

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।”

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

CONVERSATIONS WITH SWAMI SHIVANANDA

The non-co-operation movement—Mahatma Gandhi and other nationalist leaders—Their self-sacrifice exemplary and praiseworthy—The Ramakrishna Mission—Its plan of work and service different from that of the nationalist leaders.

(Place: *Belur Monastery.* Time: *Monday, November 1922*)

At that time India was swept by the non-co-operation movement and numberless people were courting imprisonment. The whole country was awakened by Mahatma Gandhi's appeal. Men and women by thousands, who considered the motherland's political independence the highest ideal, were ready to dedicate their lives at her altar.

It was Monday. The evening service was just over at the chapel of the monastery at Belur and there was great silence all around. The sadhus (monks) and *brahmacharis* (novices) were engaged in devotions and meditations, while Swami Shivananda, absorbed in meditation, sat on a couch in his room. The dim light made his serene face the more serene and radiant. Time slipped away till at last the Swami began reciting Pushpadanta's hymn describing the glories of Shiva. His mind seemed steeped in the ocean of bliss.

Just then a devotee from Calcutta came

from the chapel, and after due obeisance to the Swami, sat on the floor. After a while Mahapurushji greeted him, affectionately saying, 'Is it K. ? When did you come ?' The devotee replied reverently, 'Yes, Maharaj, I arrived at the time of the evening service.'

Swami: 'I believe you were in the chapel all this time.'

Devotee: 'Yes, Maharaj.'

Swami: 'Tell me why you look so sad and worried. Are all well at home?'

Devotee: 'Yes, Maharaj, by your blessing all are well, but for the past few days I have been mentally upset over a certain question. It has made me extremely unhappy. I am here with the idea of unburdening my heart to you. If you permit me I shall do so.'

Swami: 'Very well, tell me.'

The devotee spoke with great earnestness. He said: 'Maharaj, at this hour the whole country is stirred to its very depths by the

non-co-operation movement of Mahatma Gandhi. Countless men and women are rotting in jails. Many have already laid down their lives, and Mahatmaji himself also has plunged into the sea of danger. But why is the Ramakrishna Mission silent in this immense country-wide movement? Have not you any contribution to make? The entire nation is wondering at the ways of the Ramakrishna Mission. Has not the Mission some duty in this national struggle for freedom?' Finally, in a tone of grievance, the devotee added: 'Do not you feel for the country at all? Are you powerless to do anything in the matter?'

Swami Shivananda's calm face assumed a serious aspect. After a while he broke the silence, saying: 'Well, K., the doings of a divine Incarnation are beyond the reach of the average intellect. How would you or the nation understand the way of divine action? When God embodies Himself as man, He does so for no particular race or nation, but for the good of the whole world. The manifestation, this time, is of the highest *sattvika* aspect of the Lord. The Incarnation, Sri Ramakrishna, is the embodiment of perfect *sattva*. Containing within himself all the six divine powers, he lived in the body assuming only pure *sattvika* moods. Consider the way he spent his entire life in a temple court on the bank of the Ganges. How would you understand the deep spiritual significance of all this?'

It was in order to spread his *sattvika* spiritual thought that Sri Ramakrishna brought with him as his assistant such a powerful soul as Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji could certainly have stirred the country to political revolution, had he so chosen. Who is more patriotic than he was? How many hearts bleed for the downtrodden masses, as his did? Swamiji did not start a revolution. Had he known it would really help India, he would surely have done so.

'Aside from Swami Vivekananda, even we, by the grace of the Lord, have such power within us that we can revolutionize the country if we so wish, but the Master would

not permit us to do so. He brought us here to assist him in his work and he is constantly leading us by the hand in all that we do for the good of the country and its people. Believe me when I say our only desire is to advance the good of the world. How can I explain to you the depth of our feeling for the miseries of the people? Only the Lord who dwells in every heart knows it.

'Before passing out of his body, the Master vested his whole power and the responsibility of his mission in Swami Vivekananda. Only after travelling over the globe from one end to another and scrutinizing it closely did Swamiji found this Math and Mission to carry on activities beneficial to the world and particularly to India, according to the directions of the Master. One by one, Swamiji engaged us all in these activities. If we had so wished, we could very well have lived a life of exclusive contemplation and meditation in mountains and forests. As a matter of fact, most of us had been away from the monastery in different places, doing that to some extent. It was Swamiji who called us together and engaged us in works of service—the service of God in humanity. Even in our old age we are carrying on that work.'

Devotee: 'Maharaj, do you mean that Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders have not been doing genuine national service? Their unique spirit of service, fortitude, and sacrifice cannot be ignored. What great humiliation and persecution they are suffering for the sake of the country!'

Swami: 'No, I do not mean that. Their renunciation, fortitude, and national service are indeed very praiseworthy. Their lives are surely great and exemplary, and they have done much good for the country, working for what they sincerely believe to be beneficial to India. However, our plan of work is different. Do you know what we think of the nationalist leaders? They are doing these services inspired by certain particular thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji. There is no doubt about it that

Mahatma Gandhi is really endowed with great powers. It is also true that there has been a special manifestation in him of the Primal Energy, the Mother of the universe. In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord Sri Krishna said to Arjuna: "Whatever glorious, prosperous, or powerful being there is, know thou that he has sprung from a portion of My splendour." Whoever manifests special power and is held in high esteem and reverence by many, undoubtedly represents a special divine manifestation. The Mother of the universe who was awakened by Sri Ramakrishna for the good of the world is obviously working in various ways through the instrumentality of different persons. Many times in his lectures Swami Vivekananda stated what constitutes India's true well-being. Solutions he proposed for the regeneration of the country twenty-five or thirty years ago—the abolition of untouchability, the elevation of the depressed classes, the spread of education among the masses, and so on—are now being preached by Mahatma Gandhi.

"Though we may not voice our ideas and sentiments loudly in newspaper articles, we are actually accomplishing things, not through politics, but in our own way. Mahatmaji is working out similar ideas through politics. Just as we are doing things at home because we are interested in India's welfare, so we are doing things abroad because we are equally interested in other races and countries. Of course, in view of peculiar circumstances and conditions, our plan of activity varies in different places. Every monk of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission established by Swamiji is dedicated to the ideal "For one's own salvation and for the good of the world" and is engaged in service according to the injunctions of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda."

Devotee: "But, Maharaj, the national awakening caused by the non-co-operation

movement of Mahatmaji would have received an added impetus if the Ramakrishna Math and Mission had co-operated with it. This opinion, far from being just my own, is held by many thoughtful people of the country. Why don't you co-operate with Mahatmaji in his national campaign?"

Swami: "Well, I told you at the outset that we are working in our own way in accordance with our own ideal—an ideal formulated and left us by the far-sighted sage Swami Vivekananda. Before his illumined vision was revealed the picture of the next thousand years, not merely of India, but of the entire world. He saw everything clearly and chalked out a definite policy for us to follow. He was not throwing stones in the dark. He could see even the distant future clearly."

"The manifestation of divine power we see in Sri Ramakrishna in this age is unique. There has not been such a manifestation in many countries. The wave of spirituality will roll on unimpeded over all the world for a long time. This is just the beginning, the prelude. The spiritual sun which has appeared on the horizon of India will illumine the entire world with its undimmed pure rays. That is why Swamiji said, "This time India is the centre" Spiritual power will be manifested with India as the centre. Who can stem the tide of this divine power? The regeneration of India is absolutely certain. India's advance in art, science, philosophy, and education—in every field, secular and spiritual—will be so great that it will astonish the world. Compared with her future achievement, her glorious past will pale into insignificance. Then you will realize why the Master and Swamiji came and how much they contributed to the well-being of India. What can the limited mind of man understand about the doings of those divine beings? Don't you see that they have awakened the national *Kundalini* of India?"

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE—I

BY THE EDITOR

By merely repeating the name of the medicine for a disease one is not cured. One has to take the medicine. Similarly without direct realization, mere repetition of 'God', 'God' will not give salvation. (Shankaracharya).

I

Spiritual discipline is meant for the aspirant after God considered as the infinite source of all bliss. People generally adopt means suitable to the achievement of their ends. The spiritual aspirant has to do so likewise. There are, however, two classes of persons to whom spiritual discipline is unnecessary. To the first class belong the *siddhas*, the perfected sages, who have transcended the necessity for all discipline, who have risen above all laws, and are themselves the creators of laws for the guidance of others in the spiritual path. These great souls, calm and serene, have themselves crossed the terrible ocean of *samsara*, the world of becoming, and out of the infinite compassion of their hearts go on doing good to the world, like Nature in springtime. They are the beacon lights, the pole-star by which spiritual aspirants can steer their path safely through the hidden rocks to the haven of spiritual rest. To the second class, to whom spiritual discipline is unnecessary, belong the men, immersed in worldliness, who believe that this world alone is real, that there is no God or future life, and that death is the end of everything so far as the individual is concerned. To such people the need for spiritual discipline has not yet arisen; they are spiritually blind.

But the vast majority of men and women really desire to reach out to something better than a mere worldly life, and the problems of God and life after death do come up before them demanding a solution, even if it be a tentative solution, though only in rare moments in their busy life of work and enjoyment. Among the aspirants, then, we may distinguish two broad classes. In the first

group we may include all those who cling to this world and yet desire the help of God to enable them to get on well. To this class belong what the Gita calls the *arta*, the man in distress, and the *artharthi*, the penniless man praying for wealth. The second group consists of men who are tired of the apparent aimlessness and meaninglessness of all life, and want to get at the truth underlying all phenomena. These are the *jignasus* of the Gita.

Now all forms of ritualistic and external worship are meant primarily for the help and guidance of the first group. Temples, churches, and mosques, fasts, feasts, and festivities are the concrete, visible, tangible things that are necessary to guide and to hold their attention on things spiritual. Such things are the symbols, the direct outward expressions of the desire for going out beyond the confines of the world present to the senses to the vaster world of the spirit. These outward symbols act as constant reminders of the higher destiny that awaits the ordinary man. Pilgrimages, gifts, building of temples, and tanks, schools and hospitals, are some of the forms in which aspirants of this type want to express their efforts for realization of God.

II

For the worldly man who has no belief in future life or God, the whole philosophy of life becomes based on *artha*, wealth, and *kama*, enjoyment. Believing that this single life is the only one vouchsafed to man on earth, they do not care for dharma. Might makes right, and there is no such thing as righteousness in human life for such people. They will make lavish promises to gain their

object, and break them all without the least scruple afterwards. As an Indian proverb says, 'When in need, you call your benefactor a god; after that you call him a rogue. Such people help their friends, the people who agree with them in grabbing the wealth of the world for common enjoyment, and destroy ruthlessly all others, their enemies, who stand in the way of their ambitions for possession and enjoyment. In a word their life is based on *adharma*. Such people may be successful for a while in this world and be able to oppress many, but ultimately they sink into the greatest misery, and meet their inevitable doom. The 'Ravanas' of prehistoric and historical times illustrate by their colossal failures that the ultimate triumph of righteousness cannot be stopped by any one. World forces are moving in the direction of increased righteousness. As the *upanishads* say, *satyameva jayate nanritam*—truth alone triumphs, not untruth.

Human society has survived because, on the whole, it has been based on righteousness, natural love, and trust, and a desire to acquire even wealth and the means of enjoyment only in accordance with *dharma*, the principles of conduct which lead to spiritual development and immortal life. (*vide Gita: dharmaviruddho bhuteshu kamosmi bharatarshabha.*) No wonder, therefore, that it is only the highly moral nations the nations that have consistently condemned violence and aggression, and have preached non-violence, brotherliness, and mutual co-operation that have persisted in enduring in the midst of terrible historical vicissitudes. Divine forces favour those nations that stand for righteousness, and if we read world history aright we may learn that human progress on true lines has been possible only when mankind, instead of relying on merely materials and weapons have learned to depend more upon the invisible sources of spiritual strength. The greatest leaders of mankind have always taught this truth. What Abraham Lincoln said to Americans is worth quoting here:

What constitutes the bulwark of our own liberty

and independence? It is not our frowning battlements, our bristling sea-coasts, our army, and our navy. These are not our reliance against tyranny. All of these may be turned against us without making us weaker for the struggle. Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in us. Our defence is in the spirit which prized liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands everywhere.

III

But for the avatars, the *nityasiddhas* or ever-perfect souls, the *jivanmuktas* or the souls who have achieved spiritual emancipation by their own efforts in this very life, humanity would have stagnated at the animal level. No wonder, therefore, that the world has instinctively recognized that these great souls are the salt of the earth, and have learnt to value and live by their words and examples. These great liberated souls continue living in the world in order to help mankind. This is an empirical fact. It is innate in even the average human being to partake with others, out of sheer brotherliness, what he has got in abundance in the way of wealth or knowledge. A man cannot be happy by living merely unto himself. How much more so must great men who have gone beyond all selfishness be moved by the spirit of compassion and service of their fellow men? Otherwise how can we explain the existence of thousands of godly men and women who sacrifice their lives in the service of God and humanity? Biologists may say that it is but the transmuted paternal instinct that leads men to love and serve even those not of their blood. Supposing we grant the correctness of their argument, is not the altruistic and philanthropic spirit as far above the paternal instinct as man is above the beast? What is it that makes man divine if not this all-embracing love not only for human beings but for all beings, a truth so eloquently preached by Buddhism.

We cannot deny, therefore, that there are great souls who lead lives of purity, love, and spirituality and show the world the way to God. Some of them, like the avatars, seem to be, by their very nature, perfect, but they appear to undergo all the trials and tribulations of human life in order to show humanity

the way to God. As Sri Ramakrishna says, 'The avatar or saviour is the messenger of God. He is like the viceroy of a mighty monarch. As when there is some disturbance in a far-off province the king sends the viceroy to quell it; so whenever there is any waning of religion in any part of the world, God sends His avatara there.' Again in another of his sayings Sri Ramakrishna makes clear the nature of the avatar thus:

There are two sorts of men. The guru said to one of his disciples, 'what I impart to thee, my dear, is invaluable; keep it to thyself', and the disciple kept it all to himself. But when the guru imparted that knowledge to another of his disciples, the latter, knowing its inestimable worth, and not liking to enjoy it all alone, stood upon a high place and began to declare the good tidings to all the people. The avatars are of the latter class.

Some impatient reader may here ask us, 'Why, then, all this wickedness and misery in the world in spite of your God and all His incarnations? We do not see they are ultimately any good.'

This is a question that crops up in our minds, off and on; and the answer is not easy. It is not easy because of our inability to grasp the full nature of the world or God. We should not imagine that we have posited the existence of this apparently imperfect world, because there is a perfect God. No, it is the other way about. The existence of this finite, imperfect world, with all its handicaps, has made it a logical, psychological, and spiritual necessity for us to think of something perfect, something in which there is no limitation of any kind to curb our spirits. The existence of this imperfect world cannot be denied, as it is a fact of our common everyday experience. It is equally true that for our spiritual satisfaction this world is not enough; we require another, commensurate with the innate vastness of our spirit; and that we call God, the Infinite, by reaching whom alone can the spiritual hunger of the individual man be finally satisfied. That there is such a world we can well believe on the testimony of many souls whom humanity has acclaimed as great in spirituality. The testimony of such souls to an inner and all-satisfying reality cannot be dismissed

easily. It stands on a level with the truth of the experiments performed by modern scientists. How glibly do we swallow the findings of modern science even though the number of scientists who have convinced themselves of the accuracy of the experiments are but a handful? It is said of Einstein's theory that very few scientists have understood it fully in all its ramifications and implications. The vast majority of men have no other go except to take many things on trust, depending upon the honesty and veracity of scientists. It is beyond the capacity of all but the most gifted to understand the scientific experiments that have led to the theory of the electrical nature of the universe. Similar is the case in the field of religion. There have been men in previous ages, and there are men in present times who have felt and understood the existence of God, the underlying reality of all things that we see, and have proclaimed their conviction in no uncertain terms, nor without exercising a deep, and wide-spread influence on many human lives. They have explained the methods by which they have reached their goal, and have left footprints on the sands of time to guide others on the path. As the *Katha Upanishad* says, 'Having received this knowledge taught by Yama and the whole rule of Yoga, Nachiketas became free from sin and death, and obtained Brahman. Thus it will be with another also who knows thus what relates to the Self.' (II. vi. 18.)

IV

The most important requisite, therefore, for an aspirant is *sraddha*, faith, the belief that God-realization is possible. A man becomes as great as his faith. Faith is a childlike and unsuspecting trust in the truth of the advice tendered by the guru or taught by the scriptures. This is the first step in the ladder of spiritual discipline. 'He who has faith has all. He who lacks faith lacks all', said Sri Ramakrishna.

Now many will raise this objection. There are gurus and gurus; there is not a sage or

a saint but his opinion differs from that of others. Moreover we find different religious scriptures teaching apparently conflicting things. How are we to have faith in the words of these scriptures, or in the words of gurus who swear respectively by the scriptures of their own religion?

This argument is the prolific mother of all doubts, vacillation, and indifference to spiritual progress. It is the common argument we hear nowadays from the educated classes of almost all countries. On the face of it the argument seems to have much force. But if we look closely into the matter we shall find that it obscures the real issue by emphasizing the points of disagreement in each religion. It neglects the fundamental unity underlying all religions in that they are all attempts by the human soul in different times and in different climes to reach God, the infinite source of all bliss, as the Vedas declare Him to be. All religions are but roads chosen by particular individuals or groups to suit the peculiar circumstances of time, clime, and race. The methods vary in their externals; and the intellectual theories spun about God may vary; but the goal is God. People in various countries take different kinds of food cooked in a hundred different ways, but the aim of all is physical sustenance. Similarly, God is worshipped in a thousand ways and in a thousand forms, but the aim of all worshippers is spiritual sustenance. Sri Ramakrishna said, out of the depths of his experience of the practice of various types of religion, 'As many religions, so many paths'. In this connexion

he emphasized that even if we happened to choose a wrong path, it would not matter if only we were sincere, and prayed for light and correct guidance. In that case all our difficulties are bound to be smoothened.

About the apparent differences of opinion in religious matters, his parable of the chameleon is very illuminating:

Two persons were hotly disputing as to the colour of a chameleon. One said, 'The chameleon on that palm tree is of a beautiful red colour'. The other, contradicting him, said, 'You are mistaken, the chameleon is not red but blue'. Not being able to settle the matter by arguments, both went to the person who always lived under that tree and had watched the chameleon in all its phases of colour. One of them said, 'Sir, is not the chameleon on that tree of a red colour?' 'Yes, sir.' The other disputant said, 'What do you say? How is it? It is not red, it is blue'. The person again humbly replied, 'Yes, sir'. The person said that the chameleon is an animal that constantly changes its colour; thus it was that he said 'yes' to both these conflicting statements. The Sat-chid-ananda likewise has various forms. The devotee who has seen God in one aspect only knows Him in that aspect alone. But he who has seen Him in His manifold aspects is alone in a position to say, 'All these forms are of one God, for God is multiform'. He has forms and has no forms, and many are His forms which no one knows.

The first step, therefore, is the cultivation and strengthening of the belief that God-realization is possible and attainable. One has to be a 'believer', but not in the narrow sense in which it is used by Christians and Mohammedans. As the *Katha Upanishad* puts it:

He (the Self) cannot be reached by speech, by mind, or by the eye. How can He be apprehended except by him who says 'He is'?

By the words 'He is' is He to be apprehended, and by admitting the reality of both the invisible Brahman and the visible world, as coming from Brahman. When He has been apprehended by the words 'He is' then His reality reveals itself.

It is only by means of one's best exertions and the fixing of his mind to one object, as also by the subjection of his desires, that the ultimate state (of bliss) can be arrived at. So it is by means of discrimination, reasoning and ultimate ascertainment of truth, that a man may avoid the snares of misery, and attain his best state.

A BACKWARD GLANCE AT PRABUDDHA BHARATA'S FIFTY VOLUMES

BY ST. NIHAL SINGH

(Continued)

5. *Tuning in the Generator*

In the conduct of the *Prabuddha Bharata* from now on (August 1898), any careful observer can easily—quickly—detect an impulse—strong and continuous. This impulse found expression on pages 1 and 2 of the revived magazine. They bore an inspiring message from Swami Vivekananda. I reproduce it here in full :

TO THE AWAKENED INDIA

Once more awake!

For sleep it was, not death, to bring thee life
Anew, and rest to lotus-eyes, for visions
Daring yet. The world in need awaits, O Truth!
No death for thee!

Resume thy march,

With gentle feet that would not break the
Careful rest, even of the road-side dust
That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold and free. Awakener, ever
Forward! Speak thy stirring words.

Thy home is gone,

Where loving hearts had brought thee up, and
Watched with joy thy growth. But Fate is strong—
This is the law,—all things come back to the source
They sprung, their strength to renew.

Then start afresh

From the land of thy birth, where vast cloud-belted
Snows do bless and put their strength in thee,
For working wonders new. The heavenly
River tune thy voice to her own immortal song;
Deodar shades give thee eternal peace.

And all above,

Himala's daughter Uma, gentle, pure,
The Mother that resides in all as Power
And Life, who works all works, and
Makes of One the world, whose mercy
Opes the gate to Truth, and shows
The One in All, give thee untiring
Strength, which is Infinite Love.

They bless thee all,

The seers great, whom age nor clime
Can claim their own, the fathers of the
Race, who felt the heart of Truth the same,
And bravely taught to man ill-voiced or
Well. Their servant, thou hast got
The secret,—'tis but One.

Then speak, O Love!—

Before thy gentle voice serene, behold how
Visions melt, and fold on fold of dreams
Departs to void, till Truth and Truth alone,
In all its glory shines.—

And tell the world—

Awake, arise, and dream no more!
This is the land of dreams, where Karma
Weaves unthreaded garlands with our thoughts,
Of flowers sweet or noxious,—and none
Has root or stem, being born in naught, which
The softest breath of Truth drives back to
Primal nothingness. Be bold, and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease,
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.

* * *

Vivekananda's capacity for attending to detail—for taking pains—was almost infinite. He felt that the *shloka* from the Sanskrit, as translated for the early volumes, did not express, with exactitude, the purposes he had in view. The altered motto, taken from one of his lectures, read, 'Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached'.¹

The change went far beyond this. The editorial face was turned fully towards the rising sun. Rajam Iyer had been, I need to recall here, greatly impressed with Schopenhauer's dictum.

That philosopher had written,

The white man and his fair lady, ...stray into the
Indian woods and there come across the Hindu sage

¹ *Katha Upanishad*, I. iii. 14,

under the banyan tree. The hoary tree, the cool shade, the refreshing stream, and, above all, the hoarier, cooler, and more refreshing philosophy that falls from his lips enchant them. The discovery is published; pilgrims multiply. A Sanyasin from our midst carries the altar-fire across the seas. The Spirit of the Upanishads makes a progress in distant lands. The procession develops into a festival. The noise reaches (the) Indian shores, and behold! our Mother-land is awakening!²

So struck had Rajam been with these prophetic words that he had them pictured. The cover-design, as I wrote, caught my boyish fancy. I then was too young to see, however, that even at that date the sketch did not visualize a prophecy, but represented an ideal long since realized. This was not perceived even by Rajam, my senior by several years.

Truly speaking, it

..would be an anachronism to continue to paint Western men and women straying today into Indian woods and alighting, as if by the merest chance, upon a Hindu sage, and standing there, shy and uncertain, at a safe distance, ready to fly at a moment's notice, when, as a matter of fact, the Sanyasin's banner has been carried by the rising sun of the *Prabuddha Bharata* itself to the very heart of the West, and that Noble Truth—the one thing that is the inheritance of India alone amongst the nations,—the Truth that behind this manifold curtain of existence there is Unity, is winning its way daily and hourly deeper into the hearts of men and women in the West, illuminating their science and philosophy, and giving a colour all its own, to their profoundest utterances.³

These words were penned by Swarupanda, whom I mentioned in the preceding section. To him was entrusted not only the editing of the magazine, but also the development of the Ashrama. No fitter person, within or without the brotherhood established by Vivekananda for the service of the motherland, could, in my view, have been chosen.

* * *

It was easy to discard the out-of-date cover-design: but not so easy to replace it with one that would attractively express the ideal. For a time, therefore, the *Prabuddha Bharata* appeared, from Almora, with a plain, unembellished cover.

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² *Prabuddha Bharata*, August 1898, Vol. III. p. 14.

³ *ibid.*

Vivekananda devised, in time, a 'symbol' that represented the quintessence of the Ramakrishna philosophy. As it is plain from the illustration:

The sun is just mounting above the far face of a lake. Wind, also rising, disturbs its waters. A swan serenely floats amidst the eddies, his neck gracefully arched. Just below his pure white body a lotus is in full bloom. The white petals shine against the jade leaves. They have parted to display this marvel of nature. A hooded cobra, with tongue stretched out to sting, is twined round its own tail, forming a frame for the device. Against the snake-skin and below the lotus are lettered the ages-old *mantra*—*तन्नो हंसः प्रचादयात्*—'May the swan (*i.e.* the ever-free Brahman) illumine our hearts'.

This device symbolized man's struggle against the passions that assail him—his eventual freedom. The swan represents the soul (*jiva*); the lake the mind; and the waves, the changing moods (*vruttis*).

The rising sun symbolizes the power of knowledge—Jnana Yoga; the swimming of the *jiva* is indicative of labour without craving for reward—Karma Yoga; the ~~lotus~~ stands for devotion to God—Bhakti Yoga; and the serpent forming a circle (*Kundalini*) is emblematic of immortality emanating from Raja Yoga. All four forms of yoga are mobilized by the invocation 'May the self inspire us—guide us'. In this age, Vivekananda held, all four yogas must be practised, none of them being, by itself, adequate to our twentieth century complex minds.

Having produced a rough sketch of the device, the Master insisted upon an artist presenting him with a finished drawing. All those submitted to him struck him as singularly unattractive. Where, he asked, had gone the genius that had given the motherland its rock-cut temples—its Taj Mahal—its Raja Man Singh's palace? When driven to the verge of despair a sketch was produced that finally was adopted as the *advaita*

symbol and embellished the *Prabuddha Bharata* cover.

* * *

When the Master was nigh, work for Swarupananda and his assistants was not only easy, but also was joyful. The giants of the forest, its birds, beasts, and human bipeds, called to the Master. He liked to watch them frisking about, chirruping, mate calling to mate, the female of this species or that feeding with bill or from the breast the young it had been the means of bringing into existence—existence that was but a breath in eternity's never-ending cycle. He never tired of looking at the strong, sturdy, wooden (were they only wooden?) frames glorying in their naked majesty. His eye fondly lingered over the vine, fragile-looking but often, in reality, stronger than the fabricated rope, flaunting its starlets of many hues against the ashen, or may be the brown or sere form that it hugged. Rapture came to his soul when his uplifted vision fell upon the multitudinous peaks, with their sharp pointed diamonds shining against the azure, or copperish, or rose, or salmon-coloured, or dove's or mackerel, or sheep's wool-flecked heavens.

These sights and sounds set some spring within his heart to flowing. He would talk of things of this world, all the worlds, and no world—of beings who had been shot out of eternity and were shot back into eternity—of their miseries, or may be their vanities, or their childish babblings and brawlings down below in the laps of velvety valleys or on the steaming, broad bosom of the plains. All the while he would be devising ways and means to help them and their brothers and sisters across the waste of waters—each to help himself or herself to a sure, secure anchorage in never-ending bliss.

Even in these communings, Vivekananda was never selfish. He would have with him one or another of the brethren or his spiritual children. Towards him, or her, or them, as the case may be, the outpourings from his mind, heart, and soul would flow, now in a

gentle, meandering stream, again with the rush and roar of a mountain torrent.

* * *

Out of these contacts, intimate and yet strangely impersonal, emerged matter in plenitude for the *Prabuddha Bharata*. It was cast into many forms—notes, articles, critiques, and interviews.

As, through the courtesy of the custodians of the old, precious volumes, I turn the leaves, ever so gently, reminiscences are awakened in me. These whirl me back to my own early essays in writing—essays made in hours stolen from school and college studies.

One of the earliest numbers sent out from the Himalyan culture power-house contained the Swami's concepts concerning 'aggression in a religious sense'.⁴ Therein he told the *Prabuddha Bharata* representative—Swarupananda, to be sure—that since Buddha's time we (the Hindus) had lay prone—any outsider with any 'ism' could walk all over our prostrate bodies without a murmur from us; and even capture our bodies without remonstrance, much less resistance, from us. The movement he had inaugurated was, however, meant 'to awaken the national consciousness'⁵ in us and this, as I interpreted it, by finding the common bases of Hinduism.⁶

* * *

One evening the Master sat on the roof of a double-decker boat gliding over the bosom of *Ganga Mai*. The sun had sunk some time earlier. The afterglow was gone. The mind effortlessly turned, in consequence, from the outward to the inward thoughts.

A disciple attached to the *Prabuddha Bharata* asked, 'What of the Hindus who are lost to us for one reason or another? Should they be welcomed back to our fold, or disdainfully repulsed?'

'When the Mohammedans first came' to India, he replied, there were '600,000,000 Hindus'. So, he believed, Ferishta, the

⁴ *Prabuddha Bharata*, September 1898, Vol. III. No. 2, p. 17.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

historian, had stated. In 1899 'we are (only) about 200,000,000'.⁷

With the quiet manner that distinguished him on such occasions, he added :

'Not a few of the Hindus were forced out of the fold. Why should the descendants of these be victimized? Why should they not be received back into Hinduism?'

In centuries gone by, crowds of 'born aliens' were Hinduized. The process was still going on.

He was no stickler for 'ceremonies of expiation'. He would not impose them upon those 'who were only alienated by conquest -- as in Kashmir and Nepal—or on strangers wishing to join us'.⁸

In regard to the caste into which the

⁷ *Prabuddha Bharata*, April 1899, Vol. IV. No. 4, p. 49.

⁸ *ibid.*

Hinduized persons were to be received, he reminded the interviewer, 'Converts from different castes and aliens were all able to combine under' the flag of Vaishnavism. They were able to 'form a caste by themselves—and a very respectable one, too'.⁹

There also was a piece elaborating one aspect of this theme. It was 'Mohammedananda'.¹⁰ Inspired by Vivekananda, the writer sought to show that the religion brought from Arabia was, in its essential spirit, in harmony with the faith of our fathers. He was of the opinion that 'the only hope' for 'our own motherland' lay in the 'junction of the two great systems—Hinduism and Islam'. Vedanta, he conceived to be the 'brain and Islam (the) body'.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *vide The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, p. 680.

(To be continued)

THE VEDANTIC CONCEPTION OF EDUCATION

BY PANDIT JAIWANT RAM, B.A., B.T.

The Vedantic conception of education is unique in many respects : it is very wide in scope, embracing the whole ambit of life ; it steers clear of the pitfalls which confront most of the educational theories, pitfalls which consist in their concentrating attention on one phase of life to the total or partial exclusion of others, in no way less important ; it is as full and comprehensive as life itself. It is on this account not without profit to make a careful and deep study of the conception of education that Vedanta philosophy puts forward. According to Vedanta the life of man is permeated by ignorance and forgetfulness, and education consists in awaking the man from these. This implies both the necessity of education and the educator. That man is a highly educable being follows as a corollary from this conception. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* this has been exemplified by an analogy. There the man

without light and learning has been compared to a man who has been blindfolded, bound hand and foot, and thrown into a thick impenetrable forest, unable to move and ignorant of the direction in which he should move. Anon comes a teacher who removes the bandage from his eyes and unshackles him, and, giving him directions, enlightens him as to the path he should pursue in order to reach his destination.

The view that a man is steeped in forgetfulness is from the standpoint of psychology clearly confirmed by the well-known fact that all progress is a progress in self-consciousness. This awakening, though stated in the scriptures as one final event as far as the final spiritual awakening is concerned, comprises, in fact, so far as the whole gamut of life goes, a series of awakenings, the one leading to the next higher stage till the sleep of ignorance has altogether been shaken off for good.

There have been recognized marked stages of psycho-physical nature, climatic which when properly harnessed for educational ends accelerate the process of education and awaken the soul to further possibilities: thus is the task of education carried on, not in opposition to but in alliance with Nature.

As the educational process involves a graduated series of awakening it is the awakening not of a part or a fragment of man, not of the physical at the expense of the mental, nor of the mental and moral at the expense of the physical or spiritual, not merely of the spiritual, as ordinarily understood, at the expense of the intellectual, not of the other world at the expense of this world, not of this world at the expense of the next, but of the whole, integral man.

And to the Hindus this is not merely a theoretical doctrine not reducible to practice but one affording sound practical guidance in the everyday educational process which is moulded in conformity therewith. What methods does the Vedanta advocate and employ to bring about this awakening? As the Vedic conception of education is unique, so are its methods. The Hindus set great store by *samskara* without which the educational process, however effectively carried on otherwise, becomes divested of much essential value. The attempt to firmly grasp the fundamentals of the Vedic system of education desiderates a full comprehension of the doctrine of *samskara*. Education without the requisite preliminary *samskara* (here education is being used in its broadest sense) is like trying to place a tool in the hands of a man who has neither the desire to use it nor the requisite knowledge as to the scope of the method of its use. *Samskara* is the foundation on which the edifice of education is reared. Now what is *samskara*? *Samskara* literally means impression. The term includes within its scope the stamping of the proper impression at the proper time and all the means adopted to accomplish this end. Allusion has already been made to particular periods in the growth of the human organism when certain mental tendencies make their

first appearance and begin to unfold. Vedic psychology maintains that while proper bent given during these impressionable periods will, like the seed sown in the soil at the proper season, bring about wished-for results with comparatively less toil, the evil done by imparting a wrong bent at these critical junctures will not be completely undone by a bundleful of devices adopted later on. The main agent in the creating or unfolding of *samskara* is what in modern psychology we call suggestion. It has been proved to the hilt that a suggestion given under proper conditions produces wonderful results whose scope extends from the eradication of a specific mental or moral defect of a minor nature to the wholesale cure of chronic diseases and vital modification in character. The efficacy of suggestion has been fully acknowledged by modern psychology but its services have not been utilized to the full extent in the cause of education and therapeutics. By penetrating to the sub-conscious mind which carries out commands like a scrupulously faithful servant, suggestion, when earnestly imparted accomplishes comparatively effectively and quickly, especially at certain stages of life, what other methods cannot accomplish even with double the labour and treble the time. No creed or philosophy, ancient or modern, has recommended the employment of suggestion so comprehensively, so forcefully, so boldly and scientifically as Vedanta in its practical aspect.

From the strictly materialistic point of view, periods of life after youth called declining years, are comparatively barren being unproductive and characterized by steadily diminishing interest in the various things of this world; but according to the Vedantic point of view, each later stage should be marked by a higher sort of awakening and the lack of interest in things mundane is not a sign of decay but an urge for something higher, an urge which is woefully neglected in the present-day scientific civilization, but one fully recognized and utilized by Vedanta for the development of a higher spiritual

nature for which proper *samskaras* are also prescribed. This is decidedly a much higher conception and invests the whole of life with meaning.

All this however implies a higher aim which, according to the Vedanta, is nothing short of the complete awakening of the spirit resulting in the establishment of complete *Swarajya*, the dominion of the effulgent glory of the Self over things both mundane and extra mundane. But this is the final aim and in order to reach it the souls must pass through certain stages with distinct aim each as important in its period as the final aim. These are the *dharma* (duty), *artha* (possession), *kama* (accomplishment of higher ambitions), and lastly *moksha* (perfect freedom). During the later periods too much premature stress was laid on the last which brought in its wake not only weakening of secular interests of life and the health of the body politic but sometimes hindered the full consummation of the fourth which requires as a condition of its consummation the maturation of the first three. This four-fold aim of education leaves no faculty with which a human being is endowed, unexercised, and keeps one on the *qui vive* against that great thief of human progress—indolence and indifference. Eternity of soul does no longer remain here a mere philosophical dogma but a practical precept shaping the whole course of education and exalting one to spiritual heights transcending the narrow limits of this world as well as the next.

With this exalted aim serving as a beacon light to guide them and with this conception of life let us see what educational method was adopted by the Hindus to achieve that end.

According to Vedanta, that surely is not knowledge which consists in the mere accumulation of information, mere reading of books; these have a place in education but only a secondary place. That again is not education which appears as a kind of extraneous possession but does not become part and parcel of life and modifies its tenor. Education is an awakening from ignorance—

ignorance of the outer world, ignorance of the inner world. For a comprehension of the educational methods pursued by Vedanta which are uninfluenced by any ulterior motive, by any foreign influence, a study of the *upanishads* is indispensable.

It may be stated here at the outset that we shall confine our attention to the method only irrespective of the subject matter for which those methods have been employed. The *upanishads* contain a mine of information to which it is impossible to do full justice within the limited compass of a short article. Only a broad outline can be given. The first important principle on which a very serious stress is laid and which is recognized as the very core of educational doctrine and the foundation on which the edifice of educational method can be raised is the presence in the pupil of an ardent desire or, what is to say the same thing, a very strong interest which, as has already been stated, at a certain stage in the growth of a man would spontaneously come into being. If it is altogether non-existent nothing whatsoever can be done. If it is weak it should be strengthened, if dormant it should be roused and if it is shallow or superficial it should be rendered serious by means of appropriate tests. Indra approaches Brahma in order to acquire *Brahma Vidya* but is asked to stay for thirty-two years giving a practical proof as to the earnestness of his desire before the knowledge in question can be imparted to him. To test whether the desire is genuine or not the boy Nachiketas is effectively dissuaded from the pursuit of *Brahma Vidya* by the grant of boons which might have tempted even the ascetics. Arouse the interest is the slogan of the present-day psychologist. 'Aye' says the *upanishadic* seer, 'but see that it is genuine and sharpen it; for rousing interest is half the education'.

The heuristic method, the Socratic method, the Project method—the employment of all these methods is to be discovered in the *upanishads*, the one consistent aim all along being to lead the pupil to discover things for himself. These methods and others of

the type do not, however, by any means exhaust all the various methods employed in the *upanishads*, for pupils of different types and at different stages of life. Much is nowadays being said and written under the influence of the modern educational psychology on the utter desirability of the teacher playing the role of a guide while all the work is being done by the pupils under his control. But a practical illustration on and demonstration of this sound educational precept is seldom to be met with in the educational literature ancient or modern in the illuminating form in which it is found in that chapter of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* which deals with the instruction in *Brahma Vidya* of Bhrigu at the hands of his father Varuna. Although the whole of it cannot be reproduced here yet it deserves being described at some length, as it will afford an insight into the nature of teaching methods adopted in the *upanishads*. Young Bhrigu alive with the desire to know Brahman approaches his revered father with the request that he may be initiated into the mysterious lore. The father does not forthwith begin to expound the secret doctrine with all its philosophic implication, engendering confusion and propagating in its wake repulsion in the place of interest; but he pithily places before him the essential attributes of Brahman and leaves it to the boy to investigate, in the light of this guidance, what Brahman is by means of meditation and concentration. In the course of his ardent search the son passes through a series of conclusions each marking an important philosophical stage but the father does not contradict or criticise him but simply repeats his original direction implying that the true goal has not been arrived at and ceases repeating it when the true goal has been reached. This is a method of making the pupil rigorously exercise his mental faculties and discover the truth by unaided efforts. This however implies in a pupil a very superior endowment by nature.

But for pupils who were not so extraordinarily gifted the method adopted was one which though possessing all the virtues

of the previous method did not entail the severe burden of original thinking. This was the method which, while others were during the succeeding periods relegated to the limbo of oblivion, has been retained intact up to the present day; though outside the narrow circle of Vedanta it is not widely employed in the sphere of general education. It was the well-known method of *shravana*, *manana*, *nididhyasana*, and *sakshatkara*—mental processes which converted the newly acquired knowledge from the status of a loose mental content into an integral part of life by organizing it into the texture of the very being of the pupil.

Shravana means learning from the teacher; *manana* is the process of assimilating it by resolving doubts; *nididhyasana* consists in meditating on the assimilated knowledge; and *sakshatkara* is illumination. This I consider to be one of the greatest discoveries of the Hindus in the sphere of education without which all knowledge is of uncertain nature, and whose value to life is questionable. Only recently have occidental thinkers in the department of education propounded a view of higher education similar to this. Even at the risk of its appearing as a digression it brooks being quoted:

But if we have taken stock of the new investigations of the psychology of insight, and if we have noted how often we ourselves solve problems—though not without the use of former experience to be sure—there seems to be room for a recent contribution of Fletcher who sets up a companion type of thinking, the creative type. Taking a cue from Helmholtz and Wallace he suggests three stages of such thinking:

1. The stage of preparation, i.e. of study, absorption, and investigation, (2) the stage of incubation or assimilation, and (3) the stage of illumination, i.e. of insight or creation.

The steps are analogous if not identical.

Not only for obtaining spiritual knowledge or rather knowledge of the Eternal but also for getting a true insight into the fundamentals of educational methods which brook being employed in other than spiritual spheres the contribution of Vedanta is not only unique but deserves (especially the method side) being further explored.

THE CULTURE AND RELIGION OF THE YORUBAS OF WEST AFRICA

BY SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI, M.A., D.LIT. (LOND.), F.R.A.S.B.

It was in 1919, in the month of September, that I arrived in London for my two years' stay and study there. As soon as I had settled down in my student lodgings, I went to see the various collections in that wonderful treasure-house of objects of antiquarian, historical, anthropological and artistic interest—the British Museum of London. In this all-embracing institution, housing specimens of the handiwork of man in all ages and all climes, I was enabled to form an acquaintance, quite unexpectedly, with a collection of objects about which I had previously not the slightest idea—*viz.*, objects illustrating the art of the Negro peoples of West Africa. As a student of language, however, I had only some general notion of the linguistic classification of the African peoples, like the Hamites, the True Negroes, the Bantu Negroes, and the Bushmen and Hottentots. But like most people in India and elsewhere, I used to think that the Negroes of Africa were a savage and barbarous people, and they had nothing of civilization and art, of thought and religion of any high order, comparable with what we find among civilized peoples. But after I had seen a series of artefacts produced by Negroes of the city state of Benin in South Nigeria in West Africa—bronze heads, images, and groups of figures in bronze, bronze plaques with reliefs of human figures and animals and birds, figures and plaquettes in ivory, caskets and other ivory objects—my eyes were opened up to a new and a strange world of beauty, the strangeness and the unexpectedness of the type of artistic expression lending it an extra charm which was not merely the charm of novelty. My curiosity in Africa, and particularly in West Africa, was awakened; and whatever was easily available, in the library of the British Museum and elsewhere, I began to read with avidity, to form some idea of the cultural milieu in which this remarkable art of Benin was born. I was in this way enabled to learn something about the various peoples of Africa, and their religion, culture, and art, and to visualize them in their proper atmosphere. I noted with pleasure that the successful achievement and the abiding beauty of the attempts at self-expression in the field of plastic art which the primitive African peoples had made were already discovered by the artists and art critics of Europe who had an eye for the truly artistic. I gradually realized that the peculiar and noteworthy expression of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, which has taken place through the religion, culture, and art which evolved in the life of the various primitive peoples of Africa, was quite acceptable to

sympathetic and appreciative spirits among humanity at large.

What the primitive peoples of Africa had built up, working under various and peculiarly adverse circumstances, could show, as among all other peoples, much that was good and beautiful and worthy of the sincere appreciation of man, side by side with certain things which were cruel and ugly, foolish and shameful. What should be a matter for general congratulation is that the peoples of Africa, so long remaining such a long way behind the civilized races, are now slowly coming to realize that they too have contributed something which is worth preserving; and they are feeling that they should not always consider themselves as eternally backward and helpless, and condemned for ever to drag on an ignominious existence on scraps from Europe's feast of culture. It must be admitted that the eye of the intelligent African is at last opening up, and a true spiritual awakening is taking place for him through the influence of the cultured mind of Europe—the mind of Europe which understands, and seeks for the truth, and is liberal and human in its outlook. The Africans, as a result of this, will be able to free themselves of a sense of inferiority which is now sitting on them—~~an~~ an incubus; they will learn to judge their own culture with proper sympathy and understanding, freeing themselves from the excessive awe with which they were accustomed to look upon the Christian organization and culture brought to them by the missionary, and upon the overwhelming might of the machine-made civilization of Europe. They will not then feel so very humiliated at the poverty of their primitive life, when they understand it in its proper context. This growing change of mental outlook is certainly a bit of good news, not only for the black man of Africa alone, but for the whole of humanity.

I came to form some idea of African art and culture during my two years' stay in England (1919-1921); and then subsequently, in 1935 and 1938, I was enabled to visit some well-known centres of African art in the museums of the Continent. During my stay in London as a student, I formed the acquaintance of some African (Negro) gentlemen who were also sojourning there, and through their contact it was possible for me to know a little more intimately some aspects of African life and ways, ideas and ideals; and this knowledge helped to create in my mind a great sense of respect for the African and his native culture.

In the whole of Africa, peoples belonging to no less

than seven distinct types of speech and culture form the native inhabitants. These are (1) the Semitic, (2) the Hamitic, (3) the Bushmen, (4) the Hottentot, (5) the Bantu Negroes, (6) the Sudanian or Pure Negroes and (7) the Pygmy Negroes or Negritos. Of these seven groups, the Semitic and the Hamitic are closely related to each other—in language if not in race: the Semitic and the Hamitic languages are believed to belong to a common Semitic-Hamitic family, from which these two branches separated in prehistoric times. The Hamites appear to have been living in the whole of Northern (Mediterranean) Africa since time immemorial; the people of Egypt who built up her ancient civilization were Hamites. The Berber tribes of Algiers, Tunis, and Morocco, like the Kabyles, for instance, the Tuaregs of the Sahara, and the Somalis and Gallas of Eastern Africa—these are also Hamites, and are kinsmen of the ancient Egyptians. The Hamites belong to the white race. The Semites originally did not belong to Africa. Their homelands were Syria and Arabia, and they had quite early settled in Assyria and Babylonia. From South Arabia, Semitic colonists came and settled in Ethiopia or Abyssinia where they brought their language; and groups of Semites from Syria and Palestine also made settlements in Egypt in very ancient times. They were able to modify the life and culture of their linguistic kinsmen, the Hamites of North Africa, most profoundly; particularly in post-Islamic times, the Arabs, in the course of last thousand years, established their Moslem religion and their Arabic language all over North and Central Africa; from the Red Sea to the Atlantic they have created a new Arab world where the language and the culture of Arabia reign supreme, even if the local languages in North-West Africa and the Sahara still persist. The Semitic and Hamitic peoples who both belong to the white race have no genetic relationship with black Africa—the two groups originally are distinct. In considering African Africa, or Negro Africa, the Semitic-Hamitic peoples have no place, except as a strong solvent force from the outside. In South Sahara and West Sudan—along the upper course of the Niger river particularly,—there has been a great intermixture of the Hamites from the Sahara and the north with the local True Negroes, and this has led to some new mixed tribes or peoples, like the Hausa of Northern Nigeria and the Fulani, Fulbe, or Peul (Pol) of French West Africa, who form very well organized and advanced African tribes; and similarly in East Africa, among the Swahili and other Bantu-speaking Negroes, there has been a certain amount of Arab influence. Peoples of mixed origin like the Fulani and the Hausa, and the Swahili, are true Africans nevertheless, although they lack the interest that is attached to the True Negroes and the purer Bantu tribes: and as these have accepted Islam some centuries ago, they have, in matters purely cultural, passed out of the circle of true Africa. The Bushmen and Hottentot peoples are also related to

each other, linguistically and racially, very much like the Semites and the Hamites. These live in South Africa: they belong to a race quite distinct from the Negro race which is found in its two main branches. Bushmen and Hottentot culture has always been at a very low level, although the ancestors of these peoples showed some artistic powers in ancient times in their cave paintings; but they are not considered in discussing purely Negro culture. The Pygmies are a kind of very short-statured Negroes who have no real culture of their own—they are in the lowest scale of civilization. These Pygmies are found in the dense forest regions of Congo State, and they have been influenced even in language by their neighbours, the Bantu peoples. Their cultural milieu is also quite distinct from that of the Negroes proper.

The Negroes of Africa, forming the distinctive people of the 'Black Continent', fall into two broad groups, not considering some important local variations in the heart of Africa, in East Sudan—(a) the Bantus of Central and Southern Africa, and (b) the Sudanic Negroes or True Negroes of Western and North-Central Africa. There are certain fundamental agreements between these two groups in physical appearance, in character and temperament, and in general cultural milieu, including social organization; but nevertheless, these two groups show a great contrast in certain other matters—*e.g.*, in language, in religious notions, and in social life and customs.

The Sudanic or True Negroes of West Africa are in a way the best representatives of the black peoples of Africa. These Sudanic Negroes, considering their languages and their past history (Sudanic Negro languages bear a general family likeness among themselves), are conveniently divided into a number of tribes. Of these tribes, the following are the most important, in West Africa: the Nupes, the Ibos, and the Yorubas of Southern Nigeria; the great group of Chi or Twi tribes in British Gold Coast colony—the Ashanti or Fanti, and the Ewhe being two of the most important of them; the Gan of Dahomey; and the Baule, the Mandingo, the Mossi, the Bambara, the Songhoi, the Senuso, the Wolof, and other tribes of French West Africa. The Yorubas people of Nigeria (closely related to whom is the Bini tribe of the city of Benin in South Nigeria, who were one of the most artistic peoples of Africa, famous for their bronze statuary and plaques, their ivories and their wood-carving), and the Ashantis of Gold Coast are two of the most intelligent and most advanced peoples of West Africa, being quite noteworthy in physical appearance, in cleverness, and in enterprise; these, and the Baganda people of Uganda in East Africa, who are a Bantu people, represent the highest level of modern African Africa, and in intelligence and adaptability to modern culture, as well as in their stable social organization, they have shown themselves to be quite capable of holding their own before Europeans even.

The African gentlemen whose acquaintance and friendship I made in London during my student days in 1919-22 were all Yorubas, and one of them was an Ashanti. A little point in nomenclature may be mentioned here as something quite *à propos*. Educated Negroes of Africa are never ashamed to refer to themselves as 'black men'; but they do not like to use the term 'Negro' for themselves, because of the English corruption of the word, 'nigger', being used in abuse only—although the source-form of both 'Negro' and 'nigger', *viz.*, the Latin word *niger*, just meant 'black'. They prefer the word 'African', and Europeans and others who are sympathetic and who do not want to give offence also use the term 'African'. In the same way, the Malay peoples of Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) now take pride in designating themselves as 'Indonesians', and not by their tribal or local names. The names 'Africa' and 'African' have become, so to say, symbols of a newly awakened Negro or Black African consciousness. From these Yoruba friends of mine I came to know that the Yorubas formed quite a nation—they numbered three millions, of whom a third were Christians, another third Moslems, and the remaining third were followers of their old African 'pagan' religion. The people are singularly free from religious quarrels, and conversion either to Islam or to Christianity is purely voluntary; but there is a certain amount of resistance offered by the old religion, the traditions of which are still quite strong, to the new faiths. The Gods of the old religion of the Yorubas still receive worship from the people in what may be described as public shrines or temples, (in certain places these are considered specially sacred), and in the family shrines of householders. The Yorubas live mainly by agriculture, and they raise cereals like rice and maize, and the yam which is their staff of life, palm-oil and peanuts for home consumption, and cocoa and cotton as well as mahogany wood for export. They are now fairly prosperous; and the Yoruba country is densely populated. The landholders and farmers appear to be quite well off. There are some fairly bigish towns in Yorubaland—*e.g.*, Lagos, the sea-port town and capital of Nigeria (with more than 150,000 inhabitants), Ibadan (about 250,000 people), Ogbemosho (90,000), Ilorin (85,000), Abeokuta, and Iwo (each 55,000); and in addition to these, there are several other towns with populations ranging from thirty to fifty thousand. In these towns, they have their old chiefs, some Christian or Moslem, others following the national religion; and they carry on the affairs of these considerable settlements in their old way, and are eager to adopt whatever in the European system would appear to be helpful or better for them. The city of Ife is the centre of their religious life. To the west of Yorubaland are the countries of Dahomey (inhabited by the Gan people), and Togo, and further to the west is the colony of Gold Coast, the home of the Ashantis. The economic

condition of the people of these parts is quite satisfactory, like that of the Yorubas.

In 1920, while at London, I came to know a Yoruba student from Lagos named Nathaniel Akinremi Fadipe (or Fadikpe). Eighteen years later I was enabled to see him again in London in 1938. When I met him first, I asked him the meaning of his name, or surname. He said that the word 'Fadikpe' was composed of three elements—'Ifa-di-kpe', which meant 'the Gift of the God Ifa'. I asked him about the old African religion from which evidently he had got his family name. Fadikpe was himself a Christian, but I was pleased to find that he had no contempt for the old religion of his people. He told me about the God Ifa that this particular divinity was associated with prophecy and foretelling, and the centre of his worship was the city of Ife, where his priests used to tell the future with the help of sixteen palm-nuts from a special kind of palm-tree—the priests throw the nuts on a round or oblong tray of wood carved with figures, and they calculate how many nuts fall on the tray or remain in hand by drawing lines sixteen times on the tray, and in this way seek to interpret the mind of the God regarding the matter in hand. I had an impression from Fadikpe's talk that he had a sort of faith in the efficacy and truth of this kind of prophecy, but he explained to me that he was born in a Christian family and so he did not know much about the old religion, which was still a living faith with about a million of his people.

Later on I met a Moslem Yoruba prince or chief, Chief Oluwa, who was one of the twelve 'white cap' chiefs of Southern Yorubaland. This chief had come to London in connexion with a law suit with the English Government in Nigeria about certain landed properties near Lagos which the Government had taken over from him without paying anything and over which the chief claimed he had rights (I was glad to find that finally the chief won his case). The chief was a dignified old man in his loose black and white robes of an Arab style. His son accompanied him, and he was a handsome young man, looking splendid (when I had occasion to see him in his residence) in a blue cloak, stamped with many-coloured designs, worn toga-fashion exposing his right shoulder and forearm with the biceps of an athlete, and with leather sandals on his feet—quite the figure of an ebony statue in the classical style. Another person who came with the chief was a Yoruba compatriot of his, a gentleman of the name of Herbert Macaulay, who acted as the chief's secretary and was the manager in his case. The name was British, but Mr. Macaulay was a true African patriot, in spite of his British name and his immaculate English suit. He was a man of education and culture, and had taken his degree in engineering in a British university, and he was a well-known citizen of Lagos and a leader of his people. Mr. Macaulay's maternal grandfather was Bishop Crowther, the first full-blooded African to be consecrated

a bishop of the Anglican Church. When a small boy, Bishop Crowther was rescued by the British navy from the slavers in West Africa, and taken to England to be educated, and then he was consecrated priest and sent out as a missionary among his own people. I could learn a good deal from Mr. Macaulay about Yoruba society and ways of life. A Yoruba clergyman had written a book, originally in the Yoruba language (the Yoruba speech had no writing, and the Roman script was adapted for it by the Christian missionaries), on Yoruba heathenism, and this book was translated into English; and Mr. Macaulay had brought a copy, and he lent it to me. I was very pleased with the book, as the author was trying to make his countrymen take a sympathetic interest in the pre-Christian religion of the Yorubas. This Yoruba-speaking *padre* compared Yoruba 'heathenism' with Greek or Roman 'heathenism', and he made it clear to his people that their ancestors were heathen or pagan in the same way that those of the present-day Christian English were heathen or pagan.

There are a good many educated chiefs, and other cultured men among the Yorubas, some of them were with European education. But they were not a bit ashamed because of their old religion, and some of them were quite anxious to preserve it. This sense of pride in their religion as a basis of their culture, and this conservatism certainly formed a refreshing expression of the robust mentality of this section of the people of Africa.

This sense of pride and intelligent appreciation of their own religion and culture appears to be manifesting itself among the Yorubas and their neighbours and kinsmen—particularly among the Twi or Chi tribes, like the Ashantis. The towns of Kumasi and Accra are the political and cultural centres of the Ashantis. Among the Yorubas, Moslems, and pagans, as well as some Christian and Europeanized people, do not wear the tight-fitting clothes of the Europeans; rather they affect the loose drawers and long shirt with a loose sheet as a toga, which is a dress quite suitable for the hot climate of the country. The Ashantis have still kept up their very beautiful native African dress, from the chiefs downwards; they still wrap the beautiful looking cloak round their bodies (the cloak is made up of a piece of stamped and dyed cloth with peculiar native African patterns in colour), and wear their sandals of a classical shape: and gold rings and chains of native Ashanti workmanship offer a beautiful harmony of colour against the smooth black skins of the wearers.

Some years ago, a Congress of Religions was held in some town in America—probably it was in Chicago. It was not on such grand scale as the historic Congress of Religions which was held there in 1893, when the announcement, by Swami Vivekananda (of illustrious memory), of the ideals of Hinduism before a concourse of nations was the most

important event. In this more recent Congress, as usual, representatives of different religions and peoples came and spoke. From a list of the names of people who were to come and speak for the different religions at this Conference (I regret I did not take down the necessary reference), I found that there was the name of an Ashanti gentleman—he was to be present in America all the way from Kumasi in Gold Coast in West Africa, and to take his place in the gathering, among speakers on behalf of the better known or international religions, and proclaim the ideals of his own African religion, his African 'paganism' as it had developed among the Ashantis, as something which could be placed before civilized humanity and which in his opinion was entitled to its sympathetic and respectful consideration, and possibly, acceptance.

All lovers of Man, with a fellow-feeling for the backward and exploited peoples, will realize the significance of this little event, which symbolized the resurgence of the national self-respect of an unknown and unrenowned African people who had been denied, by force of circumstance, to rise to the full height of their being and to make their proper contribution to the corporate culture of man. We do not know anything about the religion of the Ashantis—what are its philosophical bases, and its spiritual realization. It has been always blazoned forth before the world that the Africans following this and similar 'pagan' religions were in the habit of offering human sacrifices, and in their mental and spiritual life they were quite a depraved lot, who required an aggressive and a drastic form of Christianity and Europeanization to bring them up to something like a civilized level. The fact of human sacrifice in certain forms of African Negro religion has not been denied, and cannot be denied; but it can be said as a general statement that there has been a good deal of propaganda, conscious or unconscious, against the moral and spiritual life of these peoples and their mental capacities, patent and latent,—a propaganda which is very largely the result of an intolerance due to an incapacity to understand primitive peoples whose life did not conform to British and other European Christian standards, and was also based on a desire to exploit a helpless people.

I shall say something about the moral life of the Yorubas (these conditions also hold good in the case of other African tribes or nations similarly situated), which will show how unjust and false conceptions are spread about backward peoples who have no means of asserting themselves. The Yoruba gentleman mentioned above, Mr. Herbert Macaulay, once told me, in course of conversation: 'See, Mr. Chatterji, the peoples of Europe have nothing but contempt for us as we are black men, uncivilized dwellers in forests, and rude barbarians in front of the cultured white peoples of Europe. They send missionaries to us to "civilize" us and to "improve" our morality and our life. But the

truth is, they destroy the bases of our old morality and old culture when they seek to destroy ruthlessly all our old ways. The life that old-fashioned Africans followed in the olden days, the life traditionally received from their fathers and grandfathers, was certainly not a life of advanced civilization, but there was no place in it, generally, for thieves and liars and for those who were enemies of public well-being. Even to-day the people of our villages have not wholly given up this old-fashioned adherence to truth. In our country the village or the country-side is known in English as the "bush". We have a number of main roads going through the "bush" *i.e.*, through villages, fields, and wooded tracts. There is generally scarcity of water—we do not have many wells, and "water holes" or ponds and tanks are also few. Neither is there any proper system of inns or lodging-houses, or shops and resting-places. Early in the morning, a woman from a village would come to the main road, a few miles away, with a bunch of coco-nuts and another bunch of plantains, as well as an earthen jar of water. These she would put down in the shade of some big tree by the way-side, and in the coco-nut-shell cup covering the water-jar she would put three little stones; near the bunch of plantains two stones, and similarly near the bunch of coco-nuts, five or seven stones. Arranging everything in this way she would go back home to her village. The idea is that wayfarers along the high road would sit down in the shade of the tree to rest, and if they wanted they could buy a drink of water in the coco-nut-shell cup from the water-jar for three cowries only—in our country cowrie-shells are still in use as small currency—and could have a plantain from the bunch for two cowries, and a coco-nut for five or seven cowries. In the evening the owner of the water and fruits would come from the village, and she would find so many cowries for so much water taken by her unseen customers, and for so many plantains and coco-nuts, and would find her accounts squared up, and go back home perfectly content with her takings and her water-jar and the remaining fruits if any. There is no non-payment and no thieving of the unguarded fruits and water and the cowries in this kind of buying and selling without the seller being present. On the whole, the old honesty largely persists. But the contagion of "civilization" has already started its evil work in some parts of the country.' Mr. Macaulay further said: 'You see, we had all along in our society certain strict rules of life and discipline and there was the tremendous force of public opinion. People could not do whatever they liked in matters affecting the community as a whole. Now they can do it, for, under the law of the white men, no one can prevent them. But we had formerly a good many "good forms", and that was on the whole beneficent to our society. Take, for example, marriage. A young man sees a marriageable girl in some festival, or in the weekly

or daily market, and wishes to marry her. He talks to his friends, and one of them informs the young man's grandfather or grandmother or some similar relation. Then, if the family of the girl is respectable, the parents of the young man would send a proposal for the marriage by means of a professional go-between or match-maker. After that there would be a secret enquiry from either side—whether any ancestor of the boy or the girl ever had one of these three dreaded diseases—syphilis, leprosy, or lunacy. When both families passed this enquiry, marriages in respectable African families could only then take place.' It must be admitted that a people whose personal and social morality and organization had developed in this way were certainly in possession of a high culture, although they had not been able to create a great architecture or art, or to make contributions to science and thought, or even to produce any noteworthy literature.

The religion and thought which take shape among a particular people depends upon the following things—its basic nature or character, its material environment, its economic life and means of livelihood, and the time it can devote to serious and to beautiful things after meeting the elemental demands of hunger and safety; and it depends also on contact with other races with a distinct and a superior culture. The Africans of West Africa along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea do not appear to have had much to do with a cultured foreign people before they came in touch with the Portuguese some 450 years ago, when the Portuguese first came there for trade and for finding a new sea-route to India. Before that, some influences from the Mediterranean area—from Greco-Roman and later Islamic-Arab cultures—may have trickled down to these peoples along two routes, from the north along the Sahara caravan tracks, and from the east, from Egypt, through Central Africa. A good deal of Portuguese influence is seen in the art of West Africa—unless it was really Egyptian and not Portuguese; but Portuguese influences on West African religion do not seem to have been effective at all. Definite Moslem influences came there, long after the European domination of the coast lands, through Arab and Islamized upper Nigerian traders like the Hausas. But long before that, the West Africans had built up their special religious world, with its bases of speculation and ritual, its mythology and cults, its priesthood and its festivals—as we can judge from ancient cult-objects and from ancient traditions about religion, some of these cult-objects having been discovered but in recent years. Consequently we are entitled to look upon the religion of the West African Yorubas and allied tribes as an independent creation of the mature African mind and African society in a specific African milieu. The religious notions and ritualistic practices which we see among the West African tribes that are still heathen, like the Nupe, the Ibo, the Yoruba, the Gan, the Ewhe,

the Ashanti, the Baule, and others, and in the remnants of pre-Moslem religion which still survive among the superficially Islamized tribes like the Mandingo and the Songhoi, present certain family likenesses, in spite of a number of inevitable tribal, local, and linguistic divergences, as these had evolved within an identical geographical, economic, and cultural atmosphere. Not having the competence for it, I shall not try to give a comparative study and estimate of the heathen world of West Africa, but I shall try to present the main points in the religion and mythology of one prominent West African people only—the Yorubas.

It seems more has been written on Yoruba religion and culture in English and other European languages, than on those of any other West African people; and the Yorubas themselves have contributed to this. The Yoruba religion may be taken as typical of that of West Africa as a whole. My facts I have obtained mostly from the books by Colonel A. B. Ellis, R. E. Dennett, Leo Frobenius, and Stephen S. Farrow, and some sidelights have been found from books on African art.

An elaborate series of cults of different Gods, and an extensive Mythology—these are two of the most important expressions of a religion; and Yoruba religion shows quite a high development in these lines. A religion cannot spread among the masses or be acceptable to them if it does not feed their imagination by beautiful or passable legends and stories. But all peoples do not evince the high type of imagination or poetic faculty required in producing beautiful myths and legends, and many peoples are absolutely lacking in the proper aesthetic faculty. The pre-eminence of the ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians, of the Greeks and Indians, and of the Celts and Germans in the myth-making faculty is not very common elsewhere. Throughout the whole of Africa, after the Hamitic-speaking Egyptians of ancient times, the people of the Yoruba speech have shown the greatest achievement in evolving a finished system of mythology. We have a number of Gods and Goddesses of personality and character in Yoruba religion, and some noteworthy myths; and the Yoruba Gods are entitled to a distinctive place in the pantheon of all religions, because of their special character.

A very special type of art has grown up around these myths and legends, among the Yorubas proper and their allied tribes. This art has expressed itself in images and bas-reliefs, and in sculpture and modelling in metal, ivory, wood, and terracotta, as well as in pottery and wooden vessels. The wood-carvings of the Yorubas of the present day, and bronzes of ancient Yorubaland and of the city of Benin, as well as the ivories, are specially to be mentioned. The place of this art is the highest in African Africa; and in its pure beauty and truth as a cultural expression this West African art can be said to be a *ktéma es aei*, 'a possession for ever', for the whole of humanity.

A section of mankind which follows Judaism and the

religions which are its offshoots, namely, Christianity and Islam, uses certain words of contempt for their fellow-beings who belong to religions other than these three, words which imply that God's truth is confined only to one or the other of these three religions, and none outside these knows or can even aspire to know this truth. A European word expressing this mentality, as it developed within Christianity, is *pagan* (and *paganism*): those who do not accept the authority of the Bible (or the Quran among the Moslems) are pagans. The word means 'belonging to the village or country-side, rustic', and then it came to imply the backwardness which is associated with rustic life. Explaining the word differently, we may say that a religion which is not founded on the teachings or sayings of a single historic teacher who is regarded as inspired and infallible, and which has been since time immemorial naturally evolving as the expression of the mind, the heart and the actions of people living in a particular geographic, economic, and cultural milieu, is a natural religion—is a form of paganism: and taking the word *pagan* in this sense, we cannot object to its use. This pagan religion, in order to be raised to something acceptable for mankind in higher stages of evolution, must have a system (or systems) of thought linking it up with the Unseen Reality. This is what we see in all ancient natural or pagan religions as among the civilized peoples of antiquity like the Greeks, the Chinese, and the Hindus. Some time ago, Mrs. Savitri Mukherji, a highly cultured Greek lady, who has accepted the naturally evolved religion of India, Hinduism—our Indian Paganism—has written a very fine and thought-provoking book on Hindu culture and its preservation, *A Warning to the Hindus*, and in this work she has in all seriousness and with fullest justification made a defence of Paganism (in the above sense) as the natural and proper religion of man. The Yoruba religion is a paganism of this type, bearing a family resemblance to ancient Greek or Chinese religion, and to Hinduism in its popular form.

Being unable to grasp the character or implications of the natural religion in its various forms as current among the peoples of Africa, and giving undue emphasis to one of its outward expressions, European writers at first gave it a name which is still commonly applied to it 'Fetichism'. Fetichism means faith in the magical powers of some object (*a fetish*), natural or man-made, and holding such an object as sacred as the mystic repository of some supernatural power, and sometimes wearing it as a charm or amulet. Among many African peoples we see the custom of showing divine honour to a piece of stone, or seeds of fruit, or a piece of cloth, or a figure of metal or wood, or a piece of bone, or a bunch of feathers, or to any other object, thinking it either naturally or through some ritual to be the abode of some special power. These fetishes are kept in temples (fetich-houses), and some are worn by priests and



ODUBUA, THE MOTHER GODDESS
(Yoruba wood sculpture)

religious men or by ordinary lay people. But such a belief and practice is not confined to the rude and uncivilized people of Africa alone: the belief in charms, amulets, talismans, and mascots, which are either kept in the home or are worn on the person, is quite an extensive thing in civilized Europe; and certain things in official Christianity also belong to the same category, and are but forms of fetishism, although many people would not like to be told that. Consequently it will not be proper to describe the natural religion of Africa merely as Fetishism. Similarly, it cannot be described as 'Animism', or faith in natural objects possessing a spirit (or a manifestation of the Supreme Spirit) in them.

There is no quarrel among the various kinds of natural or pagan religion as they have evolved in different ages and among different peoples—they all have a mutual respect, and hold themselves to be fellows in the same quest. Owing to a number of historical reasons, the tendency to regard itself as the only true religion, and consequently to have nothing but contempt for other religions as idolatry, showed itself in Judaism; and this attitude was inherited by Christianity and Islam—in some of their aspects at least. This attitude is responsible for what may be called religious imperialism or religious totalitarianism, which seeks to destroy all other forms of religion or religious experience and to set up itself or its own in their place. The natural or pagan religions are free from this vice. Such an attitude, claiming all truth to itself, and looking upon it as being exclusively linked up with God, can only be looked upon as a form of blasphemy. There is another matter to consider. In spite of a great many differences in their externals, a study of the various natural religions makes it clear that, notwithstanding their different formative milieu, mankind has, in the various climes and times, arrived independently at some general realizations of a fundamental character: e.g., the immanence of God in everything, and a realization of the spirit that is behind all existence; the realization that there is an Ultimate Truth that is beyond all perception, an Absolute Truth not capable of description and limitation by ascribing to it qualities; that Gods and goddesses are manifestations of this Ultimate Reality, manifestations conceived by imagination or faith; and that it is possible for the spirit to be incarnated in the mundane world, on more than one occasion.

Many of the ideas in natural religions all over the world show agreement with some of the basic things of the natural religion of India as summarized by her philosophy. But it would be only a kind of chauvinism or jingoism if we were to show our anxiety to trace Indian influences in such cases. 'My people is the greatest people of the world, and God has vouchsafed a special grace to my people, by making it the supreme leader or the supreme teacher of nations'—such an attitude is also a kind of blasphemy. Thus, in the conception of the *Tao* in China we should not try to

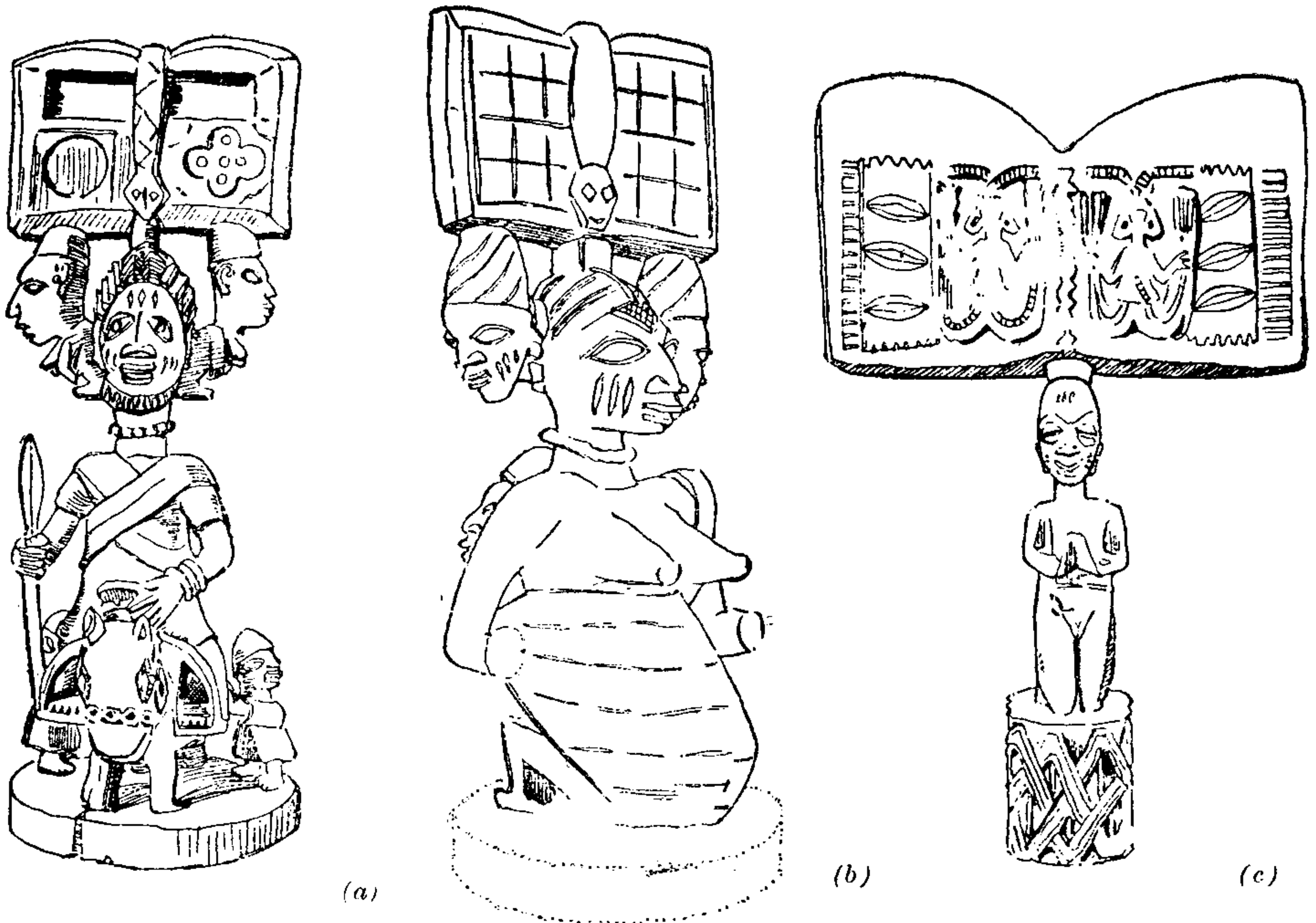
trace it to the Indian conception of the *Brahman* or the Supreme Spirit in its *nirguna* or attributeless and *saguna* or attributed aspects, or to the idea of *Rita* or the Eternal Law as something which directs the universe, considering that there is no evidence of Indian and Chinese culture-contacts prior to the fourth century B.C. This conception had dawned in the mind of the Chinese *rishi* Lao-tsze independently in the 7th-6th century B.C.; and when we look at the thing in this light, we realize the natural universality of a great spiritual idea. Similarly, certain great ideas of Sufism may have evolved independently among the Arabs and Persians, without any Indian or Greek influence.

The Yorubas believe in a divine power, something like our *nirguna* Brahman—the Absolute without attributes. This Absolute Divinity they call *Olorun*. Most of the tribes of West Africa (as well as of Bantu Africa) have a similar belief, only they have different words in their several languages for the same attributeless or remote spiritual Being, the ultimate Source and Repository of everything. The Ashantis call this spirit *Nana-Nyankupon* or *Nyankupon*, 'Lord of the Sky'; the Gans call it *Nyonmo*, and the Ewbes, *Mawu*. The name *Olorun* means 'Lord of the Sky'. The Christians regard *Olorun* as the equivalent of Yahweh or Jehovah, and the Moslems as the same as their Allah. Yoruba Christians speak of the supreme Christian God as *Olorun*. Other names of *Olorun* express his greatness—e.g., *Eleda* (Creator), *Alaye* (Lord of Life), *Olodumare* (Almighty), *Olodumaye* (Self-created), *Elami* (Supreme Spirit), *Oga-Oga* (Very Great), and *Oluwa* (Master, Lord). Of course, the Yorubas have not arrived at a truly philosophic conception comparable to the Vedanta philosophy of India. But in *Olorun*, they have formulated the idea of a unique Divinity without a second, who is equally just and judge of good and evil.

But this Supreme Spirit has always remained a little remote—at least in present-day Yorubadom: *Olorun* is never worshipped with offerings as are the lower or lesser Gods. The Yorubas conceive of these lesser Gods in the name of *Orishas*, and it is these *Orishas* who direct the affairs of men, their life with its joys and sorrows, and they also are working through the forces of nature. The word *Orisha* is differently explained—as 'the highest one selected' (*ori*—summit, top, and *sha*—to choose or select), or as 'one who sees the cult' (*ri*—'to see', and *isha*—'selection, choice'). The neighbouring *Asiantis* and other peoples have a similar conception of lower gods, or gods with forms and functions, the Ashantis calling them *bohsum*, the Gans *wong*, and the Ewbes *vondu* (this last is the possible source of the West Indies Negro word *voudou* or *voodoo*). The *Orishas* number, according to various authorities among Yoruba priests, 201, 401, or 600. Many Yorubas have an Eubemeristic idea of their *Orishas*—that these were men and women at first, and then they were translated into the domain of Gods. But Yoruba myth and legend about the origin

and history of the Orishas is just like the divine myths and legends of other peoples. Olorun created a God to rule this earth in his place—this God was Obatala ('the White God' or 'the Lord of Light'), and Obatala's wife was Odudua, which may mean 'the Black One'. Odudua was not created by Olorun: she is Nature as distinct from the Godhead, and she has been in possession of a separate and independent existence from eternity (this

Earth, who was depicted in the usual way, as in other lands—as a woman as mother holding a baby. Obatala and Odudua had a son Aganju, and a daughter Yemaja. These two married, and had two offspring, Obalofun or 'Lord of Speech', and Iya or 'Mother'. And Obalofun and Iya were the progenitors of mankind. Another son of Aganju and Yemaja was Orungan, and this last violated his mother, who, for this, courted death. After her



FIGURES OF YORUBA DEITIES

(a) Shango, the God of Thunder

(b) (c) Oya, Goddess of the Niger River, Shango's Wife

supports another explanation of her name as 'the Self-existent Personage', or 'the Chief who created existence'). Obatala-Odudua as twin faces of existence, as light and darkness—of good and evil, of life and death, so to say—recall distantly the Indian conception of *Parusha* and *Prakriti*, of *Shiva* and *Shakti*: only the *Prakriti* or *Shakti* here is of evil character. The Yorubas worship Obatala as the God of Purity and Beneficence, and he is the soul of good, the creator and saviour of men; but Odudua's character has been very adversely conceived, as something evil and vicious. Obatala is the Sky-Father, and Odudua the Earth-Mother; the lower sinful aspect of the Earth as opposed to Heaven, has been ascribed to Odudua. It is said that Odudua left her husband Obatala for a passion she conceived for another God who was fond of hunting. Yet Odudua remained the Great Mother Goddess of the Yorubas, the Almighty Mother

death, her body swelled, and from her flesh, blood, and fat the Fifteen Chief Gods of the Yorubas had their birth. These are the great Orishas who receive the worship of the Yorubas still faithful to the old religion. Similar deities are found among the related tribes of West Africa—only their genesis is different.

Among the various Orishas the following are the most important:

(1) Shango is the God of Thunder, and he receives a very great deal of veneration and worship from the Yorubas—with Ifa he is the most popular God. He is said to live in state, in a brass palace, in the clouds of heaven, surrounded by his followers, and he is the master of a large number of horses. Shango is frequently figured in metal and wooden images—as a bearded man, riding a horse. Shango has three wives—Oya, Oshun, and Oba; all the

three of them were created from the body of Yemaja, like Shango himself; and all of them are river-goddesses, the chief of these three being Oya who is the goddess presiding over the great Niger river in its course through Nigeria. Shango sends punishment to men for their misdeeds. Among Shango's attendants are the god Oshumare or 'the Rainbow', whose function it is to draw water from the earth into the brass house of Shango, and Oru, the thunder-clap, who is his messenger. Shango's special symbol is the double-axe. The following chant or hymn to Shango is very popular:

O Shango, thou art the master!
 Thou takest in thy hand the fiery stones,
 To punish the guilty!
 To satisfy thy anger!
 Everything they strike is destroyed,
 The fire eats up the forest,
 The trees are broken down,
 And all things living are slain.

Shango's stones are thunder-bolts, and sometimes these are described as the red-hot chains of iron which he hurls on those who offend him, chains made for him by his brother Ogun, the God of Iron and War.

(2) Ogun presides over iron, war, and hunting. He is said to exist in any piece of iron. Blacksmiths, soldiers, and hunters specially worship him.

(3) Ifa is perhaps the most popular of the Orishas, and he is frequently looked upon as the supreme God. He is the God of Oracles, and pious Yorubas must refer everything to the oracle of Ifa. The priests of Ifa are known as Babalawos (from *Baba-li-awa*, 'the father who has the secret'), and these priests are powerful and respected. They shave their heads and pluck off all hair, and wear white robes (light blue in the great shrine of Ifa), and they are believed to know the mind of Ifa by divining by means of palm-nuts cast on a tray. It is said of Ifa:

Ifa always speaks in parables,
 It is the wise man who understands—
 If we should say we understand—
 The wise man will understand—
 When we do not understand,

We say, It is of no account! (or, It is not fulfilled!)
 These priests are initiated into the order or priesthood at great expense, after they have gone through the training from three to seven years. The profession is quite lucrative, and full of honour.

Apart from oracles, Ifa is a God of Fecundity also, and barren women pray to him for children. He is also a God of Salvation, and in that aspect he is known as Orunmila, meaning 'heaven knows salvation', or Ela, which is a contraction of Orunmila. In songs and proverbs he is frequently invoked as the Saviour:

O thou Ela! Son of the Ruler,
 I humble myself before thee!
 O Ela! I praise the sacrifice of acceptance,—

O Ela! I praise the life-giving sacrifice,—

O Ela! I praise the sacrifice of labour.

(4) Orishako, Orisha Oka, of Oko, the God of Agriculture. As women mostly did agricultural labour (working with the hoe), Oko has mainly women among his worshippers and priests. Oko represents the fertility of the earth. An iron rod is his emblem, and honey-bees are his messengers.

(5) Shopono (pronounced *shaw-paw-naw*) is the God of the Small-pox. He is depicted as an old man, sick and lame, moving in pain with the aid of a stick. As the other gods derided him, he tried to infect them with the small-pox, but he was, for this, outcasted from the society of the gods. His temples are consequently away from the homes and haunts of men, in the 'bush'.

(6) Olokun is the God of the Sea, worshipped by sailors and fishermen specially. He is supposed to be of a human form, black in colour, and with long flowing hair. He once tried to punish men by overflowing the land, but Obatala restrained him and sent him back to his palace under the sea, binding him in seven iron chains. Among his wives is Elusu or Olokun-su, who is depicted as being white in colour, with her body covered with fish-scales.

(7) Aroni is a wood spirit, whose dominion is the forest. He seizes and devours all whom he catches in the forest, but he loves courageous persons who face him boldly, and rewards their courage by keeping them with him for months and teaching them the secrets of plants, so that they come out as doctors. The murmur of the wind through the trees and the flying of dead leaves show his presence.

There are other Orishas, and the Yoruba pantheon is quite extensive. After the Orishas, the spirits of the dead, particularly of the ancestors, find worship. The Yorubas have divided the ghost world into various kinds of spirits, and there are different kinds of priesthood and societies connected with the worship of the spirits. A class of people or priests (called *Oros*) act as spirits of the dead returned to earth, and they perform certain rituals, and receive fees. The *Oros* come out at night, completely covered in robes of rushes, and make weird calls all through the night, and at the same time make noises with what are known as 'bull-roarers'—these are oval and flat bits of wood attached to a string, and when these are swung round with the string they make a buzzing noise, the depth and carrying power of the noise depending upon the size of the bull-roarer which is from 6 inches to 2½ feet long. (Ritual with the bull-roarer is known to the aborigines of Australia; and in the state of Tripura in Bengal we have an annual worship of Durga or the mother Goddess by the Tipra people, in which bull-roarers, locally known in Bengali as *bhomra* or *bhemra*, play a part.) In their ritual of worship there are certain things—offerings and ceremonies—which are the result of their local natural conditions and their culture.

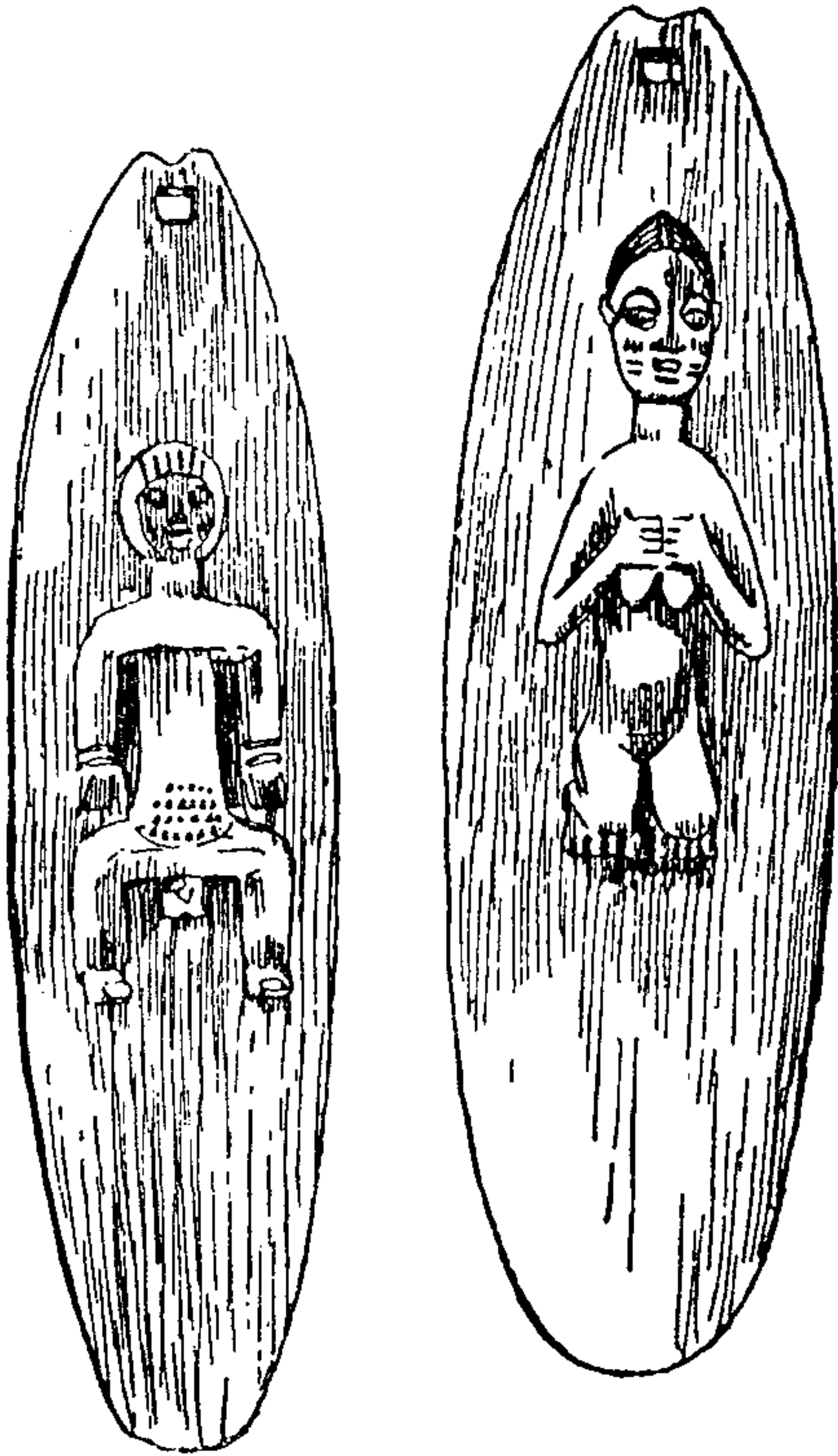
In addition to the gods and spirits, the Yorubas worship also a god or spirit of Evil—a sort of Satan—whom they call Eshu.

The Babalawos or priests of Ifa, by their divination, decide for a Yoruba child what particular Orisha he is to adopt as his special protector (as *Ishta Devata*,

home or in the courtyard with images of the gods. Sometimes sacred groves of trees serve as temples; and a big tree is frequently enough looked upon as an abode of the gods. Ordinarily cooked food, fruits, etc. are offered; alcoholic drinks are poured, eggs are broken, and birds and beasts of various kinds are slaughtered by way of worship. Flowers are not offered, but bells or clappers are used. Different classes of priests have different forms of dress; thus the priests of Obatala always wear white, and have necklaces of white beads. They salute by touching the earth with the forehead. A sacrificed animal is either burnt before the image, or its blood is smeared at the threshold of the sanctum. The food and meat as well as wine offered to the Gods are partaken of, like consecrated food, by the worshippers. Over and above ordinary ritualistic worship, personal approach to the deity and worship by prayer is also known—according to their needs, people commonly pray and try to commune by means of prayer with Olorun, Obatala, Shango, Ifa, and the rest.

The Yorubas have a full sense of the immortality of the soul. Man, they believe, obtains reward or punishment for his deeds. There is also a belief in transmigration. But their ideas and speculations about the hereafter are not deep or definite or philosophical. The final resting-place of the soul of man is Olorun or the Supreme Spirit.

We can see that in far away West Africa the so-called wild or savage black man is actuated by the same ideas and feelings, the same hopes and fears, likings and dislikings like ourselves; and the natural religion which they built up has many a point of agreement with our Indian religion—in fact, with all religions. It is difficult to speculate what line their religious life and culture would have taken if they had come in touch with the mind of Hindu India, with its civilized and cultured outlook and its great spirit of understanding and sympathy, fellow-feeling and tolerance. But I venture to think this much, that the tolerance and respect for other peoples' ideas and beliefs, which is so deeply imbedded down to the marrow of Hindu religious life, the tolerance and respect which found a new expression in the great saying of Sri Ramakrishna Deva, *viz.*, 'as many opinions, so many ways' (*jato mat, tato path*), would have strengthened the Yorubas and other similar backward peoples of Africa and elsewhere to hold fast to the abiding things of their own culture; would have helped them to find the highest good, their spiritual salvation, in their own way; and would have spared them a good deal of the humiliation which is the result of an intolerant creed and a strange one being thrust upon them.



Two "Bull-roarers",
with Bas-reliefs of Yoruba Deities

as we say in India); and they worship regularly and with special ritual these tutelary deities. Religiously minded Yorubas, who are the bulk of the Yoruba people, salute their special gods the first thing in the morning after rising from bed. When getting down into a river or tank to take a bath, they frequently chant prayers to the Gods—prayers in the Yoruba language. Their temples have nothing special about them—they are just the thatched huts like those in which they themselves live. Different temples or structures in honour of the different gods are built for the public, and rich or middle class people also have a sort of a family chapel at

FROM THE HIMALAYAS TO CAPE COMORIN

BY A WANDERER

(Continued)

From Mysore I went, for a day, to Coorg, that little tiny spot on the map of India but having a separate form of administration. Formerly it was a 'Protected State', but Lord Bentinck annexed it to British India in 1834. Coorg is a bit isolated as there is no direct railway communication. Its exports and imports are controlled. In war times this was a distinct advantage. For in Coorg there was no scarcity of food. People also seemed to be fairly prosperous. One has to go to Coorg from Mysore by motor bus, covering a distance of about sixty miles. The drive was very pleasant. The road was also nice, covered on both sides by deep jungles, and at places by coffee, orange, or cinnamon plantations. Coorg also has got a beautiful natural scenery—there being a combination of hills, plains, and forests. The sight enchanted me. But even the beauties of external nature have got their limitations. After some time they wear off, when you become too familiar with them. You cannot derive any permanent joy from them. The *upanishad* truly said that the lesser minds seek joy in the external world, but those who are wiser find eternal bliss deep down within themselves. For peace and happiness, so long as you depend on anything outside of yourself, you suffer. When you have found peace within yourself, you are at rest. Nothing can disturb you.

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I had heard so much about Ootacamund, that 'Queen of Hills', that I was eagerly waiting for the day when I would be able to visit it. From Mysore to Ooty—about fifty-five miles—is four hours' journey by a motor bus. Nowadays it is irksome to travel by bus. But the Victory Bus Service plying between Mysore and Ooty keeps down the

traffic, by charging a bit higher. Travelling by that Service is quite pleasant. As we approached Ooty, that high hill, with an altitude of 8,000 ft., looked as if rising suddenly from the plain land. But, as usual, the motor took a spiral way, and going round and round the hill it climbed to the top. With its tall eucalyptus trees, green vegetation, and here and there thick forests, Ooty looks really charming. I could imagine why Ooty is so much adored by the hill-goers. But to me suddenly came the thought of comparison: Which is better—the Himalayas or the Nilgiri? In the Nilgiri greatly do I miss the stately deodars, which are abundant in the Himalayas. So also do I vainly look for pine trees. And that long range of eternal snow, where could you find its parallel in the whole world? Ooty is beautiful—very beautiful indeed. But it cannot radiate the sublime influence of the Himalayas. In the Himalayan region you at once feel an uplifting effect, you feel as if you belonged to a higher plane of existence, leaving the world with its madding crowd below—far, far below. Your thoughts become lofty, your vision becomes high, your outlook broadens, and you aspire after something magnificent though you may not be definitely knowing what that is. At Ooty you feel you are in a beautiful surrounding, but living in an ordinary human plane of existence. As these thoughts passed through my mind I myself became suspicious of them. Why did Ooty fall below the Himalayan abode in my estimation? Was it my local patriotism? For reasons I searched within myself as well as outside. Ooty is a hill-station where all go for pleasure, comfort, and enjoyment. The Himalaya is a vast region where the hill-stations are absorbed within its bosom and which is still associated

with the spiritual aspirations of India. 'Are there temples in Ooty'?—I asked. Hardly any, I was told. Has the Nilgiri built up a tradition that people, when tired of humdrum routine life of the world, resort to it to compose their thoughts and soothe their lacerated hearts?—No. Then the reason was obvious why the Nilgiri appealed to the senses, and the Himalaya to the soul. Afterwards I learnt that that had been the experience of some other persons who had been both to the Himalayas and the 'Blue Mountain'. Then I found relief at the thought that my judgement was not vitiated by partiality.

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From Ootacamund I went to Malabar. I had heard so much about the orthodox Numbudri brahmins of Malabar, that I was seized with a longing to see them, to know them, to learn how they lived and what was their outlook on life. I heard that even now there were some orthodox brahmins who would not drink a drop of water without having finished their worship which lasted from morning till about two in the afternoon. I was conducted to a typical orthodox brahmin home. The house was spotlessly clean with flower gardens in front. The family was not very rich, not poor either. I was introduced to the head of the family—an old man. I talked with him through the help of an interpreter. I understood he was also very austere in his habits—even in his old age. I liked the man and his benign smile. I felt as if the five thousand years of India's past were peeping through his eyes at me. Too much criticism has been heaped upon the poor heads of these orthodox people. But could it be denied that they have preserved the culture of Hinduism? In their house can be witnessed even now some of the ancient Vedic rites. And how much love do they bear for the old customs and traditions! Compare their life with that of some of our countrymen who culturally belong neither to India nor to the West—who are a queer amalgam, a hybrid product. Orthodoxy is a wall which gives you protection,

and which has got a great preservative value. Of course, if you are long within a wall, your life becomes isolated, it becomes a stagnant pool—sometimes giving out a stinking smell. That is what I felt when I visited the Harijan quarters. Even after so much agitation, the Harijans are not allowed to drink of the well or bathe in the same pond which is used by the brahmins. When I heard of this, I felt exasperated. My love and admiration for orthodoxy dried up. But there came a ray of hope. In the very village where I stopped there was a school where all classes of boys—from the orthodox brahmins to the pariahs—sat together and read together. And even in the hostels, boys and girls belonging to the highest and lowest classes stayed and dined together. I heard that some orthodox families sent their boys and girls to this institution with deliberate intention, so that they might grow up with wider sympathy and a broader outlook.

* * *

As I started for Kaladi very early in the morning by a motor bus, I met large numbers of little boys and girls on the way, each with a small tiffin carrier in hand. I thought they were going to some school, and inwardly felt happy at the thought that though poor their parents were interested in their education. But in the course of conversation, with a fellow passenger I learnt that they were labourers in some factory, and as they would have to remain long hours there, they were carrying their noon-meals. I was horror-struck at the news. In such an early age when they should be sent to schools and live in mirth and joy, they were sent to grind their life in some soulless factory! How unfortunate they must be! Their parents do not know what harm they are doing them for the sake of a small pittance. Because of poverty, if these boys and girls were to do some agricultural works, their life would not have become so much blasted. They would have, then, lived in open air, amidst nature, and that would have a salubrious effect on their body and mind—though they might be working very very hard. They might be

singing like a lark, or running like a deer, and now?—they will be cooped up in a stuffy hall, doing the dry, dreary, monotonous works till their own life will be as soulless as the machine at which they will be working. Yes, that has been the curse of industrial civilization, and more unfortunate thing is that with all criticism against it, it has come to stay.

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Kaladi is the birth-place of great Shankaracharya, who lived in the eighth century and, even in those days of difficult communication, travelled from the extreme north to the farthest south of India, preaching and revivifying the decadent Hinduism. His intellect is the despair of modern scholars, and even now it becomes difficult to refute the arguments he put forward in favour of the Advaita philosophy. Kaladi is a place of pilgrimage for persons interested in Hindu philosophy. It is a village on the bank of the river Alwaye, bearing the memory of association with that great teacher. People point to the ghat where Shankara used to bathe. But the exact place of birth or the house in which he lived cannot be ascertained. Different persons give different versions. From a distance one would imagine that Kaladi must be a place of great Sanskrit culture. But on going to the spot with that idea one is disappointed. Some time back the Government of Travancore started a Sanskrit college, which, I heard, was not well attended. It does not pay nowadays to study Sanskrit. There is a temple which, they say, existed at the time of Shankara; there is another temple which has been latterly built. When one goes to Kaladi one does not find anything spectacular. But if one has got imagination, one is thrilled by the idea that from this place went out one whose voice rang throughout the length and breadth of the country, and which has not died out even now.

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From Kaladi I came to Ernakulam and crossed the backwaters by a boat to Travancore. In the boat I was introduced to one

who was an Indian Christian. The gentleman was a devoutly religious man. He at once became very free with me, and narrated his spiritual struggle. He gets up at early dawn, bathes, and then *meditates*. I found the path he followed was just the one an orthodox Hindu would do, of course leaving aside rituals. I was struck with his genuine hankering for spiritual progress. His divine discontent was great; I felt no doubt that the day was not far when he would be filled'. Out of sheer curiosity I asked him whether he attended churches. He said he did not care much for them. He did not find enough inspiration there. I found in him one who was Hindu in outlook but Christian in name. Rather why should one make so much distinction between one and another religion? Are not all religions the same at bottom? It is better that one should be given complete freedom about the selection of one's faith.

* * *

As I entered the Travancore State, at every street corner, as it were, I found a church. I felt surprised and pained. Travancore is a Hindu State. In this State the existence of so many churches meant that large numbers of Hindus had embraced Christianity. I would have been very glad if these people had embraced a new faith purely from a religious feeling. No, every church symbolized the tyranny of the caste Hindus to the backward community. Driven to desperation by social oppression and tyranny, the poor and depressed-class people had taken to a new religion, which was eager to increase its numerical strength and as such welcomed them. The Hindu society is living still in a dangerously self-complacent state. There are occurring many big 'landslides' in the Hindu society; even then it thinks it can afford to be indifferent to the problem and continue to be callous to the members of its backward sections. Perhaps the sufferings of the Hindus have not been sufficient to open their eyes. Otherwise they would have become more alert by this time. I understood that the Hindu-Christian problem was as acute in

Malabar as the Hindu-Moslem problem in the North. Everywhere the same story. The Hindus talk of high philosophy, but in action they are weak, disorganized, and disunited and victims of mutual jealousy and hatred!

* * *

At Alwaye I visited an Ashrama started by Narayana guru, the famous saint of the Ezhava (a backward) community. The Ashrama was very nicely kept. It impressed me very much. In the early days Narayana guru also did not escape persecution at the hands of some senseless members of the higher castes. But as his personality began to unfold itself, he compelled respect from those who at first hated and despised him. He was not satisfied with spiritual ministrations only. He started many schools and educational institutions. I understood that the Ezhava community had got a great lift because of him. But he had never a word of curse against those who persecuted him or his community. His is an example of how character tells and how in India social progress can be easily achieved through the help of religion.

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I visited the ancient temple of Sri Krishna at Ambalapuzha. It is said that the famous saint Vilvamangal lived here and worshipped in the temple. The story goes that Vilvamangal, in his early years, fell in love with a courtesan. So much was his fascination for her that one day he came to see her, defying a severe storm and risking his very life. Instead of admiration the situation evoked reprimand from her. The infatuated lover felt the rebuff so much that he turned to religion and afterwards became a famous saint.

The temple is in the compound of an ancient palace. The temple follows the traditional rituals. At noon there was the ceremony of decorating the deity amidst music and playing of drums. A large throng of devotees attended the ceremony. A devout priest was doing the decoration—at first covering the stone image with sandal-paste, then putting on ornaments and jewels. Every time he touched the image he made

some movement of fingers and hands (*mudra*) in such a way that it was not only artistic but also a very eloquent expression of devotion. Done by a less expert hand, these forms would have become dull and dry, but this man turned a monotonous routine work into a living act of devotion, so much so that the whole atmosphere was surcharged with intense spiritual fervour.

This temple is known as much for its past associations as for a particular kind of porridge which is offered to the deity. The fame of this particular preparation has travelled throughout the whole of Malabar. We did not leave the temple precincts without having partaken of this sacramental dish. But it cost us a heavy price: we were almost going to miss the train at Quilon for Trivandrum, which was my next destination.

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On the way to Quilon, at Haripad, I stopped for a while at a temple where the image of snake is worshipped. The temple has got a very big compound. As I entered the precincts I found large numbers of stone images of snake kept in one place. The main image of snake is in the temple where it is worshipped by a priestess who lives a very austere life. In my young days in the books of Indian history, written by foreigners in a patronizing way, I read that a class of people in Malabar worships snakes! Here, when I was in the temple, I found so much devotional atmosphere that I could at once feel that an image of snake also might be the symbol of God. Any symbol—a cross, a Kaaba, a fire, an image of a deity—is after all a symbol. It points to the Infinite, but does not exactly denote it. So any symbol is good enough, if it can call up devotional feeling. Now, why the image of snake was particularly chosen as a help to divine worship is a subject of careful historical research and not of cynical criticism. One person was asking me, 'Does the snake represent *Kundalini*, the power which is supposed to be coiled up in the form of a serpent at the bottom of the spinal cord according to yoga theory? Or is the snake worship the out-

come of a feeling to appease the wrath of snakes which abound in Malabar?' No, one must not bring in a spirit of historical enquiry to disturb the devotional atmosphere of the place. So I bowed down and departed.

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Trivandrum is a small but very beautiful city. Its natural scenery, equable climate, and picturesque setting have invited a lot of visitors and tourists to this capital of a very enlightened Hindu State. The percentage of literacy—specially amongst women—in Travancore is very high, if not the highest in India. Nature also has become bountiful in this area. As one passes through the green fields, big coco-nut gardens, with the view of the sea gleaming here and there, one feels that there is no poverty here. But appearance is sometimes deceptive. I heard that very recently there was a severe famine in a certain part of the State, to combat which the Government had to move its machinery and some private relief agencies also had to work.

At Trivandrum one can see the university, museum, art-gallery, aquarium, a zoological garden,—many such things which are the regular features of a big capital city—but here everything in a proportionately small scale but tastefully kept and tenderly looked after. I visited some of these places which impressed me greatly.

The most important temple in Trivandrum is that of Padmanabha (Sri Krishna in a lying posture), which belongs to the palace. The Maharaja, when he is in the city, attends it every morning. The temple is, however, open to the public. Till recently the Harijans were barred from entering the temple. But some time ago, by a State Proclamation the Harijans were allowed free access to all State-owned or -controlled temples. That was a very bold step. But such is the rigour of orthodoxy, that some orthodox brahmins had, I heard, boycotted the temples where Harijans were allowed entrance. Who are to be more pitied—these brahmins or the Harijans!

I visited the Padmanabha temple. It is kept very neat and clean. In the Travancore

State I found almost all temples were better kept. At least that was the impression I got. It was perhaps due to the fact that there was a separate department in the State to look after the temples. As I stood before the deity, a priest whispered to my companion, who was a local man, that I might not bow down before the deity. I felt surprised at this unusual suggestion. When I asked the reason, I was told that it was the tradition here that whoever bowed before Padmanabha became the property of the deity, and that was a privilege which only the Maharaja enjoyed. The Maharaja was supposed to belong to Padmanabha, the whole State belonged to the deity; the Maharaja ruled as an agent of God, as a trustee of the divine property. A very noble conception indeed: to work as the instrument of God! The idea appealed to me greatly.

* * *

From Trivandrum to Cape is a distance of fifty-five miles. There is a good concrete motor road. Arriving at Trivandrum, I was full of joy at the prospect of seeing the Cape. Half of my mind had, as it were, already gone there. I was imagining with my mind's eyes what it would be like. At last, one afternoon, with a companion I started for the Cape. The car glided rapidly over the nice road. At first I passed through the outskirts of the town, then through places looking like semi-towns, then through villages, sometimes through avenues of trees. On the way we were detained at a place called Suchindram, where there was a big temple with *gopurams* six storeys high, whose interior was decorated with fresco paintings. When I left the place, I was a bit alarmed. There were something like eight miles more to cover. If we could not do that in time we might miss the sunset at the Cape. I looked at the watch, I looked at the sun and measured the angle which that great orb would have to sweep before reaching the horizon. The driver, a grave, sombre-looking man but very clever, understood my feelings, and as if in spontaneous sympathy with my anxiety, drove the car as quickly as he possibly could. He was, as it were,

racing with the sun. I heard the roaring of the sea. I got a glimpse of the sea at a distance beyond the sandy beach. Without stopping anywhere the driver took the car just to the spot from where the setting sun could be seen with the best advantage. The sun had already become pale, and was on the point of touching the horizon. We stood mute before it with the vast ocean spreading before us as far as the eyes went. The sun was descending down and down. Its colour was changing every moment, so also that of the sky. We were looking with tense attention at the sun. Now a portion of the sun had gone down, it looked as if it was standing on the sea. Now, half of it had disappeared, it looked semicircular—cut off exactly at the middle. Our eyes were following the sun. Ah, there it had sunk down the horizon. The sky had become variegated with colours, the sea also looked crimson. There was silence all round excepting the roaring of the sea. I stood on the vast stretch of sandy beach. It was evening—when the day met the night. The whole nature, as it were, became composed, one's mind also became quiet as it tended to be in tune with nature. It will be long before I shall forget this beautiful scene.

At the Cape I passed three nights. The view of the sea, the temple comparatively small but kept very neat and clean, the beautiful image of the goddess, everything charmed me, beyond all expectations. In such a spot

you feel like absorbing something not belonging to this mundane existence. You do not feel like talking even to yourself. You want to assimilate the best out of this rare combination of the gifts of nature and man—a quiet spot, a temple with hoary traditions, vast watery expanse before you, and the open sky overhead. You become filled with a longing for the Infinite.

Some one pointed to a rock. It is called 'Vivekananda Rock', because the great Swami Vivekananda, after wandering through the length and breadth of India, came to this place with a bleeding heart, and sitting on that rock meditated on the past and the future of India and devised plans for the regeneration of his motherland.

From day-dreaming I came to stark reality. On one side of India is the gorgeous Himalaya with eternal snow, the very sight of which uplifts you and on another side is the enchanting scenery of the vast ocean which broadens your mind, ennobles your heart, and calls you to lose yourself in the bosom of the Infinite. And in the middle? Well, it is all misery, degradation, poverty, strife, and conflict. This is the present-day India.

* * *

My pilgrimage was over. I thought of return journey, though not without heaving a deep sigh.

20th January 1945

(Concluded)

CREATIVE INDUSTRIAL ART

BY J. PATRICK FOULDS

Change is the key-note of life in India to-day; waves of new and vital energy are surging restlessly and relentlessly against the restraining barriers of custom and inertia which, for so many centuries have stood between India and the development and expression of her immense potentialities, spiritual and material, for the benefit of humanity.

One manifestation of this urge to change is the attitude, only too frequently to be met with, of those who whilst saying 'We have everything to learn from Western civilization' do not realize that possibly the greatest lesson which India may learn from the West is not to tread the same path as the latter, lest she discover for herself equally disastrous pitfalls.

India does not want another industrial revolution—she needs an industrial revelation. With the development and organization of both factory and cottage industries in its present embryonic state, there is an unrivalled opportunity for India to make a creative contribution of great cultural value to the world, through right understanding and application of the principles underlying creative industrial art. The artist who realizes this opportunity needs first to see clearly the present condition of the industrial arts in India, and then to shape a course for their future. To what may this would-be leader look for an indication of this course?

In applied design and ornament the vision of the average Indian artist today does not appear to have penetrated nearer to the heart of his country's potentialities for creative designing than the horridly beribboned excrescences of the Victorian age, or, as a 'modern' alternative, designs of the 'chromium plate' school, inhuman, unbeautiful, uncreative, and untrue. Must he, then, turn away from the West, as it has been misinterpreted in this country, as a source of inspiration for true design, and seek for a lead from the traditional designs of the indigenous crafts? Here again he will be disappointed, for this road leads back into the past, when the designs were created. Then true and vital expressions of the genius of that age in India and Persia, they are now little more than beautiful anachronisms, dying a thousand deaths daily at the hands of manufacturers and craftsmen to whom a design has come to mean little more than a number in an order book, or an old and musty document, a far removed copy of a once vital work of art, bereft of life and significance. (The creation of designs and of new forms of expression consonant with the age in which he lives is the primary function of the artist; the craftsman can only interpret these designs, and when, as has been the case in India, the flow of design from the artist to the craftsman is interrupted, the latter must not be blamed for the inevitable resultant decline in the spontaneity and beauty of his work.)

Textile designing (surely an art in which India should be pre-eminent) affords the artist an almost equally discouraging spectacle of the unhappy combination of Indian inertia and Western mediocrity. The market is flooded with the third-hand products of the Japanese mills, (poor imitations, for the most part, of goods of a standard unsaleable in the West) and textile designers in India today would seem to have set themselves assiduously to copy from these models, so that their country may contribute to the world, to which she gave some of its most glorious textiles, a comparable stream of shoddy.

Commercial and advertising art present, at the moment, a less depressing spectacle. The development of India's industries, and the rising standard of literacy amongst her masses are preparing the way for these legacies from the West, but the large scale advertising campaigns are not yet with us. This is fortunate, because it gives artists who are trying to find a bridge between creative and commercial art an opportunity of studying very carefully the course which the latter has taken in the West, before committing India once more to a form of unconsidered and slavish imitation which will inevitably lead into that Valley of Horrible Mediocrity from which, for all our technical triumphs, we Westerners are but slowly emerging today.

Interior decoration must naturally be closely linked to the prevalent style of architecture, but surely it is neither necessary, desirable, nor inevitable that the offspring of modern Western architecture, ill-adapted to Indian needs, should be the utterly unsuitable and usually untenanted drawing-room, created apparently either in the aspidistra, anti-macassar and what-not tradition, or in imitation of the modernized cocktail bar of the local hotel. Here then is a field in which the artist may first ruthlessly eliminate a mass of unbeautiful, because unsuitable, over-elaboration, as well as much of the bare understatement of ill-assimilated westernization. He may learn from the West some of her superb mastery of technical methods, and from the

Indian craftsman his infinite patience and capacity for handling large masses of intricate design ; but he should also learn that creative industrial art cannot be the outcome of technique pursued for its own sake, the products of which, however exquisitely wrought and finished, will not be a lasting contribution to the world, because they are without soul. In the determination of the lines along which this art is to be developed, he is faced with a harder task than in other forms of industrial art, for here he has no precedent, Western or Indian, to guide him. The prevalence of the artistically atrocious pseudo-Western styles of interior decoration in Indian homes today cannot be taken to mean that the art must necessarily develop along these lines. Nor can the artist of today always find a past tradition in this country, which can be adapted in harmony with modern needs, aesthetic and utilitarian. He will in this case, therefore, have to create a new art form—India must create and give this new art form to the world.

Broadly speaking it may be said that there are only three alternative courses open to the Indian industrial artist today ; he may slavishly copy from the West, he may delve into the design traditions of his own country, or he may strike out in an entirely new direction. Let us consider first the probable result of the extensive imitation of present-day Western industrial art. There, new techniques have been slowly evolved to meet the Western peoples' own needs of self-expression ; until the artist in India has a really creative message to express, the accumulation of imitated complex technical methods is likely to lead him not towards but away from any vital forward step in industrial art. Can he find this message merely by studying the products of Western

countries ? He may be helped by the discriminating pursuit of this study, but he must bear in mind that no really great school of artistic achievement has ever been based on imitation, and that an art which is not the living expression of the intensely individual urge to create is valueless, and will in the long run produce a country which will be second hand. A similar argument applies to the second course indicated, namely, an attempt by industrial artists to adopt and 'bring up to date' ancient India's designs in accordance with modern India's needs. An industrial art revival based on such an attempt would probably be as great a failure as one based solely on the imitation of Western techniques and products, and for the same reasons, unless it were the result not of the concentrated study of relics of the 'glorious past', but of the discovery by each artist for himself of some such unfailing source of inspiration as was, judging from their works, known to its designers.

What is the source of inspiration which could transform India's moribund tradition into constructive creativity ? It springs from the capacity of the artist to retire into his innermost self, there to 'commune with God', and to express with simplicity and faithfulness that which is thus vouchsafed to him. No amount of technical progress or knowledge of past achievements can make up for soullessness in art. This then is the third course which the artists of India may adopt : pausing in their outward searchings, they may look within themselves, whence, if they be really sincere in their wish to express the True in art, Truth will reveal itself to them, and through them, in time, India will receive a new tradition of truly creative industrial arts.

MAN, SOCIETY, AND HAPPINESS

BY ALFRED GOGERLY MORAGODA

Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan in the course of his Convocation Address at the Vidyalankara Privena said, 'If you are to set the world right, start with the individual. The world needs today a change in the heart of man—a reconditioning of the human soul. Outward institutions cannot by themselves bring about a regeneration of human nature'.

It seems worth-while to examine the contemporary situation, contemporary criticism, and contemporary hopes for mankind in the light of this philosophy.

The world is just emerging from the throes of war, and man's sensibilities have become so dulled during this period of attrition that the knowledge that it has been possible for human beings to be blasted into detached and quivering fragments, burnt, blinded, and maimed in various battle-fields no longer startles any one.

Though the world is potentially capable of nourishing, clothing, and sheltering every one in it satisfactorily, an alarmingly large proportion of its inhabitants is insufficiently fed, inadequately clothed, and badly housed.

The necessities of life are available, even in small measure, only to those who have some wage-earning job to do—apart, of course, from the leisured classes of lords, lunatics, and lepers. But in spite of an almost universal aversion to unemployment, in the West alone nearly thirty million people were unemployed before this war began. And most of those who have found employment since then have been either preparing munitions of war or making use of them to destroy each other.

Examples, such as man's odd antipathy to tuberculosis closely associated with his perseverance in breeding and disseminating tuberculosis bacteria by his consistent maintenance of slums, can be multiplied to prove

that the contemporary scene is full of the irony of human beings producing what they do not wish to have.

In a situation such as this, contemporary criticism is vehemently directed against established institutions and practices. Man blames the unhappiness visible in the contemporary scene on the inanity of religion and its teachings and the inefficiency of the state and its forms of government. Irreligion and subversive theories of government are fashionable.

A generation is growing to maturity which, we are told by such a discerning observer of the present age as Professor Joad, is generally without belief in religion, without standards in morals, and without interest in the perennial values of truth, beauty, and goodness. The only values which a substantial proportion of this generation is disposed to recognize are those of money and the good material things which cannot be had without money. For they believe that in a society in which every one is equitably supplied with these good things, men will be able to live in happiness.

For purposes of illustration, this article will confine itself to their attitude to religion in relation to this belief. There is a tendency for them to be sneering and harsh in their criticism of religion for its failure, by its inspiration and activity, to achieve such an equitable society and thus bring about a state of happiness on earth for all mankind.

But criticism must be informed by humility if it is to be rescued from becoming mere cynicism. Any person of even less than average intelligence can be 'a sneering fault-finder', as the dictionary defines a cynic.

The quality of humility will enable a man, whom the contemporary scene moves to vehement criticism against religion, to reflect

that religious bodies throughout the world have not, perhaps, been altogether ignorant and careless of the anomalies of life, which he perceives and that, inspired by enthusiasm akin to his to grasp and remould this scheme of things, they may even have done what they could to bring happiness to men on earth, but have been impeded by the limitations of human frailty.

In humility he may be disposed to calculate how little, in fact, he may himself be able to achieve in the short span of his existence in altering the shape of things as he would, and how much he must necessarily fail to accomplish as a consequence of his own human weakness and the complete impossibility of making any material 'change in the hearts' of the mass of mankind.

The attitude of indifference which one adopts towards religion is based essentially on one's appreciation of the imperfections of religious bodies. But these imperfections are but a measure of human imperfection as a whole, and the cultivation of the quality of humility will enable one to see oneself and all human beings as the struggling ants they really are, and to realize the limitations imposed by nature on all human effort.

Those very superior people who stay out of temple and church, walk out of meetings, and keep out of everything connected with religion, in the end die having achieved infinitely less real good in the way of improving the shape of society and the lot of man than the religious bodies which they condemned.

For, considered in the light of human frailty, their achievements should command admiration rather than censure. It is to the poverty of their performance in the social sphere that criticism is chiefly directed. But in spite of the mistakes they may have committed and the things which they may have left undone, being controlled, directed, and administered as they have been, by mere men, prone to error, the inspiration and achievements of religious organizations in implementing the social content of the teachings of their masters, contained, for instance,

in a commandment like that of Jesus that one should love one's neighbour as oneself, may be considered remarkable.

To illustrate by taking the Christian Church for example: it has constantly placed before men the message of love; and its inspiration has been responsible for the passing of humane social legislation like the Poor Laws; the reduction of excessive hours of work; the abolition of slavery, cannibalism, human sacrifices, torture, and cruel punishments; the introduction of better prison systems and more humane treatment of the sinner 'whom', as Oscar Wilde pointed out in gaol, 'Christ came down to save'; the spread of education; the diffusion of moral enlightenment and more satisfactory standards of living among primitive peoples; the initiation of legislation and creation of organizations to prevent cruelty to animals and to protect orphans and destitute children; the provision of care for the deaf and blind and old and infirm; and the inculcation of the missionary spirit in the prevention and cure of sickness and attention to those afflicted with loathsome, infectious diseases.

The teaching and encouragement of the Church and its schoolmen must be considered largely accountable for the downfall of certain tyrannies and despotisms; the overthrow of feudalism and all its objectionable by-products; the awakening in the minds of men, long accustomed to regard themselves as inferior by class or caste to certain others, of the realization that all men are equal in the eyes of God; and their activity, as a consequence of this awakening, to seek and obtain equal rights and privileges for all men on earth.

The Church has placed before men the highest standards of honesty, morality and upright conduct, and fearless resistance to expressions of evil; and surely one of the most admirable things of our time is the stand taken by certain Protestant and Catholic clergy against European dictators, and their demonstration that man's ultimate appeal should be to something other than human might.

These European dictators with all their assembled might have failed completely in their assaults on those fortified by spiritual power even as they have failed in their own material ambitions. And contemporary hopes for mankind have to be considered in the light of such convincing evidence of the vanity of human might.

In this light the point may well be considered whether the contemporary idea of progress towards an era of peace and happiness on earth, brought about by human effort, is not an illusion. For the time seems to be at hand when human endeavour whether it admits any inspiration and aid in the direction from religion or not, will have achieved a world in which man's material needs like food, clothes, houses, medical attention, and education, would be equitably available to all men.

But no one should mistake such an age of material comfort for an era of bliss beyond compare for all mankind. It would be well to remember one's millionaire friend, whose material comforts are amply satisfied even in this present age. One does not always find him the personification of joy and peace. In fact, one often finds him quite gloomy, sulky and unhappy, possibly over some difference of opinion he may have had with his wife about some trivial matter like the choice of the guests who should be invited to his birthday party, or a more momentous matter like her preoccupation with some one who may ultimately supplant him in her affection. He may even commit suicide—and this in spite of his having all the material good things of life in abundance.

The provision of these good things to all men will not, therefore, automatically 'set the world right' and bring about happiness and contentment so long as there is no 'change in the heart of man', and man remains intrinsically the same sort of animal, in possession of all his present sins and weaknesses, except perhaps such 'economic' vices as the dishonesty which breeds theft, which an age of plenty for all may remove.

The contemporary hope of progress towards

some Utopia, therefore, appears to be illusory. After all 'progress' is a new idea. The ancients put their golden age in the past, and even one's rustic countryman in Ruhuna may still hark back to the golden age of Duttu-gemunu. Civilizations rise, but civilizations also fall.

With the modern aspiration for a Utopia based on material comforts the superstition of progress has, however, gained some homage, inspired by the liberal ideas of the rights of man springing from the French Revolution and by the marvellous industrial development and mechanical inventions of the present century and the last.

This homage will, however, hardly survive the disillusionment which will follow on the realization that an era of plenty is not necessarily an era of peace. There is so much pain and bitterness in the impact of one individual's personality, his mind, spirit and character, on another's, and the forces of lust and fear and pride and jealousy and selfishness are so strong in men that there is always, in the nature of things, the intrinsic possibility of a relapse into a new kind of dark age and no political or economic programme to alter the shape of society will be enough to bring about an age of peace and happiness on earth for all mankind.

For the happiness of the individual members of a society results entirely from the nature of the inner self of each individual. Outward institutions cannot provide this. It is not something which springs from the nature of the society or the community of which one is a member. Changes in the shape of the society or the methods of government cannot bring this about, though they may contribute to the external comfort and well-being which religious organizations no less than secular institutions have, as illustrated above, exerted themselves, to provide within the limitations imposed by human nature and in the face of the indifference of mankind to ethical teachings.

It is only a change in the heart of each man that can bring him happiness, which is something apart from the enjoyment of the

material good things of this world. From the standpoint of 'robust rationalism', as Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan put it, 'whatever religion one adopts, one comes to the definite conclusion that this world cannot give one any stability, it cannot give one any kind of

bliss. One attains the blissful state only when one surrenders one's individuality'.

This is the end of religion.

There may be something in religion, after all, if it can give a man a peace that passeth all understanding.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

Swami Vivekananda's plan of work and service for the regeneration of India is clearly explained by *Swami Shivananda* in the course of *Conversations* in this number. For the benefit of our new readers, we may mention that Swami Shivananda was a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and the second President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.... St Nihal Singh continues his very interesting *Backward Glance at Prabuddha Bharata's Fifty Volumes*.... Pandit Jaiwant Ram, an educationist of several years' standing, compares the Vedantic principles of pedagogy with those of modern times, and shows how much we owe to India's past, and how much more we have to learn by a careful study of it, in *The Vedantic Conception of Education*.... *The Culture and Religion of the Yorubas of West Africa* by S. Suniti Kumar Chatterji of the Calcutta University is a highly illuminating article depicting the admirable art and civilization of one of the most advanced peoples of Africa. This interesting description of their culture and religion leaves no doubt that these native inhabitants of Africa are neither 'savage' nor 'backward' as some Westerners represent them to be.... The learned 'Wanderer' completes the fascinating account of his journey *From the Himalayas to Cape Comorin* by taking us to the beautiful temple of Kanya Kumari at the junction of the three seas.... Major J. Patrick Foulds discusses the necessity of Indians developing originality along the lines

of Indian tradition in art and its application to industry in *Creative Industrial Art*.... In *Man, Society, and Happiness*, Mr. Moragoda makes a passionate plea for well balanced views on life.

AIM OF RELIGION

Man is drifting away from moral and religious standards, guided more by considerations of expediency. Scientific inventions and material wealth have overawed humanity. The estrangement from religion is so complete that intelligent men are beginning to doubt its utility in the present-day scheme of life. Persons, who should have known better, ask 'What has religion led to? Has it brought us any nearer freedom? Has religion contributed to the progress of India materially, economically, or scientifically?' In answer, another would say, 'Have science, politics, or commercial advancement ushered in a golden era for humanity? Is religion responsible for the lack of freedom of the smaller nations in Europe and Asia? Wars of attrition, Frankenstein's monsters, international competition in trade and commerce, and subjugation of the weak by the strong—are these the signs of progress which religion is supposed to hinder?' It is unfortunate that these 'utilitarians' who go for religion have not transcended the puerile standards of a baby which says, 'Does astronomy bring me gingerbread? If it does not, then astronomy is useless.' The powerful Christian nations have not found it necessary to throw off religious values *in toto*; nor have China and Japan sought to renounce their respec-

tive religions in order to achieve progress and strength. Religion does not pretend and has never pretended, to remove the poverty of or to bring material prosperity to its votaries. On the contrary, it brings to man eternal life. That religion is a call to man to change the fundamentals of life, to transform the self into an entirely different kind of pattern, was stressed by Sir S. Radhakrishnan in the course of an illuminating discourse at the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta. Sir Radhakrishnan deplored the modern man's dilettantish interest in the abiding values of life. It has become the fashion to attack religion as unprogressive and antisocial, and hold it responsible for all the ills of humanity. Such ignorant criticism often comes from persons who lack the desire to know the truth, who are excessively attached to things of the world, and who are unable to understand and practise self-control.

The importance of religion to human society is better understood when we look at those nations in whom religion occupies a minor place and materialism holds sway. They are reverting to the old barbaric ways of ruthless extermination of their so-called enemies. There is no restraining influence on the extent to which racial discrimination, bellicose patriotism, and religious intolerance are encouraged and practised. As Sir Radhakrishnan has pointed out,

Science undoubtedly had done a great deal towards combating diseases and annihilating distance. But it had not been able to conquer the primitive instincts of human beings, like jealousy and greed. In spite of the great advance which science has made, it did not throw much light on the questions, 'where we come from and where we go'.

Hence science, divorced from religion, is not enough. Nor is it safe in the hands of erring humanity. The present war is a clear pointer to this.

Man had to be evolved and grown into a larger consciousness. And the growth hereafter had not to be in the physical frame of man. The development they were after was to be on the psychological plane, in the world of mind and spirit....For that discipline was necessary, and that discipline was supplied to them by what was called religion... Religion asked everybody to look at the way into which evolution had operated in the past and to apply the lessons of evolution of

the past to the future growth of human consciousness. (*Hindusthan Standard*)

The most fundamental doctrine of Vedanta affirms that the soul of man contains all perfection within itself and that the manifestation of the divinity within man is the end and aim of religion. Once again it has to be clearly understood that religion does not consist in blind belief or dogmatic assertion or ritualistic ceremonies. It is a life of practical utility coupled with true renunciation. It is absurd to want to know whether religion is of any use to earn one's livelihood or to amass wealth. Man does not live by bread alone, though religion may appear a mockery to a starving man. The utility of religion is not to be judged by economic or political standards. It is common knowledge that men love to enjoy sense pleasures and generally prefer to live in security and comfort. Few, indeed, are those who renounce selfishness and overcome the limitations of their little selves, in order to gain infinite peace and blessedness. To such persons there is no more distress or dejection, and there is nothing which they deem highly of,—'having obtained which, (he) regards no other acquisition superior to that, and where established (he) is not moved even by heavy sorrow'. (Gita) Nor is it correct to say religion is antisocial and makes man indifferent to his fellow men. Then it is not religion but mental perversion and sanctimony masquerading as religion. As Sir Radhakrishnan said, the truly religious man would throw himself, with all his energy and sacrifice, into the work of the world....It was religion which said that man must recast his thoughts, enlarge his consciousness, and evolve the nobility of the human race. A truly religious man was interested in the welfare of every human being.

'NOT FOR SUNDAY USE ONLY'

Preaching at St. Jude's, Hampstead Garden City, Sir Stafford Cripps said :

It is in the nature of man that he should spend an hour or so, away from his exacting work, to go to a church and tell the congregation his views on the nature of Real Values, and how they should be applied to victory and peace. Our religious principles are all right for Sunday use, but we are inclined to ask, whoever really thought they were meant to be applied to business, politics, or economics.

Sir Stafford was rather outspoken in exposing the superficiality of the fashionable and comfortable type of religion desired by those who care more for 'practical results' than for unshakable principles. Fearing the rigours of religious discipline, most people assume an evasive attitude towards religion. This is more common in the West where spirituality, and even morality, are connected with worldly prosperity. To the Westerner religion is a formal relation with God to whom he prays on a Sunday or on other ceremonial occasion. The most profound and noble teachings of Christ are but imperfectly understood and still more imperfectly practised by those nations who profess to follow Christianity. Deploring this 'Sunday religion' and calling upon his congregation to follow the teachings of Christ more intensely, Sir Stafford Cripps observed :

The world, dazed by its own misfortunes, hankers after a clear and decisive lead. In my belief, it is only those who believe passionately in the teachings of Christ who can give that lead. We must permeate our whole lives with His teaching, and we must regulate our every action by His principles. If only all those who profess and call themselves Christians could combine to insist upon the Real Values as the test of all national and international policies, we could transform the world in the course of a few decades.

Of course, religion has its cultural and secular aspects too. It should so influence and guide our secular activities as to make these lead us directly or indirectly to the final realization of the goal of life. Unfortunately, organized Christianity, though ostensibly propagating Christian ethics, does, in practice, encourage churchiness and conversion. The emphasis has shifted from spirituality to proselytizing zeal and cultural conquest. It is a very happy sign to find that a distinguished politician like Cripps has urged his co-religionists to cultivate spiritual values and offer prayers not merely for victory over the enemy but for divine inspiration and guidance from day to day. He said :

One historical fact is abundantly clear, that our concentration upon material values has led us into the most appalling tragedies, and bids fair to destroy all

that we value in our civilization. We know the divine answer to our troubles given in Christ's teaching, but we have, so far, not had the courage to make those teachings the guiding principles of our everyday life. I have had some little experience in the last fifteen years of political, social, and economic problems, and the more I have seen of the difficulties the more convinced have I become that the one way to their solution lies along the road of practical Christianity. (*Illustrated Weekly of India*)

Religion, not based on renunciation and spirituality, or wrongly applied to life, is occasionally seen to produce unfortunate results. Wars have been waged in the name of religion. Instead of exerting a salutary influence on secular life and leading men to spiritual illumination, ministers of religion often join hands with politicians. Religion degenerates into a weak and soulless formality which is incapable of arresting the growth of unrighteous civilization based on exploitation and aggrandizement. By not insisting upon spirituality and morality, Christianity has failed to prevent the perpetration, by Christian nations, of acts that are the exact opposite of Christ's teaching. As Aldous Huxley rightly remarks :

'The church allows people to believe that they can be good Christians and yet draw dividends from armament factories, can be good Christians and yet imperil the well-being of their fellows by speculating in stocks and shares, can be good Christians and yet be imperialists, yet participate in war'. (*Ends and Means*, p. 209.) Christianity, though glorious in many respects, has yet to be properly understood and practised by the West. So far as it is understood, it has proved insufficient to satisfy the spiritual hunger of man. Signs of world-weariness are becoming painfully predominant in the West. No amount of political or social manipulation of human conditions can cure the evils of life. The essential function of religion is to awaken in men the consciousness of the spiritual oneness of humanity. Spiritual awakening and ethical culture alone can change present racial tendencies for the better.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

SIDELIGHTS. BY SAKA. *Published by Language Publications, 12, Thambu Chetty Street, Madras. Pp. 160. Price Rs. 2.*

The publishers deserve great commendation for bringing out, in book-form, the selected writings of Mr. Khasa Subba Rau, the popular writer and well-known journalist of South India. These 'sidelights' were written under the literary pseudonym 'Saka', at different times, and appeared in the papers with which he was associated as editor. Herein is presented a collection of writings of a variety and quality rarely to be met with. Though short, the sketches and articles are remarkably interesting and informative. The writings included in this volume are divided under three parts. In the first part are brought together fascinating and intimate pen-pictures of twenty-seven prominent persons, some of whom are less widely known. Some of the more familiar names among these are Mahatma Gandhi, Mr. Jinnah, Mr. Savarkar, Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, Sir Mirza Ismail, and Mr. G. A. Natesan. In recording his brief but masterly study of each one of these persons, Mr. Subba Rau has written freely and fearlessly. Naturally there is appreciation as well as criticism. The second part is devoted mainly to journalism. Being a veteran journalist, he is at his best here. In short essays, he discusses the standards of journalism, the vagaries of the press in India, the ways of Indian and English editors, and the merits of good writing. The third part is a medley of such entertaining topics as culture, birthdays, marriage, divorce, oratory, films, and patriotism. The ease and felicity with which he treats of these diverse subjects are admirable. His writings reveal a genuine, though subdued, love for the motherland. For example, writing on 'Patriotism' he says: 'The glorification of elements associated with subjection has become part and parcel

of our very existence. In a city like Madras, memorials to foreign greatness abound everywhere, and appreciation of things Indian is sparse and furtive. Our biggest thoroughfares are conceived in honour of English names. Even our sports trophies are monuments to non-Indian prowess, and in the naming of them Willingdon counts for more than Amar Singh. In this land of parties, the one party lacking is a party of patriots to whom nothing else in the world counts before country, a party pledged to independence and opposed to subjection in any form with no love for ethical abstractions and academic disputations, and no quarter for communalists and place-hunters.' His impressive and pleasant style is a great treat to the readers. Fervent appreciation, ingenuous criticism, penetrating insight, and ironical yet dignified humour mark these writings of 'Saka'. We have no doubt the book will be widely read. The printing is excellent, and the get-up quite good under the present conditions.

A GLIMPSE INTO GANDHIJI'S SOUL. SIX WOODCUTS BY DHIREN GANDHI. *Published by International Book House, Ltd., Bombay. Price Rs. 3-8.*

Gandhiji successfully completed a three-week fast in February 1943 while under detention in the Aga Khan's palace in Poona. In the words of Gurdial Malik, 'the present series of six woodcuts portrays, in the poetry of pictures, the basis and the background of the fast'. The sketches are highly suggestive of the deep significance of some of the touching scenes witnessed during the fast. They are well executed by one who is intimately connected with Gandhiji and has had the rare opportunity of closely studying him. The last four drawings bear directly upon the fast, while the first shows Gandhiji in prayer and the second shows him paying a visit to the place of cremation of Mahadev Desai. The publishers have done their part admirably well.

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA, KANKHAL

REPORT FOR 1944

The Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal, Hardwar, established in the year 1901, has completed the forty-fourth year of its useful existence. Notwithstanding war-time handicaps, the Sevashrama has been able to carry on successfully its service in the cause of suffering humanity. The total number of cases treated during the year under review was 29,601, of which 28,265 were outdoor cases and 1,336 indoor cases. The daily average of attendance, including both the departments, was 106. The number of surgical operations performed in the course of the year was 229.

The night-school for depressed-class adults and boys, conducted by the Sevashrama, had 50 pupils on the rolls at the end of the year. The Sevashrama library,

containing over 2,500 volumes, was freely made use of by the local public. The birthday anniversary of Swami Vivekananda was duly celebrated when over 1,400 poor people, including members of the depressed classes, were sumptuously fed.

Some of the needs of the institution are: (1) Rs. 10,000 for underground drainage (with sanitary arrangements); (2) Rs. 7,000 for kitchen block with store-room and dining-hall; (3) Rs. 7,000 for land and building for night-school; (4) Many beds in the indoor hospital have not been endowed, and the cost of endowing a bed is Rs. 6,000; (5) Rs. 1,500 for an electric pump for the main well. But the immediate problem is to meet the abnormal situation created by the war, and the Secretary of the Sevashrama makes an appeal to the public for a sum of at least Rs. 15,000 urgently needed to purchase essential hospital requisites. Contributions may be sent to the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, P. O. Kankhal, District Saharanpur, U. P.