tribulations. The temptations thrown in his way by Satan and his final overcoming of those temptations remind us of similar experiences in the lives of most of the world's teachers. The Hindu Shastras speak of similar temptations thrown in the way of Nachiketa who wanted to learn and realize the supreme truth, and in Buddhistic theology we read of an exactly similar experience in the life of Buddha, when Mara, the god of Evil, tried to make him deviate from the path which leads to ultimate Nirvana, and had to admit defeat. Even coming down to our own times we read of similar experiences in the life of Sri Ramakrishna who spurned at all temptations thrown in his way by Mathur Babu and Lachminarayan Marwari. This to my mind is symbolical of the great truth that no one who cannot renounce the pleasures and joys of this world can ever hope to attain the highest realization.

After this Jesus started delivering his message to the world, and the question now arises as to what that fundamental message was. To my mind the essence of his preaching resolves itself into this basic precept that the aim of all human life is to realize the divinity which is latent in every individual. 'The kingdom of God is within you,' he said, and the first and foremost duty of man is to enter that kingdom in order that

he may enjoy everlasting peace and happiness. In Chapter 12 of St. Mark this is made clear in language which leaves no ambiguity about it:

'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment.' And he goes on to say that the only way to achieve this consummation is through renunciation. So long as there is attachment to worldly things the kingdom of heaven will only remain a distant vision and a dream which can never be realized. 'Sell all thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'

'Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house or parents or brethren or wife or children for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in the present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.'

Therefore all forms of worldly attachment had to be renounced. It has to be noticed that Jesus Christ was a Sannyasin who had nothing in the world to call his own and only lived in an ecstasy of communion with God Himself. 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.' He was himself a shining example of the precept which he preached: 'Take no thought of the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself,'—an advice which can only be given by one who has shaken off the slightest vestige of attachment for the things of this earth. But then it would be wrong to suppose that Jesus wanted all men to be Sannyasins. He knew that all people

cannot be put into one mould and that among his followers there would be Sannyasins like himself who renouncing all would take upon themselves the task of spreading his gospel far and wide and also householders who would realize God by following his precepts. He therefore laid down for each of these classes,—at least that is how I read the Bible,—a separate code of conduct so that each might progress towards God-realization in his own particular way. For the householders he lays down a code of conduct which tells them to repent for their sins, to obey their parents, warns them against stealing and against bearing false witness, against adultery even in thought, against all kinds of hypocrisy which was characteristic in those days of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart,’ says he, ‘for they shall see God.’ It is this purity of heart on which the greatest stress has been laid. The heart is the source and the fountain of all our actions, and if the heart is not pure our outward actions and words are of no consequence, whatever we may do. He puts no stress on external observances which to him are of no value, ‘for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts . . . things which defile a man.’ It is exactly the same sentiment which finds an echo in Sri Ramakrishna’s words, ‘*Man mukh ek kara,*’—to be sincere in word, thought and deed, which alone can confer a passport to the eternal happiness of God’s kingdom.

His second commandment was, ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself.’ ‘If a man smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the left also,’ and so on. Although the reason for this tolerance and forbearance has not been expressed by him in so many words, the Hindu mind finds it easy to follow. ‘*Sarva-bhute Narayana*’—the same divinity

which dwells in me dwells in my neighbour also and if in return for a tooth or an eye I do him a greater injury it is not the other person whom I am injuring but I harm myself because I injure the same divinity which is within both of us.

Again in another passage he gives us some idea of his concept of the kingdom of God.

‘Suffer little children to come unto me for of such is the kingdom of God.

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them.

And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’

The greatest stress is here laid on humility like that of a little child. A child is sincere, trustful, humble, and man must also possess all these qualities in order to qualify himself for God’s kingdom. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘One who realizes the divinity within him becomes like a child who has no strong attachments to anything.’ It is this faith of a child, absolute unreserving faith which is required. And the virtue of this faith is extolled in these words:

‘Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.’

It is this supreme virtue of faith which enables St. Peter to walk on the sea to meet the Master.

‘But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him and

said unto him, O Thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.'

An exactly similar incident is related in the Buddhist Jatakas of a lay disciple of the Master when he was living in Jetavana who had to cross the river Aciravati to meet the Enlightened One and not finding a boat on the shore walked across the river meditating on the Lord Buddha. When reaching half way he saw waves, his ecstasy in meditating on the Buddha became less and his feet began to sink, but he again strengthened his ecstasy in meditating on the Buddha, and reached Jetavana. It is this faith which moves mountains and makes dry ground of oceans and rivers that enabled the sick, the lepers and the palsied to be cured, and the dead to come to life again, at the hands of Jesus.

Another virtue which has to be cultivated for attaining the Kingdom of heaven, and which has been mentioned before, is humility. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for their's is the kingdom of heaven.' He himself is a living example of this humility so much so that before the Last Supper we find him washing the feet of his own disciples with towel and water. And he extols the virtue of humility in these words, 'Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'

And he finishes up his exhortations with this final admonition:

'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect.'

Having given these injunctions to his lay disciples he also prepared his Sannyasin disciples for their great work. Jesus knew that after him this small band of people would go out to the four corners of the earth to spread his

gospel for the ultimate redemption of mankind, and he prepared them accordingly. It is a remarkable fact that all the prophets on this earth have prepared a small and select band of disciples who renouncing all worldly possessions and attachments have devoted themselves to preaching the glad tidings after the departure of their beloved Masters. Buddha, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna,—to name only a few,—can be cited as examples of those whose monastic disciples spread the message of their Masters far and wide. In the same way Jesus Christ prepared a small and select band of men who after his departure would renounce everything and spread his gospel in all directions. They were people selected from very humble walks of life,—fishermen mostly who plied their nets in the Sea of Galilee,—but he prepared them to become fishers of men. To them he only preached the great virtue of renunciation and of not having any thoughts or worries about living and eating and sleeping. Everything must be sacrificed unreservedly for the sake of the Higher Life. Not for them to lay up treasures upon earth which thieves steal and moth and dust corrupt but to lay up treasures in heaven. He impresses on them the supremacy of the eternal life as compared to the transitory benefits of the world. To gain the whole world and lose one's own soul is the height of foolishness. He tells them that no one can serve God and Mammon. He gives them an injunction not to take any thought for their life and what they shall eat or drink, nor for their body or what they shall put on. Was not the life more than meat and the body than raiment? They had only to look at the fowls of the air who never sowed nor reaped nor gathered into barns but were cared for by the Heavenly Father; and were they not better

than those? What necessity had they to think of raiment? Were not the lilies of the field who did neither toil nor spin more glorious than Solomon with all his riches? And if God chose to dress in that fashion the grass of the field which would be cast into the oven the next day, would He not do very much more for them in order that they might be fed and clothed? Did He not know what their needs would be? Therefore his injunction was that without caring for these things they should first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things would be added unto them, even without their caring for the morrow. He warns them against accumulation of property of any kind:

‘Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses;

Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat.’

It was a very hard life for which he was preparing them. When one of them wanted to go back for a short time in order to bury his father who had just died, he stopped him saying, ‘Let the dead bury the dead.’ For them there was no looking back or going half way. All worldly ties had to be cut asunder and the only tie that would remain would be with God, to whose will there must be a complete and unconditional surrender. It was only after they had passed through this school of rigorous discipline that they would be qualified to become torch-bearers of the gospel of Christ in lands and climes which had become Godless.

It is interesting to compare these injunctions of Jesus Christ with the Noble Eightfold Path laid down by Buddha for the attainment of salvation, viz. right views, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right endeavour, right watchfulness and

right meditation. This was the path, ‘of which the Tathagata has gained perfect knowledge, which produces insight and knowledge, and conduces to tranquillity, to supernatural faculty, to complete enlightenment, to Nirvana.’

A question is commonly asked as to whether this kingdom of heaven which Jesus Christ visualized refers to the present or to some future existence. Although there are passages in which he speaks of the ‘world to come,’ it is permissible to assert that the advent of God’s kingdom even in one’s present existence is not by any means ruled out. As one Biblical writer puts it, ‘the future has become present and the present is projected into the future. The future salvation has become for us present, and yet has not ceased to be future.’ The fact that immediately before the advent of Jesus we find St. John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ‘Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,’—a sentence which is later on repeated by Jesus himself,—is a sufficient warrant for assuming that the words ‘Thy kingdom come’ in the Lord’s prayer did not refer to anything to be realized in some incomprehensible distant future but a blessing to be gained in this life itself.

The one great quality in the character of Jesus, which also strikes us as the most prominent, is his infinite love and unbounded mercy. This love and mercy he exhibited towards all, and throughout the New Testament we find him showering his grace upon all and sundry who had faith in him. Even the sinners need have no despair; if they repented and their repentance was genuine God’s mercy would be on them, as exemplified in the parable of the Prodigal Son. ‘Hate the sin but not the sinner’ was his injunction; and when a multitude which consisted even

of some of his own followers wanted to stone a sinner to death he stopped them with the admonition, 'He that is without sin amongst you, let him cast the first stone.' We find him fondling little children, feeling compassion for the lowly, the diseased, the outcast and the despised, and his kindness was showered upon all equally. He feels compassion for the multitude who come to listen to him because they are hungry and he sees that they are properly fed before they leave him. This kindness of Jesus is only symbolical of the kindness of the Heavenly Father, as illustrated in the parable of the lost sheep, and this is a quality which all men have been asked to cultivate. It is not to be a passive quality but an active dynamic philanthropy like that of the Good Samaritan. And the service of God through the service of suffering humanity is also envisaged in the Bible:

'I was hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in:

'In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

In spite of his unbounded love Jesus could be stern also. He had no use for hypocrisy in any form. The 23rd chapter of St. Matthew contains imprecations and curses upon the Pharisees and the Sadducees, threatening them with hell fire and wailing and gnashing of teeth,—in language which leaves one in no doubt as to the feelings which prompted them. But to the faithful, to the sincere, to the true believer, his heart was ever open and his benevolence unstinted. Even the sinner Mary Magdalene, out of whom he drove out seven devils, was not considered to be unworthy of his grace,—an act of supreme love of which we find a parallel in Buddha's deliver-

ance of the fallen woman Ambapali, and of Sri Ramakrishna's ecstatic trances at the sight of the women of the streets whom he regarded as manifestations of the Divine Mother in another form. Even in the midst of his trials and adversities his charity and benevolence towards suffering humanity did not wane even by a tittle. His love for his disciples and their love for him forms one of the most ennobling episodes in the New Testament; so much so that when Judas Iscariot in a fit of temptation betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver, he was seized with such overpowering repentance that he immediately went out and hanged himself. Of the sorrows and sufferings of this world he had his full share. Poverty, contempt, treachery of friends, denunciation by enemies, betrayal by a close disciple,—all these and a great deal more, culminating in the trial, the crown of thorns, and the crucifixion, fell to his lot. And even he sometimes found the burden a little hard to bear, so much so that before the great betrayal we find him in the garden of Gethsemane, praying to God in utter exhaustion of body and anguish of soul:

'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt.'

But in spite of all this we find him giving of his abundance of mercy to all. When on the Cross in an agony of despair he cried out, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' we find him at the same time praying for his enemies and those who crucified him, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,'—a living and shining example of putting into actual practice his own precept:

'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate

you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.'

And in the plenitude of his mercy he takes the sins of the world upon his own shoulders and makes the supreme atonement on the Cross, leaving for us those words of hope which have been ringing throughout the world through the passage of centuries:

'Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.'

The Hindu hears in this an echo of the words of the Lord in the Gita,

'Sarva dharmân parityajya mâmekam sharanam braja.'

The next incident, and the last, in the life of Jesus Christ which I will discuss here is the Resurrection. A good deal of controversial literature has grown up around this episode and I do not propose to indulge in any scientific and analytical reasoning in regard to this subject, although even without entering into this controversy it may be said that it has stood the test of rationalistic criticism. To me, however, it symbolizes a resurrection of the human soul from the bondages of this earth towards the life infinite. 'I am the Resurrection and the Life' said the Lord. As soon as man realizes his oneness with God he shakes off all mundane attachments and resurrects himself to a realm of infinite bliss and everlasting happiness. And that is the grand finale and the great consummation which should be the aim and ambition of every one of us to achieve in this life, so that it may not be said of us later:

'I piped unto ye and ye have not danced; I mourned unto ye and ye have not lamented.'

I am afraid I have taken more time than was allotted to me or than I intended to take and I must therefore now bring my remarks to a close. Although the ministry of Jesus covered only a period of about two years, the subject is so vast and complex and withal so engrossing that it is difficult to do even the barest justice to it in a brief compass. The profoundest scholars in the world, the most learned theologians and divines have bestowed all their learning and scholarship in expositions of the life and teachings of the great Saviour; but it may be said, without meaning the slightest disparagement of their efforts, that they have only been able to touch the fringe of the subject. He is a remarkable and harmonious blend of Jnana, Karma and Bhakti, which in more recent years found such a glorious embodiment in Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. I will only conclude by saying that amid the shifting sands of time the majestic figure of the Prince of Peace still shines out in all its resplendent glory, beckoning to all human beings to follow the true path, but man heeds him not. The passage of two thousand years has not dimmed the effulgence of his countenance or lessened the value and universality of his teachings from which millions of weary souls still derive inspiration and consolation. May he on this day shower his choicest blessings on us all; may he usher in an era of peace on earth and good will among men; and in the sublime language of the Vedic seers, with which I will end this short discourse, may he in his abundant mercy lead us from the unreal unto the real, from darkness unto light, and from death unto immortality. Amen.

SWAMI YOGANANDA

BY SWAMI PAVITRANANDA

At the time when Sri Ramakrishna was attracting devotees—old and young—to the temple garden at Dakshineswar, a young man of eighteen, belonging to a neighbouring family, came to the garden of Rani Rasmani for a few consecutive days to see Sri Ramakrishna. The boy looked younger for his age and was cherubic in appearance. He was of a greatly religious disposition, and a divine purity beamed through his face. The boy heard about Sri Ramakrishna and felt interested to see the saint. But he was shy by nature and as such could not find out Sri Ramakrishna, though he was coming to Dakshineswar repeatedly. One day he saw a crowd in a room in the precincts of the temple and thought that might be the place where Sri Ramakrishna was staying. He went near but stood outside. At this time Sri Ramakrishna asked a man to bring all those who were outside within the room. The man found only a boy and brought him inside and offered him a seat. When the conversation ended and all went away, Sri Ramakrishna came to the boy and very lovingly enquired about his whereabouts.

The name of the boy was Yogindranath Choudhury. Sri Ramakrishna was delighted to know that the boy was the son of Nabin Chandra Choudhury, his old acquaintance.

Yogindra belonged to the Choudhury family of Dakshineswar. His ancestors were very aristocratic and prosperous, but his parents became poor. Yogin's father was a very orthodox Brahmin and performed many religious festivals. During the period of his Sadhana Sri Ramakrishna sometimes attended these

festivals, and thus was known to the family.

Yogin was born in the year 1267 of the Bengali Era. From his boyhood he was of contemplative temperament. Even while at play with his companions, suddenly he would grow pensive, stop play and look listlessly at the azure sky. He would feel he did not belong to this earth, he had come from somewhere in some other plane of existence, and those who were near about him were not really his kith and kin.

He was simple in his habits and never hankered after any luxury. He was a bit reserve and taciturn by nature. This prevented his friends from being very free with him. But he commanded love and even respect from all.

After he was given the sacred thread, he though very young, spent much time in meditation and worship. While performing worship of the family deity, now and then he would become deeply absorbed.

Yogin was about sixteen or seventeen when he met Sri Ramakrishna for the first time. He was then studying for the Entrance Examination. At the very first meeting Sri Ramakrishna recognized the spiritual potentiality of the boy and advised him to come to him now and then. Yogin was charmed with the warmth and cordiality with which he was received. And he began to repeat his visit to Sri Ramakrishna as often as he could.

To the people of Dakshineswar Sri Ramakrishna was known as an 'eccentric Brahmin.' They had no idea that the 'eccentricity' in the behaviour of Sri Ramakrishna was due

to his God-realization. The orthodox section looked upon Sri Ramakrishna with suspicion as regards his strictly observing caste rules etc. For people from Calcutta flocked round him, and those were the days when many people in that city openly defied the customs and traditions of Hinduism. As such Yogin did not dare come to Sri Ramakrishna freely, for he was afraid there would be objections from his parents if they knew about it. So he began to pay visits to Sri Ramakrishna stealthily.

But love like murder will out. Soon it was known that Yogin was very much devoted to Sri Ramakrishna and spent most of his time with him. Yogin's friends and companions began to taunt and ridicule him for that. Of a quiet nature as Yogin was, he would meet all opposition with a silent smile. Yogin's parents were perturbed to see him indifferent to his studies and so much under the influence of Sri Ramakrishna. But they did not like to interfere with him directly, as they thought it would be of no avail.

Yogin thought that the continuance of studies was useless, for he had no worldly ambition. But just to help the parents, who were in straitened circumstances, he went to Cawnpore in search of some job. He tried for a few months, but could not get any employment. So he devoted his ample leisure to meditation and spiritual practices. Yogin shunned company. He liked to live alone with his thoughts. He spoke as little as possible. His movements and behaviour were unusual. The uncle of Yogin, with whom he stayed at Cawnpore, got alarmed lest Yogin go off his head. He wrote to the father of Yogin all about him and suggested marriage as the only remedy; for that might create in Yogin an interest in worldly things.

Yogin knew nothing about this. He

got information that some one was ill at home, and thinking it might be his mother, to whom he was greatly devoted, Yogin hurried to Dakshineswar. But to his great dismay he found that the information he got was wrong—it was simply a pretext to bring him home, where his marriage was arranged. Yogin was in a fix. He was against marriage, for that would interfere with his religious life. His great desire was to live a life of renunciation and devote all his time and energy to the realization of God, but now there was a conspiracy to frustrate his noble resolve.

Yogin was too gentle to be able to resist the wishes of his parents—specially of his mother, and in spite of himself he consented to marry. Yogin's parents wrongly thought that marriage would turn the mind of Yogin to worldly things. But the case was just the reverse. The fact that his resolve of living a celibate life had been frustrated weighed so heavily on Yogin's mind that he felt miserable over it. He became moody and brooded day and night over his mistake. He would not like even to go to Sri Ramakrishna to whom he was once so attached. No, he would not show his face to Sri Ramakrishna, who had high expectation about the spiritual future of Yogin and would be sorely disappointed to learn that Yogin had falsified all his hopes by his act of marriage.

The news of all that had happened with regard to his beloved Yogin reached Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna sent information again and again to Yogin to come and see him. But Yogin was reluctant to come. Thereupon Sri Ramakrishna told a friend of Yogin, 'Yogin once took some money from me. It is strange that he has not returned the money, nor has he given me any account of that!' When Yogin heard

of this, his feelings were greatly wounded. He remembered that Sri Ramakrishna had given him a small sum to make some purchases for Sri Ramakrishna, before he left for Cawnpore, and a small balance of that remained with him. But because of his marriage he felt ashamed to go to Sri Ramakrishna and therefore could not return the balance. At the remarks of Sri Ramakrishna, however, he was so aggrieved that he took the earliest opportunity to return the money and at the same time he thought that would be his last visit to Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on his cot with his wearing cloth on his lap, when Yogin came to see him. Like a child putting his cloth under his arm-pit he ran to receive Yogin as soon as he saw him. Sri Ramakrishna was beside himself with joy at the coming of Yogin. And the first thing he said to Yogin was: 'What harm if you have married? Marriage will never be an obstacle to your spiritual life. Hundreds of marriages will never interfere with your spiritual progress, if God is gracious. One day bring your wife here. I shall so change her mind that instead of an obstacle she will be a great help to you.'

A dead weight was removed, as it were, from his heart, as Yogin heard Sri Ramakrishna utter these words in an ecstatic mood. Yogin saw light where it was all darkness for him. He was filled with new hope and encouragement. While taking leave of Sri Ramakrishna, Yogin raised the topic of the balance of money which he was to return, but to this Sri Ramakrishna was supremely indifferent. Yogin understood that Sri Ramakrishna's remark about the money was simply an excuse to bring Yogin to him. Now his love and admiration for Sri Ramakrishna became all the more great, and he again began to repeat his visits to Dakshineswar.

Even after the marriage Yogin was indifferent to the worldly affairs as before. This was a great disappointment to his parents who thought of binding Yogin to the world through the tie of wedlock. Once the mother of Yogin rebuked him for his growing detachment to the world as unbecoming of one who had a wife to support. Yogin was shocked. Did he not marry only at the earnest importunity of his mother! From this time on Yogin's aversion for worldly life increased all the more. He thought Sri Ramakrishna was the only person who consistently and most selflessly loved him. And Yogin began to spend greater time with Sri Ramakrishna. The latter also found an opportunity to pay greater attention to the training of Yogin.

We have said Yogin was very soft-natured. It would be difficult for him to hurt even an insect. But sometimes too much gentleness becomes a source of trouble rather than being a virtue. Sri Ramakrishna noticed the softness in the character of Yogin and he wanted to bring this home to his disciple. Sri Ramakrishna once found that there were some cockroaches in his bundle of clothes. He asked Yogin to take those clothes outside the room and kill the cockroaches. Yogin performed the first part of the order and not the second one. He took the clothes outside the room. But as he was too gentle to kill the insects, he simply threw them away, and thought Sri Ramakrishna would not perhaps enquire about so much detail. But strangely enough Sri Ramakrishna asked Yogin whether he had killed those cockroaches. When Yogin answered in the negative, Sri Ramakrishna gave him a mild reproof, for not obeying his words in toto.

A similar incident happened on another day. Yogin was coming from Calcutta to Dakshineswar by a boat. There were other passengers on the boat. One of them began to criticize Sri Ramakrishna as being a hypocrite, and so on. Yogin felt hurt at such criticisms, but did not utter even a word of protest. Sri Ramakrishna needed no defence by Yogin; he was tall enough to be above the reach of any criticism by fools—Yogin thought. After coming to Dakshineswar Yogin narrated the incidents to Sri Ramakrishna and thought Sri Ramakrishna would approve of his goodness in not opposing the passengers. But Sri Ramakrishna did just the opposite. He took Yogin to task for pocketing the blasphemy heaped upon his Guru. 'A disciple should never hear criticisms hurled against his Guru without protest,' said Sri Ramakrishna. 'If he cannot protest, he should leave the spot forthwith.'

Once Yogin went to the market to make some purchases for Sri Ramakrishna. The cunning shopkeeper feigned to be very religious-minded and Yogin took him to be such. But when he turned to Dakshineswar, he found that the shopkeeper had cheated him. This called for a sharp rebuke from Sri Ramakrishna. 'A man may aspire to be religious; but that is no reason why he should be a fool,' said Sri Ramakrishna.

Though Yogin would trust a man easily and had the simplicity of a child, he was not a simpleton. Rather he had a keen discriminating mind and he was critical in his outlook. What opinion he would give about men and things would often prove true. But his critical attitude once led him to a quandary.

One day Yogin slept in the same

room with Sri Ramakrishna. In the dead of night Yogin found that Sri Ramakrishna was not in the room and the door was open. At first he felt curious, then became suspicious, as to where Sri Ramakrishna could go at such an unearthly hour. He came outside, but Sri Ramakrishna could not be seen. Did Sri Ramakrishna then go to his wife, who was then staying at the concert-room?—Yogin thought. Then Sri Ramakrishna was not what he professed himself to be! Yogin wanted to probe into the mystery, and stood near the concert-room to see if Sri Ramakrishna came out of the room. After some time Sri Ramakrishna came from the Panchavati side and was surprised to see Yogin standing near the concert-room. Yogin was stupefied and felt ashamed of himself for his suspicion. A greater sinful act can never be conceived of: to suspect the purity of a saint like Sri Ramakrishna even in thought! Yogin was horror-struck at his own conduct and did not know what to say. Sri Ramakrishna understood the whole situation and consoled his young disciple with the encouraging words: 'Yes, one should observe a Sadhu at day-time as well as at night before one would accept him as a guide.' With these words Sri Ramakrishna came to his room, followed mutely by Yogin. In spite of the sweet words from Sri Ramakrishna, Yogin had no sleep throughout the whole night, and later throughout the whole life he did not forgive himself for what he considered to be an extremely sinful act.

There are many incidents as to how Yogin with all his devotion to Sri Ramakrishna kept his critical faculty alert and did not fail to judge his Guru even. Once Yogin asked Sri Ramakrishna how one could get rid of sex idea. Sri Ramakrishna said that

could be easily done by prayer to God. This simple remedy did not satisfy Yogin. Yogin thought that there were so many persons who prayed to God, but nevertheless there came no change in their life. Yogin expected Sri Ramakrishna would suggest to him some Yogic practice, but he was disappointed in that, and came to the conclusion—Sri Ramakrishna's simple remedy was the outcome of his ignorance of any other better means. During that time there stayed at Dakshineswar a Hatha-Yogi who would show to visitors his dexterity in many Yogic feats. Yogin got interested in him. Once Yogin came to Dakshineswar and without meeting Sri Ramakrishna went straight to the Hatha-Yogi and was listening to his words spellbound. Strangely enough, exactly at that moment Sri Ramakrishna chanced to come to that place.

Seeing Yogin there, Sri Ramakrishna very endearingly caught hold of his arms and while leading him towards his own room said: 'Why did you go there? If you practise these Yogic exercises, your whole thought will be concentrated on the body and not on God.' Yogin was not the person to submit so easily. He thought within himself, perhaps Sri Ramakrishna was jealous of the Hatha-Yogi and was afraid lest Yogin's allegiance be transferred to the latter. Yogin always thought himself to be very clever. But on a second thought he tried the remedy suggested by Sri Ramakrishna. To his great surprise Yogin found wonderful results and felt ashamed of his doubting mind. Afterwards Swami Vivekananda used to say, 'If there is any one amongst us who is completely free from sex idea, it is Yogin.'

(To be continued)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

THE PRESENT WORLD WAR AND WESTERN SCIENCE

Prof. P. S. Naidu of the Annamalai University in a thought-provoking article contributed to the *Hindustan Review* of February, 1941 traces the effect of an one-sided development of the intellect on human character and gives some valuable suggestions regarding the organization of creative research in science. He shows how science itself has upset the law of conservation of matter and the law of causality and how this sudden unsettlement in the intellectual realm has brought about a parallel upsetting of settled views in the moral realm. He also shows how science has stimulated the desire for enjoyment thus causing the moral turpitude which has engendered the present war. He pleads for making science an adjunct of philosophy. Says he, 'It is on a philosophic foundation the edifice of science should be built. All students of science should be made to seek, as Jeans, Eddington, Whitehead, Haldane and Kohler are seeking, the true function of science in its service to philosophy and religion. Philosophy should be the culmination of science.' As knowledge is power, and power is a great corruptor of human nature unless held in check by moral and religious restraints, Prof. Naidu argues that the higher branches of science should be made accessible only

to those who have a well-developed moral and religious nature. As a life of detachment is essential for the fullest development of the human will as it manifests itself in religious and moral restraint, he wants that 'creative research in science should be undertaken only by an order of monks similar to the Ramakrishna Order, composed of men who are *in* the world but not *of* it.'

It seems to us that Prof. Naidu's suggestions are quite timely. India will come to her own very soon and in the great task of national reconstruction, the country should be quite alert to avoid the pitfalls inherent in the institutions nurtured in the West. We can certainly profit by other people's experience. If an over-emphasis on intellectual development at the cost of morality and religion has brought about the present unsatisfactory state of affairs in the West, as Prof. Naidu shows it has, it would be proper for this country to arrange to give its youth a more harmonious training which will lay due emphasis on the moral and religious aspects as well as the intellectual aspect of the training. May we add that poetry and the fine arts should also find their proper place in any scheme meant for the training of the whole man.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

SOUL OF INDIA. BY BIPIN CHANDRA PAL. *Published by The New India Printing and Publishing Co., Ltd., Calcutta. Pp. 260. Price Rs. 2.*

Mr. Pal is well known in Indian political circles as a staunch nationalist, a fluent speaker and a popular leader. The book under review reveals him as a profound student of Indian culture and philosophy. His visit to the West gave him the opportunity to study the temperament and social structure of the European people and, at the same time, expound the Indian nationalist ideal to the English people. After his return to India, one of his Christian friends, probably a young European lady, who was an admirer of India and her people, wanted to come to this country and study Indian life and culture more intimately. He advised her to stay on in her own country and undertook to acquaint her with an understanding of Indian life and thought through letters. In this book are included four long letters written to her during this period. These letters briefly touch upon a number of topics and the writer's main object is to present before his correspondent a true and unprejudiced pen-picture of real India. The Author says: 'The Soul of Europe and America is Christ; the Soul of India is, in the same way, Sri Krishna.' In presenting Sri Krishna as the 'Soul of India' he has had to give a place of importance to Vaishnavism and the Religion of Love as initiated by Sri Chaitanya. In this connection he observes that 'in Hindu Vaishnavism, we have a more thorough, more concrete, at once a more real and a more ideal presentation of the Universal than perhaps we have in any other culture.' And again, 'In Vaishnavism the innate sense of the Spiritual and the Universal of the Indo-Aryan Race-Consciousness seems to have found its loftiest and deepest expression.'

He begins by telling his correspondent that most of the books on India by foreign authors do not reveal the real Soul of India, the full truth and reality of Indian life and culture. Looking merely from outside on our religious ideals and institutions, every foreigner gives his own picture of India in the light of his experiences. In

this connection the author relates two humorous cases of such incorrect interpretation arising from superficial and apparent study. Next he takes up the study of the two great and ancient world-cultures—Hindu and Greek, wherein he presents the complex and composite character of either and draws attention to the various points of affinity and difference between them. In spite of the differences of temperament and outlook on life between the East and the West, the Hindu mind was in no way less scientific or less realistic than the Greek mind, for the former had wonderfully developed various arts and sciences to perfection even at a time when these were unknown in Europe. The Westerner's standard of intellectual and moral values built upon a wrongly-assumed sense of superiority does not allow him to see things dispassionately, with a detached mind. Here the author mentions the name of Sister Nivedita of the Order of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda as the one and only exception to this common type of Western writers. Mr. Pal pays a high tribute to her saying, 'Nivedita came to us as no European has as yet come, not as an adept, but as a novice; not as a teacher, but as a learner,' and points to her book *Web of Indian Life* as being a correct interpretation of Indian life and thought. Giving her the clue to the proper study and interpretation of any subject, the writer asks his friend to study, love and understand the holy men of India, the sages and saints, if she wants to truly appreciate Indian life and culture.

In his next letter Mr. Pal indicts both the reformer and the reactionary as following wrong methods not based on a real and correct appreciation of their own country and culture. The Soul of India, according to him, lies in the 'traditional middle path' of the sage and the philosopher. What this 'middle path' is should have caused not a little surprise in the immature mind of his young friend. After stating a few historical and geographical facts regarding India, her extent and population, the learned author proceeds to give an illuminating exposition of the ancient Hindu Varnashrama Dharma,

clearly bringing out the significance of the caste system and the stages into which man's life was divided. The caste system had a purpose to serve when it was introduced into Aryan society. It will die a natural death when there is no more necessity for it. Referring to the introduction of different stages of life through which every eligible person had to pass through, he rightly observes, 'Divisions and inequalities cannot absolutely be eliminated from any form of social organization, however democratic it may be.' Realizing this the Indo-Aryans had long ago brought this order of Ashramas into existence as a best possible solution of this problem, thus placing every eligible member of society, whatever office he may be holding, to undergo a course of discipline which will train him in self-detachment. He concludes the second letter by briefly reviewing the advantages and disadvantages of Mohammedan rule in India.

The last two letters constitute the main substance of the book. They are entitled 'India: The Mother' and 'Religious India.' Contrasting the concepts of unity and patriotism in the East with those in the West, he points out to his friend the fact that Hindu patriotism is based on love of humanity and devotion to motherland. The different aspects of Purusha and Prakriti are discussed in detail and compared with similar conceptions in Christianity. The writer's descriptions regarding Mother worship in Durga, Kali, and Jagaddhatri must have greatly interested his correspondent. Notwithstanding his strong Vaishnava leanings, the author does not minimize the importance of Shakti worship in contributing to the reawakening of national consciousness and aspirations. Entering upon a dissertation on Hindu philosophy, he shows how Hinduism is not a credal religion like Christianity, Islam or even Buddhism and briefly touches upon Vedantic thought which, he tells his friend, 'is the real key to Hindu religion.' Here the story of Varuna and his son Bhrigu is related as it is found in the Bhrigu Valli of Taittiriya Upanishad, and the author reads an allegorical meaning into this story. The concluding portion of the book is an exposition of the Vaishnava movement as in vogue in Bengal, popularly known as the Radha-Krishna cult. In this connection we may draw the attention of our readers to a fuller treatise on this subject by the

author entitled *Bengal Vaishnavism*. The author's width of outlook and well-balanced judgement are commendable. It may appear too superficial and wanting in details to a Hindu reader. But it is meant more for a foreign reader who is interested in a study of Indian thoughts and ideals. We heartily welcome the book. It is printed on good paper and nicely got up.

SCIENCE AND SUPERSTITION. By M. N. ROY. *Published by the Indian Renaissance Association Ltd., Dehra Dun. Pp. 164. Price Re. 1-8 As.*

Mr. Roy frankly avows in his preface that the criticism which his book is 'bound to provoke' 'will not be serious criticism.' He knows as well as we do that critics as a class treat serious literature seriously and lighter stuff in a lighter vein. A book is after all a book, it is at best the window through which the writer views the passing panorama of life. The house to which that particular window belongs may be perched on the top of a lofty peak or it may be situated in a blind alley seldom penetrated by the sun's rays. Each observer is entitled to give his own version of the passing show.

'The clay-feet of a number of time-honoured gods are exposed in this book,' says Mr. Roy. The ancient gods seated on high Olympus may view this pygmy of a mortal with a smile of derision, but a Christ and a Buddha, and a Ramakrishna and a Chaitanya, the gods on whom Mr. Roy attempts to try his psycho-analytical theories came to share humanity's joys and sorrows. We dare say that they have a soft corner in their hearts for Mr. Roy also. Mr. Roy claims to be a heretic. We do not know to what church he belongs to examine his claims to heresy. A Hindu can never be a heretic; the religion is wide enough to accept within its fold all and sundry who earnestly endeavour to realize the true values of life. As for materialism, Mr. Roy may know that the cult of the Charvakas was recognized by ancient Hindu philosophers as a school of thought which had a place in the scheme of things; Brihaspati, the preceptor of Indra, is the reputed founder of this school. There is nothing new under the sun. But let not Mr. Roy preach materialism in the name of modern science; we who happen to possess more than a layman's interest

in science may inform Mr. Roy that recent advances in mathematical physics have dealt a death-blow to materialism.

As for psycho-analysis, it is yet in its infancy. The serious student of religious and spiritual experiences has a wealth of good literature to study both in Eastern and Western languages. The seeker who

has a genuine interest in the question of the survival of human personality may find much food for thought in the writings of men of science like Sir Oliver Lodge, Frederic W. H. Myers, Prof. William James and others. He need not confine himself to the evidence of a nine year old child.

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1940

The 32nd Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at the Belur Math on the 11th April. The following is a short report of the work done during the last year.

There were 61 Mission centres in India and abroad, and 64 Math centres working in close collaboration with the Mission, making up a total of 125 centres, besides 18 sub-centres. No less than 357 permanent institutions of various types were run, of which 275 belonged to the Mission proper. The Mission also undertook various temporary relief activities.

THE HEADQUARTERS

Besides directing the activities of the branch centres and supplying monastic workers to them, the Headquarters through its *Charitable Dispensary* served 25,744 patients and gave regular and occasional help to 10 students and 97 helpless widows and invalids, the total expenditure being Rs. 1,366-12-3. It also helped with monthly grants 15 Schools in different places with a total strength of 999. Many monks went all over India on *preaching tours* and held regular religious classes in and around Calcutta.

The Mission undertook *Flood Relief* work in the Midnapur District and distributed 432 mds. of rice, 1,129 pieces of new cloth and 825 pieces of old cloth to 1,395 persons belonging to 14 villages at a cost of Rs. 3,686-14-0. It also spent Rs. 275-4-0 for *Fire Relief* in Puri, Birbhum and Faridpur and Rs. 50-8-0 for *Malaria Relief* at Sonar-

gaon, Dt. Dacca. For *Famine Relief* in the Thar-Parkar District in Sind, it spent through a local party Rs. 950-12-0.

BRANCH CENTRES

The activities carried on by the branch centres fall under:

(1) Medical Service through Indoor Hospitals. The centres at Rangoon, Benares, Kankhal, Brindaban, Midnapur, Tamruk and Taki have each been maintaining a hospital. The total number of general beds in these and of maternity beds at the Shishumangal Pratishthan, Calcutta, the Rangoon Sevashrama and the Taki Shivananda Hospital was 596. The Rangoon Sevashrama with its 200 beds, the Benares Home of Service and the Kankhal Sevashrama are the largest hospitals of the Mission. The above 8 centres treated altogether 13,930 indoor patients.

(2) Medical Service through Outdoor Dispensaries. There were 40 Outdoor Dispensaries which treated 16,28,494 cases in all, the daily average being 4,462 as against 4,048 in 1939. The Sevashrama at Rangoon, with its 3,70,644 out-patients and a daily average of 1,025 continued to hold the biggest record. The T. B. Clinic at Delhi treated 17,301 cases.

(3) Help to the poor and Temporary Relief. The branch centres also served 10,532 patients in their homes, distributed about 410 mds. of rice and 1,085 pieces of cloth. Besides Rs. 4,230-4-9 was spent for occasional and regular help to 1,276 and 339 persons. During the Midnapur Flood,

the Tamluk centre organised a relief centre and helped 665 persons at a total cost of Rs. 1,219-7-9.

(4) Educational Work—The educational work of the Mission was conducted through (a) *Secondary Schools*—Residential and otherwise. Of the former, that at Deoghar had 148 students, the Madras Students' Home had 119, and the Vidyalaya near Coimbatore had 97 students. Of the Day Schools, the two in Madras with 2,058 boys and 942 girls are the biggest in the Mission. The three mixed High Schools in Ceylon had a total strength of 560. The Mission conducted altogether 12 High Schools and 12 M. E. Schools with a total of 4,443 boys and 2,327 girls. (b) *Primary and Night Schools*—There were 58 Primary Schools with 3,377 boys and 1,647 girls, and 17 Night Schools with 638 students. (c) *Industrial and Vocational Schools*—The Industrial School, Madras, and the Belur Industrial School had 45 and 48 students respectively. The former specialises in automobile engineering with a five-year course. It also gives vocational education to all the students of the Residential School. Agricultural education was provided at the Sarisha and Mansadwip centres. The Bankura Sevashrama had a section for training Homoeopathic students, and the Shishumangal Pratishthan and the Rangoon Sevashrama trained midwives and compounders respectively. The Sarada Vidyalaya of Madras had a training section for lady teachers for elementary schools. (d) *Students' Homes*—32 centres, including the Madras and Calcutta Students' Homes, accommodated 1,050 students of different schools and colleges. They were given all facilities for study and for developing their health and character.

(5) Uplift of backward classes and areas—The Mission has been trying its best to serve those classes and areas which have unfortunately fallen back culturally and educationally. Permanent centres like the educational and cultural centres in the Khasia and Jaintia Hills, as also the Ashrama Libraries, Schools, Dispensaries and Hospitals in villages like Taki, Sarisha, Magrajpur, Sonargaon, Baliati, Jayarambati, Sargachhi, etc. catered for the masses. Some of those centres organised tours with magic lanterns, gramophones, etc.

(6) Spread of Culture and spiritual ideas—Almost all centres conducted Libraries and Reading Rooms and organised public lectures and classes. Contacts with distinguished Western scholars were also made, and the Mission's monastic workers carried the message of Vedanta to different parts of India and foreign countries. In this connection, special mention may be made of the Institute of Culture in Calcutta, which has recently got the gift of a valuable library consisting of about 25,000 volumes from the heirs of Dr. Barid Baran Mukherjee of Calcutta. The Institute organised 32 lectures and 105 classes. The Mission Society at Rangoon had two Libraries containing 8,909 volumes. It conducted 82 classes and 25 lectures.

Foreign Work.—The foreign work of the Mission has been partly handicapped by the war. Thus the work in central Europe had to be stopped, the work in Paris had to be shifted to a less important township in unoccupied France, and the London work to a suburb. The work in the United States of America and the Argentina Republic is however flourishing. The Mission was quite successful in Mauritius, where a permanent centre is well on the way. The Singapore branch extended its work to Penang.

Schemes under development.—Substantial progress was made in connection with the T. B. Sanatorium at Dungri, near Rancht, and the College at Belur. The Sanatorium has got 240 acres of land and has collected about Rs. 70,000/-, on which buildings are going to be constructed. The progress made with the College scheme is also encouraging. It will be started in July next.

Income and Expenditure.—The total income during the year 1940 was Rs. 11,94,578-12-6 and the total expenditure Rs. 13,00,714-14-½.

Conclusion.—From the above it will be apparent that the Mission has done a considerable amount of work during the year under review. While expressing its gratitude to all who contributed to it, the Mission appeals to one and all to continue their whole-hearted support and co-operation so that the philanthropic organisation founded by the illustrious Swami Vivekananda may make greater progress in the future.

RANGOON

The Ramakrishna Mission Society, Rangoon, celebrated the birthday anniver-

sary of Swami Vivekananda with a seven days' programme from the 19th to 26th

January, 1941. On the first day a largely attended public meeting was held in the prayer hall of the Society in which speeches on the life and message of Swami Vivekananda were delivered by the monastic members of the Order. Two other public meetings were included in the programme of the third and the fourth day when different speakers addressed the audience in Bengali, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. On 22nd and 23rd two meetings were organized for the college and school students respectively. The largest meeting in connection with the celebrations was held on the 25th in the City Hall of Rangoon. The Hon'ble U. Saw, Premier of Burma, presided. The celebrations came to an end on the 26th with the distribution of food among 495 Buddhist monks and about 3,000 poor people.

The birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna was also observed with due eclat by the Society from the 28th February to 2nd March, 1941. The celebrations commenced early in the morning of the first

day with chantings from the Vedas followed by Puja and Homa. A public meeting was held in the evening. A discourse on the Gita by Swami Ranganathananda and devotional music formed the programme for the second day. A public meeting with U. So Nyun, M.A., Bar-at-Law, Commissioner, Corporation of Rangoon, in the chair, was organized on the last day. The President in a highly illuminative speech paid a great tribute of respect to the prophet of Dakshineswar and concluded the speech by saying, 'His mission in life was to proclaim and clarify the fundamental unity of all religions. In that sense he was not a missionary in the commonly accepted sense of the term, for he was not out to preach any particular religion. His was a message of love for humanity, charity, tolerance and social service—a message which cannot fail to find a ready response in the hearts of every true Christian, every true Mohammedan, every true Hindu and every true Buddhist.'

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA, RANGOON

The Sevashrama is one of the premier medical institutions conducted by the Ramakrishna Mission. Started in 1921 the Hospital has steadily grown in importance and usefulness until to-day it occupies a unique position among the medical institutions of Burma. The report of the institution for the year 1940 places before the public a short account of its activities during the year.

The year closed with 200 beds for indoor patients of which 34 were for women and children, 22 for maternity cases and the rest for male patients. In the male wards, besides surgical and medical sections, the Hospital has provision for special departments for eye, venereal and tuberculosis cases. The total number of indoor patients treated during the year was 6,681. The death rate was 5 per cent.

The outdoor department is divided into the following sections: (1) General

(2) Women and Children (3) Dental (4) Eye (5) Ear, Nose and Throat (6) Venereal and (7) Maternity. The total number of cases treated during the year in this department was 3,77,325 of which 1,26,579 were new cases. The average daily attendance was 1,025. 9,013 surgical cases, both principal and secondary, were dealt with during the year. 9,823 clinical tests were carried out in the laboratory of the Hospital.

Besides two consulting physicians and one consulting surgeon the Hospital had a staff of 27 doctors at the end of the year. Of these 7 were lady doctors. The nursing staff consisted of 19 nurses and midwives and 21 trained male workers. Two new departments—the Dental and the X-Ray—were ready for opening towards the close of the year under review. Construction of a new block for the Maternity Section was taken up at the end of the year.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASADAN, SALKIA, HOWRAH

The activities of the Sevasadan for the years 1938-1940 may be brought under the following heads:

Philanthropic: An average of 12 poor families was helped in each year with monthly doles of rice. Besides these,

blankets, cloths and occasional doles of rice were distributed to 72 poor people. The Dispensary of the Sevasadan which provides for homoeopathic and biochemic treatment to poor patients treated 48,588 cases in 1940 as compared to 39,814 in 1938.

Educational: The Sevasadan conducts a free Students' Home for school and college students which accommodated 14, 16 and 13 students respectively in the years 1938, 1939 and 1940. The academic education that the students get in schools and colleges is supplemented here by a course of moral and religious training. The Library of the Ashrama was well utilized by the students and the public.

Religious: Classes on the Bhagavad-Gita

and the lives and sayings of great seers and saints were conducted and the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna and some Hindu religious festivals were duly observed every year.

Present Needs: The Sevasadan requires a total amount of Rs. 15,000/- for erecting buildings for the Dispensary and the Students' Home and a temple on the plot newly purchased for the purpose and sends its earnest appeal for funds to the generous public.

THE RAMAKRISHNA SEVASHRAMA, SHYAMALA TAL, HIMALAYAS

With the end of 1940 the Sevashrama has completed the twenty-sixth year of its useful career. It has been the one and only source of medical relief to the helpless sufferers over a range of thirty miles in the deep Himalayan forests interspersed with groups of hamlets here and there. The report of the Sevashrama for the year 1940 presents a short account of its activities during the year.

The indoor hospital had accommodation only for 6 patients. But through the generosity of a kind friend the construction of a new ward for 6 more patients was undertaken during the year. The total number of indoor patients was 162 of whom 102 were cured, 34 relieved, 25 left treatment and 1 died, 4,359 patients received treatment in the outdoor department of

whom 3,141 were new cases. The number of minor surgical operations came to 107.

A distinctive feature of the Sevashrama consists in the treatment it provides to domestic animals when they suffer from diseases. This department was expanded and partially equipped during the year for proper treatment of the animals. The number of cases treated during the year has gone up from 1,360 of the previous year to 3,371.

Present Needs: (1) Funds for the upkeep of the Sevashrama. (2) A Permanent Fund of not less than Rs. 20,000/- for general expenses. (3) A Permanent Fund for the treatment of dumb animals and a shed for accommodating them, for both of which Rs. 5,000/- is needed.

THE RAMAKRISHNA GURUKUL, THE VILANGANS, TRICHUR

A short account of the activities of the Gurukul in 1939 and 1940 as embodied in its report for the years is given below. The activities may be classified as follows:

The Gurukul and the Mathrumandir: They are residential homes for boys and girls respectively and are meant mainly for the Harijans. There were 40 boys and 13 girls at the end of 1940. The inmates take a large share in the domestic management of the institutions. Besides the education they receive in the Vidyamandir, training in dairy and agriculture is imparted to the boys and the arts of cooking, sewing, needle-work etc. are taught to the girls.

The Vidyamandir: It has become a High School in 1940. The strength of the School in 1940 was 295 boys and 146 girls. There is arrangement for drill and group games for all the students. The School has provision for part-time training in agricul-

ture and gardening. The Co-operative Store dealing in school requisites and run by the students gives practical training to them in business methods. Moral and spiritual instructions form a part of their training.

The Industrial School: Boys and girls are trained here in weaving, mat-making, embroidery, needle-work, knitting etc. There were 21 boys in 1940 in the School. A rural and industrial exhibition was organized in 1939.

A regular weekly religious class was held for the Hindu prisoners in the Viyyur Central Jail. The following are some of the present needs of the institution: (1) A building for the Mathrumandir which will cost Rs. 10,000/-. (2) A building for the Gurukul. (3) Quarters for workers. (4) A Workshop for vocational training. (5) A Science Laboratory. (6) A Gymnasium.

**THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION STUDENTS' HOME AND SHIVANANDA
VIDYALAYA, BATTICALOA, CEYLON**

The report of the Students' Home and Shivananda Vidyalaya places before the public an account of its useful activities for the year ending 28th February, 1941. The Vidyalaya had 148 students on its roll at the end of the year. All the 4 students sent for the J. S. C. Examination in June, 1940, and 7 out of the 9 students who sat for the S. S. C. Examination came out successful. Another 13 students appeared in the J. S. C. Examination held in the latter half of the year and 5 in the Cambridge Senior Examination. But their results were not known till the publication of the report. The study of modern science occupies a prominent place in the curriculum of the school. The Literary and Debating Societies conducted by the students worked well during the year and a number of papers containing records of observations and experiments carried out by the students under the auspices of the Science Association were contributed to the manuscript magazine, the *Naturalist*. 30 students were

taken on an excursion to the historic city of Anuradhapur. The School Library contains 1,500 volumes of books and many leading dailies and periodicals. Two weekly classes were organized for higher studies in Tamil literature. 12 and 22 students joined the two classes. There is a hostel attached to the School which accommodated 41 monthly, 17 weekly and 15 day boarders.

The Students' Home provides free boarding, lodging and education to needy and deserving students. There were 39 students in the Home at the end of the year. The shrine attached to the Home offers all facilities to the students for spiritual culture. The administration of the Home is chiefly in the hands of the boys which supplies them the opportunity to cultivate the virtue of self-help. Exercises and outdoor activities form a part of their daily life. The authorities appeal to the generous public for funds for the upkeep and maintenance of the institution.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, BARISAL

The report of the Ramakrishna Mission, Barisal, for the years 1937—1939, puts before the public a short account of the activities of the centre for these years. The activities may be classed under the following heads:

Educational: The Mission conducts a Students' Home which accommodated 11 college students during the year 1939. Of these 2 were free and 9 half free. The object of the Home is to train boys on the line of the ancient Brahmacharya Ashrama.

The Ashrama runs a Library and a Reading Room which are open to the public.

Philanthropic: Poor people are helped with monthly or occasional doles of rice. 42 patients were attended to at their own homes and 8 dead bodies were cremated

during the period under report. In 1938 arrangements were made in the Ashrama for the treatment of 152 cases of eye diseases including 72 cases of cataract operation.

Religious: A class on various Hindu scriptures was held in the Ashrama on every Sunday. Besides these occasional lectures and discourses on topics of religious interest were arranged. The various Hindu festivals were duly observed and the birth-days of the great religious leaders of the world were celebrated.

Present Needs: (1) Rs. 10,000/- for a building of the Students' Home. (2) A permanent fund for the Home. (3) Rs. 4,500/- for extension of the Ashrama building. (4) Funds for improvement of the Library building and the Ashrama ground.