

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

VOL. L

AUGUST, 1945

No. 8



“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

CONVERSATIONS WITH SWAMI SHIVANANDA

BELUR MATH, JUNE 1930

The month of June, and it is terribly hot. Mahapurush Maharaj hardly gets any sleep at night these days. And because of this he feels out of sorts in the earlier part of the day and he is compelled to receive visitors sitting on his bed. This morning, after breakfast, he was pacing up and down on the verandah. It is a great strain to walk, still he is trying to keep up the habit. Soon he got tired and sat down on a chair. Later he was going back to his room to rest. He was walking too slowly. Turning to those near-by he remarked laughingly, ‘Toddler!’ Going back to his bed he said, ‘Just fancy what the body has been reduced to. I cannot walk even a few steps. Literally an invalid. All this is the play of the Mother. At one time with this body I have climbed hills, walked endless miles, and performed such austerities. But now? I can walk hardly a dozen steps. And for a long time now I have had to give up going downstairs. In the old days how I used to knock about! By Thakur’s will I have had enough travelling. Now I do not feel the least desire to go anywhere. Thanks to him, all desire for going or coming has left me. Now I have no trace of desire in

me. I am happy in whatever condition he keeps me. As my physical activity is decreasing, so is my mental activity increasing. The more the mind is turning away from the outer world, the more it is turning to the inner world. And graciously enough Thakur is revealing to me clearly the thing that is beyond body, mind, and intellect. Now it is inside that life functions most intensely. By Thakur’s grace I am having all those experiences that the scriptures speak of. I am not the body, the six changes belong to the body and not to me. I am that Eternal Being, the unchangeable, the ever pure, the ever enlightened, the ever free. I have this knowledge now to the full, beyond all shadow of doubt. That is why any experience of the body—pleasure or pain, disease and old age, does not disturb me. These are the inescapable conditions of flesh. Perceptions that once came only through effort come now spontaneously, naturally. Through Thakur’s grace all those mystic experiences are always within my grasp. The path to the abode of bliss is clear of all obstacles. Time, space, person—all these belong to the phenomenal world. Once the mind is merged in God-conscious-

ness, you lose all sense of them. When I was around Almora, I would often come across lovely places. They were wonderfully congenial to spiritual practices. Even in natural beauty they were beyond all compare. While meditating there, I would find everything vanishing—hills, trees, feeling of cold and heat,—with the first sign of the mind going inward. I did not even feel that I had a body, what to speak of those things. Once the mind loses itself in God who is the source of all beauty and who is also your beloved, it finds no interest in objective things nor does it derive any pleasure from them. All worldly pleasure palls on you once you taste the bliss of God, the Infinite. “Bliss is in the infinite, not in the finite. Infinitude itself is bliss.” Only a tiny fraction of God is manifest as this universe; the rest is unmanifested. No one has ever known Him or can know Him. How can man know God, the Infinite, with his finite mind or intellect? That is why the Lord says in the Gita,

What is the good of your knowing the
numberless things of the world?
Know this, in short, that I support it with
a fraction of Myself.

“A fraction”—man does not know enough of this fraction, not to speak of the whole. True, with the progress of Western science many new discoveries are being made. Through intensive research new instruments have been devised, and with their help many new stars and planets are being discovered. But there are still many more things to be discovered, and scientists just do not know if there is any limit to them. Further, there is no guarantee

that the observations made by instruments are infallible. And oddly enough, if scientists propound a theory now, ten years after they summarily reject it. That is why Thakur used to say, “Mother, I do not want to know you. Who has ever known you or can know you? Only do this, mother, that I may never be deluded by your world-bewitching *maya*. And also grant me pure devotion to your lotus-feet.” That is the object of life—attainment of devotion to Her lotus-feet by all means. There is no fear once the mind has reached the state of God-consciousness.

After attaining which nothing seems
worth attaining,

Resting on which the greatest misfortune
cannot shake you.

And that pure devotion, pure knowledge—they come through His grace. But, as it is, He invariably grants them. If you sincerely resign yourself to Him, He will surely take pity on you. You may roam all over the world, visit all the holy places, but it is of no avail unless you have His grace. That is why I say to the boys (i.e. the monks of the order) when they insist on going to their chosen places (for spiritual practice), “What will you gain by merely running about? Instead, stick here with complete resignation. You need not do anything else. Complete resignation—that is all that is needed.” We too are here, completely resigned to Him. He has kindly given us a lot and is giving us more. And I sincerely pray that you all may have full devotion. (With eyes closed and hands upraised) “My goal is that sublime abode from where there is no return”.

Only that yogi
Whose joy is inward,
Inward his peace,
And his vision inward,
Shall come to Brahman
And know nirvana.

—*Bhagavad Gita*

ON THE EXPERIENCE OF THE ATMAN

BY SAINT KABIR

Unutterable is the intuitional experience of the *atman*.
Can the dumb man, after eating sugar candy, express its taste in words?

When the *atman* is realized, then there is neither gladness nor sorrow;
Leaving aside all wrangling, still remains the knower of the *atman* like the
flame of a lamp painted in a picture.

The experience of the *atman* is not a thing to be recorded in words,
it is entirely a thing of one's own experience;
Verbal record has as little importance after direct experience as the marriage
procession has after the meeting of the bride and the bridegroom.

—Translated by Prof. S. N. L. Shrivastava, M.A.

GOD'S WILL AND MAN'S WILL

BY THE EDITOR

He makes all, He knows all, the self-caused, the knower, the time of time (destroyer of time), who assumes qualities and knows everything, the master of nature and of man, the Lord of the three qualities (gunas), the cause of the bondage, the existence, and the liberation of the world. (Shveta. Up. VI. 16.)

I

When man, freed occasionally from his enjoyments and preoccupations of the bodily life, gets some leisure and is able to turn his thoughts towards an understanding of the why and wherefore of this world and his own place in it, he may be said to have become religious-minded. Himself being a creator in miniature, he conceives of a Being as the Creator of the whole of the visible universe. Naturally the maintenance of the universe must become the primary concern of its Creator. The destruction that man sees all around him has also to be attributed to the agency of the same Creator, since the premises underlying the conception of the Creator precludes the possibility of his having any rival to thwart him.

A study of the history of the growth of religious thought brings out clearly how the idea of the one Creator or God arose among men. In the Vedic religion we find the gods

of nature becoming subordinate to Indra, the god of heaven, for he is the wielder of the mighty thunderbolt. In *puranic* times we find Indra giving place to the worship of the Man-Gods like Rama and Krishna. Side by side with this transformation in the object of popular worship, we find an intellectual formulation synthesizing and co-ordinating the theory of Man-Gods with the metaphysical conception of Brahman, the supreme creator, preserver, and destroyer. In each of these aspects, that is, of Brahma as creator, of Vishnu as preserver, and of Shiva as destroyer, the Supreme Being is conceived apparently differentiating in order to carry on the work of the universe. Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva are three in the One, and the One is in the three. Thus the Supreme Being becomes immanent without losing His transcendence. The Man-Gods like Rama and Krishna become incarnations of Vishnu, the preserver aspect of the Supreme Being. These incarnations are God becoming Man, assuming a human

form in order to help mankind.

The transformation of the nature gods also took another form. Proceeding on the assumption that what is in the macrocosm is in the microcosm and vice versa, the Vedic gods like Agni, Vayu, and others became the presiding deities of the various organs of the human body, and higher than all was the *atman*, the Supreme Being in the human body. (*Vide Aitareya Up. I; Brihad. Up. I. iii.*)

This latter process seems to us to be the unique contribution of the Indian mind to the problem of solving the apparently dual nature involved in ideas of God and the Universe as His creation. The microcosm is but the macrocosm in another form and name; there is no eternal contradiction or difference in substance between the Creator and His creation as is involved in a Creator not immanent in the universe. Neither the Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, nor Buddhists could rise to the heights of the vision of God which was vouchsafed to the sages of India. The mystics in later Christianity and Mohammedan sufis came nearest to this conception. Christ, indeed, did say, 'I and my Father are one'. But Christians have understood this to mean not that the Self in all men is the same God, but that Christ *alone* is *mystically* united with God, the Father. The fanaticism of Christianity is due to this faulty interpretation of Christ's teachings. The objective-minded, fiercely intolerant tribes of Europe were spiritually unprepared to grasp the great truth taught by Christ, the truth to which we have witnesses in the men of God-realization in every land. Moreover the tradition of the Hebrew race was in dead opposition to any such teaching. The Hebrew God was the tribal god, saving, guiding, and punishing the tribe like a sovereign despot ruling over his subjects. Even Christ had to put up with this sort of conception of a mighty God punishing the erring, and protecting the favoured, for he found that the people could not understand anything higher. To the people he taught in parables. He said, 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.' (*Matt. 7. 6.*) He spoke more directly to his disciples, but even they could not fully comprehend all that he taught them.

II

According to the Vedic sages, God is above what we call good and evil. Good and evil exist only in our ways of looking at things. The followers of the dualistic religions, like Christianity and Mohammedanism, seem congenitally unable to grasp this idea. So, as against God, the All-Good, they had to put Satan, the All-Evil, in order to explain somehow the existence of evil in the universe. It is a pity that even in these days of scientific enlightenment we find many Christians brought up in the untenable dogmas of the Christianity of the Dark Ages unable to form a clearer conception of the nature of God and the universe; so strong is the force of traditional training.

However these things may be, the idea of God as omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient has gained general acceptance in all the religions. The degree in which this idea has influenced men in their actual lives has varied according as God was conceived as personal or impersonal. The circumstances of time, place, and race had also much to do in the shaping of the influence upon men of the idea of an omnipotent God.

God, as a person, was an easier conception than God, the impersonal. To the Jews, the Christians, the Mohammedans, and to many of the *bhakti* cults of India, God is a person. Some have preferred to call God as Father, others as Mother, and others by various other names. But one thing is common to all these conceptions of God as a person, namely, whatever happens in the universe does so because God has willed it so. 'Not a blade of grass moves but by His will', says the Hindu *bhakta*. 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered', said Christ to his disciples. (*Matt. 10. 29-30*).

But then the question arises: If everything happens by God's will, wherein comes man's will, man's sense of being a free agent, his sense of moral and legal responsibility? Different schools of thought have tried to solve these apparently irreconcilable points of view. Some have advocated absolute determinism, while others have maintained with equal vehemence that man is completely free, and preach a theory of libertarianism.

The view, however, to which most thinkers would perhaps subscribe seems to be a theory which could harmonize the facts of the personal experience of freedom of choice with the omnipotence and omniscience of God, the truth of which is equally vouched for by the evidence of many of the saints, sages, and prophets who have moved the world.

Such a harmonious synthesis is only possible, however, if we lay equal stress on the transcendental and immanent aspects of God. We have not the space here to give a retrospect of the historical views on this subject, though that would be very interesting. We want to place before our readers at least the Hindu view, as it seems to us to present the least objections, logical and evidential. One important pre-condition in understanding the Hindu view on this point is that we must always keep in the background of our consciousness the oneness of the Whole in the midst of all this apparent manifoldness.

The Hindu posits that 'All this is verily Brahman'. In His transcendental aspect God is ever the same. In His immanent aspect, He Himself has become the gods, the angels, the elements, men, animals, and what not. '(In the transcendental aspect) there was only the One. He wanted to become many. (By His power) He created all *this*, and all else, if any, beyond *this*. Having created, He Himself entered into all that. Having entered, He became what is manifest and what is unmanifest, what is defined, and what is undefined, what is supported and what is not supported, what is endowed with knowledge and what is not endowed with knowledge, what appears as real to the senses and what appears as unreal to the senses.' (*Taittiriya Up.* II. 6.) As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'I see that He has verily become all this. The only difference is in manifestation. In man, especially in the godly man, He is more manifest than in other things.' He once remarked, 'The heart of the devotee is the parlour of the Lord'.

III

But the immanence of God does not lead to any pantheism or the worship of anything and everything as God, as most Western critics are apt to think. As Shankara says, 'The waves belong to the ocean, not the

ocean to the wave'. Nor do the immanence of God and His omnipotence do away with obvious facts of human experience, i.e. of freedom of choice and sense of moral responsibility. For these also are within God's providence. Men are responsible for their karma, good and bad, and reap the fruits thereof. The inequality of manifestation is due to the karma of each individual. But it is God Himself who is the giver of the fruits of actions as well as the causal agent with reference to all actions, whether good or evil. 'He makes him whom He wishes to lead up from these worlds do a good deed; and the Same makes him whom He wishes to lead down from these worlds do a bad deed.' (*Kaush. Up.* III. 8.) His creating all creatures in forms and conditions based on their former deeds is just what enables us to also call God the cause of the fruits of all actions.

Man is indeed the ostensible doer. But it is God who makes him do things. God's omnipotence and omniscience do not cut the ground from under the feet of man's sense of freedom and self-effort, but form the ground on which alone this apparent freedom of the individual can rest. All that he has, man derives from God. It is his sense of separateness from God that makes possible the idea of self-effort, moral responsibility, and the reality of all our pains and pleasures. But in reality nothing is separate from God. God's inscrutable power is in everything in this universe. The power of *vidya* makes for enlightenment and freedom, till we finally come to rest in God alone. The power of *avidya* makes for ignorance, forgetfulness of God, and a sense of the reality of the visible world only; it curtails our mental and physical freedom and leads us further down to the road leading to greater misery. Man's will is free in that it can choose to go up by the path of 'knowledge' or go down by the path of 'ignorance'. But it is only when man's separateness completely vanishes that he becomes one with God and realizes that man's will is also God's will in a way which he could not imagine before. As the Gita says, 'Neither agency, nor actions does the Lord create for the world, nor (does He bring about) the union with the fruit of action. It is *maya* that does it all. The Omnipresent takes no note of the merit or demerit of anyone. Knowledge is enveloped in ignorance,

hence do beings get deluded.' When a man's will merges in God's will, when through knowledge it is perceived that it is the will of God alone that prevails and the sense of being a separate doer is destroyed, then indeed comes full freedom. 'When the subject beholds no agent other than the *gunas* and knows that which is higher than the *gunas*, he attains to My being.' (Gita.) Till that time man's freedom will be only partial, bounded by his identification with the limited selves of body, mind, and intellect. From the truly metaphysical point of view it is God's will alone that works. But in order to make this a living and fruitful conception and to realize its truth, a man has to get over the limitations of his identification with the body and mind, the cause of the sense of his being a separate doer as well as the reaper of the fruits of his deeds. Only a man, who has become merged in God, who has lost his personal identity, and is able to perceive the hand of God in everything, can truly say, 'Not a blade of grass moves but by His will'. To all others who have not reached this state, man's will has got a greater or less freedom, and leads to more or less self-effort in order to obtain what he wants. To one who has realized the full immanence of God, there is nothing more to do, nothing more to attain. As Sri Ramakrishna said, from such a man all work drops off like water from a duck's back. But as the Gita says, rare indeed is such a great soul who sees the Lord in all things. To such a man there is no more man's will; all is God's will.

IV

Hindu spiritual teachers have made fitness of the pupil a *sine qua non* for receiving spiritual truths. We all recognize that preliminary training is necessary in almost all branches of learning. In modern days specialization has gone so far that not even the man with the greatest intellect can do much in any subject without undergoing all the preliminary training in that subject, before he can hope to learn the harder truths and become an expert. But when it comes to re-

ligion, we find people having confused ideas as regards the requirements of fitness for a pursuit of religious truth. Every man poses to be an authority on the subject of religion and will talk all sorts of irrelevant things on the subject of God and related matters. But religious truths can be comprehended properly by a man only after he has undergone the requisite preliminary training; and this training is as rigorous as, if not more than, the training that a person has to undergo in order to become a doctor, an engineer, an air-pilot, or a bacteriologist. As the *upanishads* say, 'But he who has not first turned away from wickedness, who is not tranquil and subdued, or whose mind is not at rest, he can never obtain the Self (even) by knowledge'. 'By truthfulness, indeed, by penance, right knowledge, and *brahmacharya* must that Self be gained.' 'Nor is that Self to be gained by one who is destitute of strength, or without earnestness, or without right meditation.' As in other branches of study, special aptitude and intense longing for success will go a long way in ensuring speedy attainment of knowledge. The one important qualification, therefore, for success in the religious line is that the person has to be completely moral. That is the first step in the discipline. The man who has not become established in the moral principles will not succeed in religion, just as a man without a knowledge of mathematics can never become a great engineer. One can, therefore, only pity the men who bring the charge that a belief in the omnipotence of God kills man's initiative and sense of moral responsibility. The fact rather seems to be that, unless a man is really moral, and puts forth the best exertions that he is capable of in developing his god-given powers of mind and body properly, it will not be possible for him to truly understand God's will and its nature. It is only when we *outgrow* our sense of self-effort and moral responsibility—not by shirking it that we can truly understand that man's freedom and will have their ground and being in God's omnipotence, omniscience, and immanence.

RELIGIOUS REVIVAL IN EAST AND WEST

BY SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

Struggle for existence and survival of the fittest play the greatest part in life in the animal kingdom. This is also true of the animal-man who is ever ready to compete and fight with his fellow man and to gain ascendancy over him. Man is the greatest enemy of man; but man may as well be the greatest friend of man.

As the animal-man evolves in moral consciousness, he comes face to face with a new struggle. It is the struggle between his lower animal nature and his higher divine nature. He tries to gain mastery over himself, over his body, senses, mind and ego. As spiritual consciousness dawns on him, as he feels the presence of a mighty Existence, call that God, Brahman, or whatever you please—instead of remaining egocentric, he becomes cosmocentric. And he comes to possess, instead of the spirit of competition, that of co-operation; instead of the tendency to struggle for existence, the spirit of self-sacrifice and loving service.

This also should be the spirit of the various religions of the world. But unfortunately it is not so. What we actually find is this: There is enough religion to hate one another, but not enough to love one another.

While theologians are busy in establishing the superiority of their particular faiths, and also in creating cleavages, both the East and the West are coming closer to each other through other means, not because of, but in spite of religions.

Should not the religions stop quarrelling and fighting, and come to have a better understanding among themselves, and lend a helping hand in this meeting of the East and the West? This is the question that is rising in many thoughtful minds, both in the East and in the West.

Those who constantly quote the English poet Rudyard Kipling's lines—

'East is East and West is West,
And never the twain shall meet'
have neither the vision of the future, nor the knowledge of the past. They are even unconscious of what is happening in the present.

In spite of his jingoism, Kipling could not help declaring—

'There is neither East nor West,
Border, nor breed, nor birth.

When two strong men stand face to face
Though they come from the ends of the
earth.'

We find that through all the ages Eastern thoughts have been moving westward, and Western thoughts have been flowing eastward. Little do we realize how we people of the modern world are products of both Eastern and Western thoughts—Eastern religious thoughts and Western scientific thoughts.

When I hear people speaking too much of orientals and oriental religions, I feel like asking, 'Who was Christ? Where was he born? Where did Christianity come from?' Among the world's greatest religions there is none which has Western origin. Asia has been the mother of the great religions. Asiatic spiritual ideals have been influencing the West since most ancient days, just as Western-Graeco-Roman thoughts also were permeating and influencing the East in some form or other.

Living Eastern civilizations—like those of India and China—are very old. In India and China we think in terms of thousands of years, instead of centuries as in the West.

The movement of life is rhythmic. There are ebbs and flows in the tides of life. The East—particularly India and China—after thousands of years of active life, tired and went to sleep for a time. But it was sleep and not the sign of death. The young West, bubbling up with an exuberance of energy and activity, thought that the East was dying, and that she alone was destined to dominate the world as she pleased. We see the signs of a new awakening all over the East—in the so-called Near East, Middle East, and Far East. The East in a large measure is already awake. The stimulus has come from the West, but the vitality that is expressing itself in the East is her own.

'Never before in our history', says a Chinese author, 'have our youth been so enthusiastic over matters of education, religion, and social service.' In India too we have been seeing the stirring of a new life.

Both in India and China the intoxication of the wine of Western culture for a time threatened to bring about a moral and spiritual chaos, but the danger has passed. People are feeling the necessity of a new adjustment. They want to remain true to what is best in their own culture and assimilate what is best in the culture of the West.

The havoc that Christian missionaries and Western colonists did in the lands inhabited by primitive people could not be repeated in India and China. The age-long cultures of China and India possess a strange vitality which can stand the onslaught of time.

If in the field of religion we find Christian agencies flooding the East with editions of the Christian Bible, we also see Chinese and Hindu ethical and spiritual thoughts are spreading very much in the West. The orientalist of the last century helped a great deal in this respect. Many books embodying the wisdom of the Orient—particularly of China and India—are being published in the West. China mostly speaks of the wisdom of her ancient teachers—Lao Tse, the mystic; Confucius, the great humanist; Mencius, the democratic philosopher. India, on the other hand, is presenting not only the ancient teachings of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the later teachings of Patanjali and Sankara, but also the wisdom of modern teachers like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda who have embodied the ancient teachings in their lives and are presenting them with a new power and meaning. They are teaching us that the ancient, eternal, spiritual ideals can still be followed and realized in our chaotic modern world.

The greatest contribution of the West is her physical science, for her religion has come from the East. All over the East where religion and science have not been in conflict as in the West, Western scientific culture is being greatly assimilated and applied. Western materialistic ideas for a time seemed to upset the East. But that was more or less a passing phase. The age-long moral and spiritual culture of the East is helping her

children in gaining a new, much-needed balance.

While the East has been assimilating the best of what the West has to offer, the West has been greatly negligent of the wisdom of the East. 'Hitherto,' says a Western thinker,¹ 'East and West have between them boxed the compass of error, the East in an excessive zeal for Westernization, the West in an indifference to the treasures of the East. The time has come to adjust the balance In particular, it is for the schools and universities of Europe and America . . . to study the wisdom of the East.

'The Nordic and Latin civilizations depend largely for their excellence on what they have learnt from Palestine, Rome, and Greece. This pasture is still as sweet as ever if freshly cropped. But they have now chewed the cud so long that it is losing its savour, and it is absurd that Western studies should be restricted to these three familiar civilizations, when the unfamiliar civilizations of China, Arabia, and India lie green before the hungry mind.

'From China they will learn that fellow-feeling begets righteousness, and that righteousness is the foundation of good government. . . . From India they will learn that man is in true nature a *bodhisat*, a saviour who sees all living beings as his other selves; that work is sacrament that opens the eyes to a Moral God, through whom is at last revealed the Eternal Godhead that is Bliss Supreme.'

Both in the East and in the West mere material ideals are sure to lead to ruin. So what is needed is an intensification of spiritual ideals. And this can be achieved by the awakening of a true religious consciousness in the soul of man.

We need the guidance of the higher ideals of religion. Spiritual ideals must ennoble our thoughts and sentiments. Spiritualized ideas and emotions must guide our activities, individual and collective. For this we need a general religious revival both in the East and the West.

Now the question is—How is that to be brought about? There are three alternatives.

1. Many Christian missionaries—both Catholic and Protestant—have been dreaming of the conquest of all other religions by their brand of Christianity. This they imagine will produce a great religious revival. They

¹ H. N. Spalding, *Civilization in East and West*.

have used all means, fair or foul, in getting converts in many lands, particularly in India and China, for the last several centuries. What have they achieved?

'In India, roughly 1.6 per cent of the population are listed as Christian; in China, three quarters of 1 per cent.' When are the rest of the people in India and China going to embrace Christianity? The dream of Christian religious imperialism for world domination is doomed to failure. This desire for world conquest, even at the sacrifice of spiritual principles, has made the Christian Church spiritually bankrupt.

A Christian thinker, Dr. Hocking, hopes that some day in the future Christianity will become the world faith. But in order to do that, present-day Christianity must come to possess some of the characteristics which other religions possess but which Christianity does not. Let us dismiss this visionary idea and consider the second course.

2. The second alternative is to evolve a grand eclectic religion by taking the best of every one of the great religions. We may take head from one, hands from another, feet from a third, trunk from a fourth and so on. We may create a monstrosity but can never give life to it. So a religious revival is out of the question by creating a fanciful, lifeless system.

3. The third alternative is to vivify the existing religions through the exchange and assimilation of mutual ideals. This seems to be the only practical course.

It is a well-known fact to students of Western thought that the study of modern biological evolution has greatly influenced comparative religion. 'Comparative religion does not imply a special kind of religion. It is only a particular method of treating religion. Comparative religion notes the facts of resemblance as well as difference. It tells us that all religions have had a history and that none is final or perfect.'

Professor Frederick Max Muller who gave a great impetus to the study of comparative religion emphatically pointed out—'I hold that there is a divine element in every one of the great religions of the world. I consider it blasphemous to call them the work of the devil, when they are the work of God; and I hold that there is nowhere any belief in God

except as the result of a divine revelation, the effect of a divine spirit working in man.'

We live in a world where many religions have met. All the religions are the products of various influences. Religious thoughts are like streams. They get contributions from the soil through which they pass; and they also come in contact with other streams and are enriched.

Thoreau, the Concord sage, said, 'The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges.' Romain Rolland speaks of the confluence of the Jordan and the Ganges. All this is happening before our very eyes, and in our own lives. Not only the Jordan and the Ganges but all the cultural streams are meeting. Let us consider some of these main streams briefly.

A. Hinduism—Recent excavations in the Punjab and Sind valley have unearthed a civilization at least fifty centuries old. In India these pre-Vedic elements, early and later Vedic culture, Dravidian and Kolarian ideas and ideals have all become fused. What is called *Hinduism* is a confederacy of faiths, a commonwealth of religions. All Schools of Hinduism in some form or other believe in (1) the Atman, potential divinity of man, (2) Brahman or the Supreme Spirit, (3) the ideal of self-realization, (4) the paths of Yoga leading to direct spiritual experience.

Hinduism holds that all religions are paths to the Truth; all souls will attain salvation in due course; world brotherhood can be based only upon the Divine principle but not upon any personality. The ideal is not toleration but acceptance of all paths as true.

B. Buddhism—According to Buddha. 'Truth is God', and the Truth to be realized by right comprehension, right speech, right conduct, and right meditation.

In India, Buddhism was reabsorbed. But the streams flowed out and fertilized the soil of many lands—Ceylon, Siam, Burma, Thibet, China, and other countries. In China, Buddhism blended with Taoism and Confucianism.

To Lao Tse—there is one real being, it may be called 'Tao' but the word is a substitute for 'the name which cannot be named'. Tao is the source of all things, omnipotent through non-assertion. Tao implies also the inner order of the universe.

Confucius was a great humanist. His system is not a religion in the ordinary sense of the term, but a system of ethics. Confucius stood for righteousness. To him the family tie was the sacred tie. It promoted the stability of society and the nation.

Northern Buddhism brought to China a well-developed impersonal world-view and the absolute nature of the spiritual law. The Bodhisattvas of Buddhism were believed to bring the truths of religion to the common man. Kwan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy, 'stands for the direct concern of the highest in the lot of every man'.

C. Christianity—This religion had its origin from ancient Judaism which is the product of various influences, Egyptian, Babylonian, and Persian. Judaism strongly believes in absolute monotheism—in a single universal God. Judaic mysticism holds that man—made in the image of God—has direct access to his heavenly Father without the intervention of a Son.

Christianity in its origin is a blending of various elements. It further mingled with the Graeco-Roman culture. With its stress on the personality of Christ it became a mighty imperialistic religion. Christian theology was influenced by Aristotle, while mysticism by Neo-Platonism, which bear the mark of ancient Hindu influence.

In all the Christian denominations, Roman Catholic, Orthodox Greek, Protestants, Episcopalian, there shines forth Christ's burning love for God and overflowing love for man.

D. Islam is a product of many influences, including Judaism and Christianity. Islam became a dynamic religion. Mohammed's living faith in God and in his own mission fired his followers with a tremendous vitality. Islam has been regarded as a fighting religion. The record of Christianity also has been similar, even more so.

But Islam has its cultural side also. Bagdad, the seat of the ancient Caliphs, was a city of great learning. When the Mohammedans conquered Spain, Cordova became the great centre science and art in medieval Europe. Mohammedans became the great carriers of the ancient Greek culture and the scientific culture of Eastern countries to Europe. This helped in bringing about the renaissance of Europe.

The great merit of Islam is the simplicity of its creed and worship. It possesses a unique democratic spirit which rises above race, country, or colour. This makes a Mohammedan a brother to every other Mohammedan—an ideal not realized to this extent by any other religion.

Islam, too, has its mystics also in the sufis. In Bahatism, Islam finds a new expression with its emphasis on universalism—spirit of tolerance towards all religions. Bahatism emphasizes the importance of meditation—which 'is the key for opening the doors of mysteries'.

This cursory view of the great religions reveals that each religion has some outstanding characteristics, and none possesses all the elements we need for improving ourselves and the world we live in. All the religions have merits and demerits, and they can all acquire a new strength and increased usefulness through the exchange and assimilation of mutual ideals.

The greatest common factor in all religions is the Eternal Presence of the Divine Spirit. As Professor Max Muller observed—'This constant sense of the presence of God is indeed the common ground on which . . . the great temple of the future is to be erected, in which Hindus and non-Hindus may join hands and hearts in worshipping the same Supreme Spirit—who is not far from every one of us, for in Him we live, move and have our being.'

By following the various religious systems in our modern days Sri Ramakrishna realized this central theme and goal of all religions. He tells us from his direct experience, 'The unillumined man in his ignorance says that his religion is the only true one, and that it is the best. But when his heart is illuminated with the light of true knowledge, he knows that above all the wars of sects and creeds presides the One, indivisible, eternal, all-knowing Bliss. It is invoked by some as God, by some as Allah, by some as Hari, and by others as Brahman.'

This spirit of universalism was proclaimed by Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna's disciple, at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. He offered the ideal of a religion which 'will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its policy, which will

recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope . . . will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true divine nature. Offer such a religion and all the nations will follow you. The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.'

For reviving our spiritual life, we must stress the central theme. We need the ideal of self-realization. And along with that, we also need all that is great and good in each religion. We need the ideal of the potential

divinity of man and the spirit of unity in diversity of the Hindu sages. We need the message of righteousness and peace of Buddha; we need the practical mysticism of Lao Tse; and the stabilizing humanism of Confucius; we need the burning love for God and Man of Christ; and the living faith in God and the unique democratic spirit of Mohammed. We must learn how to make our life richer and fuller.

Do we want a religious revival? If so, let us first of all vivify our own spiritual life by a conscious exchange and assimilation of mutual ideas and ideals. If we want the world to change, let us first of all begin with ourselves.

A BACKWARD GLANCE AT PRABUDDHA BHARATA'S FIFTY VOLUMES

BY ST. NIHAL SINGH

(Continued)

3. The Battery is Charged

The man who quits the world of the senses and enters the world of renunciation—or, as I interpret, the world of service without the lure of reward—wanders about the motherland. In this way he becomes acquainted with every mood and tense of Mother India.

Here she is fruitful. She smiles. Her progeny, numerous and multiplying, are blessed with bumper crops of staples and seeds, fruits and nuts, cottons and cords.

There she, in a sportive mood, has spread sand in a magnitudinous, almost unending sheet. She has driven water a hundred, maybe two or three hundred, feet below the surface shining iridescent in the sun. Her sons and daughters are compelled to sweat and to toil and withal to lead a narrow existence.

There, again, her breasts swell. Or, with seemingly rash resolve, she leaps skywards, and with giant's pertinacity, stays up in the air. The prospect she presents may be full of allure, restful to the eye and soothing to the nerves. Or the caked mud, reinforced with shale, or slate, or mayhap rock-ribbed, may, for a change, look drab and even depressing.

As the man who has renounced the world of transient pleasure in quest of the sphere of eternal bliss proceeds, often on foot, bare of sock or shoe, from Kanya Kumari (the Cape Comorin of the cartographers) to the inner Himalayan recesses, and from Dwarka to Jagannath Puri, he notes that the sons and daughters of Ind display greater diversity of form and feature, colour, hair, habiliment, and habit, than even the motherland from whose womb they have sprung. He finds, however, that when he appears at the door in the north he receives a handful of rice or flour as he had done in the south. He learns, too, that he is no oftener sent away without his dole in the west than he is in the east. At every step he is, indeed, reminded that an invisible but remarkably strong thread of canon and custom, conviction and culture, binds together the elements, in exterior so varied. * * *

After receiving *sanyasa* and, in token of it, exchanging home for homelessness, Narendranath Dutta was to extinguish the name he had hitherto borne. What was his shaven-pated, tall, broad-shouldered figure, now in the renouncer's *gerua* (ochre) robe, to be called?

His guru—the Paramahansa Ramakrishna—had spoken of him as Kamalaksha. That Sanskrit term connoted 'lotus-eyed'.

The lotus, to Hindus, is the flower of flowers—beautiful in form and beautiful in hue, whether creamy white, pink, or blue. In Hindu symbology, the lotus, with its feet hidden in the ooze and its pure head splashed with sunlight as it sways in the breeze just above the surface of the water in which it is growing, represents the soul tethered to the earth yet refusing to be of the earth.

Through instinct rather than reflection, the newly initiated sanyasi decided that this appellation—Kamalaksha beloved of the guru, was too sacred to be bandied about. As, after a period of contemplation—or self-realization, as he put it—he set out upon a pilgrimage of the motherland, he called himself 'Vividishananda'. When the light he shed, as he plodded on foot inevitably towards the 'Last Rock of India', attracted the multitude, he sought peace by slipping away. The next point, miles and miles distant, where he recontacted the populace, he allowed himself to be addressed as 'Satchidananda'.

'Vivekananda' was not assumed till later. Of this I shall make mention in the proper place.

* * * * *

In the course of this *pradakshina* (peregrination) that was begun in 1891, the high-souled sanyasi learnt many things about India and her children.

One of these was that, despite all statements to the contrary, the people did have a *lingua Indica* of their very own. By means of it he could contact Indians of the south, as well as of the north, Indians of the east and of the west.

It was no alien speech. It was of the soil. Even if the belief concerning the origin of the Indo-Aryans in the northern latitudes of Europe were correct, it had been in use here for many thousands of years.

It was Sanskrit. It meant 'refined speech' or the speech of the refined—the cultured.

In these degenerate days of the Kali Yuga (Iron Age) the number of Indians who pursue Sanskritic studies is sadly limited. If Vivekananda found himself hampered by that limitation, he, nevertheless, could use,

as the medium for the exchange of thought, one of its daughters—more especially Hindi. This he found was pretty well understood over a wide, wide area.

* * * * *

In the Presidency of Madras he had, however, to fall back, time and again, upon his knowledge of the Rulers' tongue, except when conversing with men of the pundit class. No small wonder was caused by the ability of a person garbed in the *gerua* (ochre) robe—the symbol of sanyasa—to speak English effortlessly and effectively. Many even of the men who went to him out of curiosity felt irresistibly drawn to him. The more serious-minded among his auditors elected to walk upon the path upon which he set their feet—a path half as old as the Bay that lapped the shores of Madras, yet possessing the fascination of a track cut only that moment through the jungle of life.

Among these was a Tamilian, then in the early twenties—Rajam by name. Born in 1872 in the small village of Batlagundu in the Madura district, shyness had largely cut him off from the company of other boys. The time that he, in his teens, would have given to fun and frolic had he been like other lads, he devoted to studies. Literature, especially poetry, appealed to him.

Liking for Shakespeare, Byron, Keats, Shelley, and Wordsworth formed a link between him and his professors at the Christian College in Madras. Methodists by denomination, some of them were Scots, remarkably intelligent and even more remarkably helpful.

Love for Nature's manifestations, of which some of the English poets sang, had also the effect of turning this young Tamilian's mind upon itself. This despite the influence exercised in the contrary direction by his teachers, mostly hard-headed, matter-of-fact men.

Much questioning led him towards metaphysics. Search for the One Cause behind all causes brought his soul back from wanderings in the Western fields—largely Wordsworthian—of pantheism to the forests of the motherland. There he heard, in his fancy, the *vidyarthi* (I spell the word in the South India way) asking and the *acharya* answering. There he saw, with his mind's eye, wisdom accumulating in the Motherland and the *upanishads* multiplying.

Love for the Infinite runs like a river of flame through the compositions of Tamil saints. These, Kamban and Tayumanavar in particular, set the young man's heart on fire.

Came a day when these complex currents of thought and feeling burst into visible expression. Rajam contributed an article to the pages of the magazine conducted by the staff and students of his college. This was, I believe, in the summer of 1892.

The article took the form of a critique of a poem that had been composed, some time earlier, by Professor Ranganatha Mudaliyar (evidently of a shudra sub-caste). It had struck Rajam as being artificial in character. It was composed in something after the fashion of poets of the Middle Ages, who, compared with the ancients, were as a lump of rock-salt to a snow flake freshly falling from the sky.

In clearly indicating this, the youthful critic showed both discernment and courage. What was still more important, he unconsciously revealed how his mind was cutting through the showy outer-crust shallowness down to the core of our culture.

The call of the language he had learnt at his mother's knee became more and more clamant. He began writing in Tamil a chronicle of his spiritual struggles. This he cast, as many another person similarly circumstanced has done, in the form of fiction. The thatch of verbiology that he, with great labour, put over the spring gushing from the heart failed, however, to hide the joy mingled with the fast-flowing stream of self-revelation. Rajam's soul had come upon 'a fountain, all undefiled and pure, to slake its thirst'. It was triumphant.

According to one who read the novel in the original an advantage to me denied—it was interspersed with expressions chiselled and polished by the masters of Tamil, particularly the afore-mentioned Kamban. Shelley's and Wordsworth's cadences and concepts mingled with these.

* * *

Rajam liked to live in Madras because, as he put it, he could lose himself 'in the wilderness of houses and be obscure'. This proved to be a choice far wiser than he could have dreamt.

There, in 1895, he chanced upon the man who was to touch his soul with a flame that was to consume such dross as had not already been burnt away—that was at the same time, to illumine his mind. This was, as mentioned before, the Swami Vivekananda.

* * *

In no time at all a resolution matured within Rajam's mind. He would strive to pass on to others the inspiration and illumination he had received. The means he was to adopt towards that end was to be a magazine of 16 pages including the cover, to be issued monthly from Madras.

The inaugural number (July 1896) began with a statement of the editor's aims and intentions, headed, as was customary, 'Ourselves'. Rajam expressed the view that 'but a few years earlier' no such periodical could have been possible. 'The promise of many a Western "ism" had', he explained, 'to be tried out'. Madras, it must be remembered, had been, for some years, the sacred capital of the Blavatsky—Olcott cult of Theosophy, described and hated by missionaries.

Then, too, 'the problem of life had itself been forgotten . . . in the noise and novelty of the steam-engine and the electric tram'. As was inevitable, it was, however, found out, in time, that 'steam-engines and electric trams do not clear up the mystery (of mysteries); they only thicken it'. When that discovery was made, the 'cry like that of a hungry lion arose for religion and things of the soul'.

Science stepped out of its fume-filled laboratories: but the 'tabloids' it offered failed to satisfy the heart's cravings. Its 'theories of evolution and doctrines of heredity did not go deep enough.'

Agnosticism did not lag behind. It 'offered its philosophy of indifference, but no amount of that kind of opium eating could cure the fever of the heart'.

The occident, fast being driven from Christianity towards the vortex of materialism, had already unloaded missionaries upon the East. The Christian creed, split up into denominations, that these men and women offered, would not, however, fit India's

needs. India had, in fact, 'grown too big for the coat' of their manufacture.

* * *

Something else had happened, moreover. The cultural tide had turned.

Till 1893 India had only received missionaries. In that year the movement 'in reverse' began—began imperceptibly, but time was to show that it was to gather force.

The *sanyasi* who inaugurated it was young—unknown abroad. He went to an American who, after fighting in the Civil War in his own country, had become enamoured of Madame H. P. Blavatsky's 'Theosophy' and had his headquarters in Madras. It was immediately plain to Satchidananda, as he had given his name, that Colonel Olcott looked upon the Indian's intention as presumptuous and curtly refused to countenance it.

The Maharaja of Khetri—a small State in Rajputana—who had formed a much shrewder estimate of the young sadhu's capacity than Colonel Olcott had done, as soon proved to be the case, speeded the Hindu missionary. He paid out of his own pocket, without the asking, the expenses for the voyage. He also insisted that the young man be called 'Vivekananda', and thence onward the Swami stuck to that name.

Little though it was then suspected, Vivekananda's arrival in the United States of America was destined to be an event in man's inner life. Henceforth the wisdom dammed up in India since ancient times was to flow outwards—not merely would the Palistinian flood-waters, twisted and turned in Europe and America, lash against Indian belief and undermine Indian institutions.

The Swami's steps, after his landing in North America, had been directed seemingly by some unseen agency, towards Chicago in the middle-western state of Illinois—some fifteen years before it became my home for a time. A Parliament was about to meet there.

Strange though it may sound to our ears, attuned to the din emanating from the European chancelleries and their adjuncts, the war offices, it was to meet, not for purposes of pushing back or obliterating national frontiers in imperial interests. Nor was it designed for exploring the natural resources of one people by another people largely or wholly for the benefit of the exploiters. It

was not even meant for participating in fun and frolic that at times results in the destruction of vast numbers of bipeds and quadrupeds and often of the soul itself.

No. Man had foregathered there from the four corners of the world for purely pacific purposes purposes of profit to the inner man. They were to compare notes on cultural subjects. This they were to do in a spirit of understanding and appreciation—not of contention and conquest, which often vitiates missionary enterprises.

Arrived at the 'Parliament of Religions' hardly a minute before twelve o'clock and wholly lacking credentials, Vivekananda was made welcome. Asked to address the distinguished audience, he, in his India-born humility, spoke not to strangers from strange lands, bowing to strange gods, but to his 'brothers' from near and from far—mostly far.

The eternal wisdom our sages and saints had been gathering through the ages, formed the theme of his discourse. He, nevertheless, spoke in terms so simple as to be easily understood by one and all. The words flowing from his lips lifted the audience off its feet. From that moment men and women all over the United States of America took pride in becoming his pupils.

It was not strange that the Hindu who had dared to start the missionary movement 'in reverse' should be assailed by persons who, till then, had been the only missionaries. They set into circulation nauseating stories about his morals. They accused him of holding clandestine commerce with servants in homes to which he had been admitted as an honoured guest.

An attack also came from another quarter. Olcott, back in Madras, denounced the *sanyasi* as a charlatan and gave particulars of the interview he had had with the young man, then 'posing' as the Swami Satchidananda.

An attempt was made, too, to pooh-pooh his work in the United States of America. It originated from Calcutta. To this I will, however, refer in a subsequent section of this article, to which it rightfully belongs.

A little later the Swami went to Britain. There, too, he was acclaimed Teacher as enthusiastically as he had been in America. This was even a greater marvel: for Britons

cherished the illusion that they had been born to bear the white man's burden in Asia and Africa. Such an illusion is soul-destroying. The writer of 'Ourselves' in the inaugural issue of this magazine was deeply affected by this turn of the cultural tide. As he wrote :

A Sanyasin from our midst carries the altar fire across the seas. The spirit of the *Upanishads* makes . . . progress in distant lands. The procession develops into a festival. Its noise reaches Indian shores and behold! our Motherland is awakening.

* * *

AWAKENED INDIA was, fittingly, the name given to the magazine. It was, in reality, the Englishing of the title, for the express benefit of readers who could not understand the Sanskrit phrase, the 'PRABUDDHA BHARATA'.

In the young editor's sight the motherland was 'awakening'. That was the word he used, *vide* the extract I made above.

Vivekananda had, however, visioned India as already 'awakened'. This robust pride in our genius and even robuster faith in our future constituted one of the secrets of the seer's power to push and even to pull us forward on the path of regeneration.

In minting the title, the Master had also in view another purpose. He wished to associate the Buddha with the enterprise. In so doing he was to stress the fact that cultural unity underlay diversity in India.

The Swami had not been content with furnishing the inspiration for launching *Prabuddha Bharata*. No. He did much more. He clearly indicated the way in which it was to be conducted for the dual purposes of awakening India and raying India's message to humanity at large.

Succinctly stated, it was to be a *magazine*—not a review. Like his address at the Parliament of Religions, it was to capture interest and, through that captured interest, instruct. The appeal was to be to the heart and not merely to the head.

It took me years of journalistic experience in the wide, wide world to detect the diversity of approach to the mind of the reader of a magazine as compared with that of a review. It took me more years to acquire something of the technique necessary to achieve the two purposes.

To Vivekananda, who had perhaps never darkened the door-step of a newspaper office

at that time, all this must, however, have been perfectly plain. He, for instance, exhorted the editor to re-write and to popularize 'those wonderful stories scattered through the Sanskrit literature'.¹ As Rajam put it :

. . . these stories are not like the unhealthy (? erotic), sensational (? sensual), fifth-rate French novels of the day, the cobwebs spun by idle brains, but the natural flowers of great minds that could, from a Himalaya-like philosophic altitude, take a sweeping and sympathetic survey of the human race. That is why they bear the stamp of immortality on them.

The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* had been, he suggested, for centuries in the making. Centuries will have to elapse before 'another of their kind can be made. They are not older than the mountains, but they will live longer than the mountains, and have more influence.'

Rajam went on to explain that the stories to be found in India's sacred books 'have a different meaning for every stage of human growth'. The ordinary man can enjoy them. So also can the philosopher. Each understands them, however, in his own way. The reason was easily comprehended. These stories were composed by men high up on the ladder of human progress. Some of them had, indeed, climbed to the topmost rung.

The Master had bade Rajam to :

. . . avoid all attempts to make the journal scholarly ; it will slowly make its way all over the world, I am sure. Use the simplest language possible and you will succeed. The main feature should be the teaching of principles through stories. Do not make it metaphysical at all. . . . Go on bravely. Do not expect success in a day or two or a year. Always hold on to the highest. Be steady. . . . Be obedient and eternally faithful to the cause of truth, humanity and your country and you will move the world. Remember it is the person—the life which is the secret of power, nothing else.

The editor assured the reader that the Swami had 'undertaken to contribute to the journal as often as he' could.

He also avowed his intention to print 'articles on human subjects' by other authors. Without being 'heavy', they were to serve seekers after truth as lamps to light up the way of life.

Rajam admitted that Truth had many facets. At core, however, it was one. Had not the Lord Krishna said in the Song

¹ The *Prabuddha Bharata* or AWAKENED INDIA, Madras, July 1896, p. 2.

Celestial—the Bhagavad Gita—‘I am in all religions, as the string in a pearl garland’?

The Vedanta that the Swami taught was the essence common to all religions—it was, in fact, the inner unity. So the *Prabuddha Bharata*, though a Hindu organ, had no quarrel with any religion.

‘The ideal society, according to the Vedanta is’, Rajam stated, simply and directly not the outcome of ‘...a millennium upon earth. Nor does it usher in a reign of angels, where there will be nothing but thorough equality of man, and peace and joy’.

The Vedanta does not, on the contrary, indulge in any chimeras. ‘Religious toleration, nay, neighbourly charity, and kindness even to animals constitute, indeed, its distinguishing characteristics. The fleeting concerns of life are subordinated to the eternal’. Man ‘strives not to externalize, but to internalize himself more and more, and the whole social organism moves, as it were, with a sure instinct towards God’.

The ideal, the editor promised, ‘will be steadily presented in these pages’. No attempt will, however, be made ‘to restore old institutions which have had their day, any more than to restore to life a dead tree’. His object would be ‘to present the ideal, which, fortunately, never gets too old, leaving every one to seek his own path of realization’.²

An address delivered by the Swami to a band of earnest-minded Americans, reproduced in the inaugural issue, gave even a surer indication of the objective. ‘As a boy I had some white mice,’ confided the Master to his pupils.

... They were kept in a little box and had little wheels made for them, and when the mice tried to cross the wheels, the wheels turned and turned and the mice never got anywhere.

So with the world and our helping it. The only (purpose that the giving of) help (serves) is that you (the giver) get exercise.

This world is neither good nor evil; each man manufactures a world for himself. If a blind man begins to think of it, it is either soft or hard, or cold or hot. We are a mass of happiness or misery; we have seen that, hundreds of times, in our lives. As a rule, the young are optimistic and the old pessimistic. The young have all life before them; and the old are complaining—their day is gone; hundreds of desires, which they cannot fulfil, are struggling in their brain. Life

² *ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

is at an end for them. Both are foolish. This life is neither good nor evil. It is according to the different states of mind in which we look at the world.

Fire, by itself, is neither good nor evil. When it keeps us warm, we say, ‘How beautiful is the fire!’ When it burns our fingers, we blame the fire. Still it was neither good nor bad. We use it, it produces in us the feeling of good or bad... So also is this world. It is perfect. By perfection is meant that it is perfectly fitted to meet its ends. We can all be perfectly sure that it will go on, and need not bother our heads wanting to help it.

Yet we must do good; it is the highest motive power we have, knowing all the time that it is a privilege to help. Do not stand on a pedestal and take five cents and say, ‘Here, my poor man’. But be grateful that the poor man is there, so that by giving to him you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed but the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to use your power of benevolence and mercy in the world and thus become pure and perfect. All good acts tend to make us pure and perfect.’

* * *

I can make space for just one piece to serve as an instance of how the disciple followed in the Master’s wake. Writing under the pseudonym of ‘P. V. Ramaswami Raju, Barrister at Law’, he related this tale, heavily condensed by me and consequently a part of it is in my phraseology.

From the feet of Father Himalaya, beloved through Time and Eternity of sages, the land rolled down in gradients so gentle as to be almost imperceptible. The Videhas, who peopled it in the age that we call Golden, had for their Lord, Janaka—one of a long line of Janakas. In the sciences and arts appertaining to the defence of the state from aggression and the maintenance of external order, this particular Janaka was versed as no contemporary of his was. He had acquired an insight into human nature and also into the eternal verities, that *rishis* and pundits visited the capital of Mithila (believed to be Janakpura of our day)—just for the joy of striking their minds against his. He was, in consequence, known as the *rajarshi*—Kingly Sage.

One day a seeker after truth came thither. His brain was well-nigh bursting with curiosity as to how Janaka managed, ‘in the midst of the cares of state’, to maintain relationships with his people and his kin on a level that was held as ideal; and yet had acquired

³ *ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

the competency to reveal the *paramatman*—the soul of souls. Exercising the student's privilege, he frankly asked the *rajarshi* the secret of his success, unparalleled in the annals of man.

'O Sage!' admitted Janaka, '... your questions are most pertinent. The ways of this world and the ways of the holy are often different. But there are instances in which the two go together.

'It is extremely difficult to explain satisfactorily by means of words how this happens. But it is easy to indicate the same by a practical illustration. I request you will be so good as to submit to a tangible demonstration. It is not my object to insult you by it, but only to show you effectually what I mean.'

* * * * *

Upon the student agreeing to submit to the experiment in Truth, his head was shaved clean. He was given a piece of cloth to tie round his loins.

... on his head was placed a wide plate with a very low brim, containing quicksilver. Four tall soldiers of martial frame with drawn swords attended him on four sides. The instructions of the king to these four men were these:

'Take the sage round the city. Let there be music and dancing at every stage. Let everything else that would charm the senses be placed in his way so as to attract his attention.'

* * * * *

Not a particle of the quicksilver must, however, fall from the plate, the king adjured. If any did, the guards must instantly cut off his head.

At the sound of these words the student's heart quailed. All his attention was immediately concentrated upon the plate. He went round the whole city. The journey began in the morning and ended in the evening.

When finally the soldiers brought the student back to the king he was asked to put the plate down. He did so and sat exhausted upon the sward, near a fountain from which 'the lily welcomed the moonbeams as they glanced through the foliage of the woodlands around'.

Now the king asked the stranger to tell him all 'that he had seen in the city'.

'Sire,' he replied, 'I can tell you nothing... because... I saw nothing. My mind was wholly occupied with the plate of quicksilver.'

The king replied: '... Just so; the best music in the city was got up for you... Theatricals were to be seen at every turn in the streets. Fair women, like the lotus and the jessamine, smiled in your course. Elephants with gorgeous trappings followed you: horses caparisoned with cloth of silver and gold preceded you. Perfumes, the most agreeable and costly, were burnt all round in censers of gold hedged with priceless gems. But you noticed nothing, as your mind was... concentrated upon the plate.'

'Similarly,' the king admitted, 'I live in the midst of the cares of a kingdom surrounded by all the splendour and magnificence attendant upon it. I notice, however, nothing about them or about those that delight in them because my mind is with the *paramatman*.'

* * * * *

Some twenty-five months after this good work had begun, Yamaraja's messengers relieved Rajam of all striving in this mundane sphere. 'The *nishtha* or contemplation by which he realized the *atman* was', wrote 'P.S' in an obituary note, 'none of the common breath-stopping or tip-of-the-nose-watching kind'. No. 'A natural and peaceful death' ended 'a glorious and happy life'.⁴

The last issue of the second volume contained a notice:

... it is our most painful duty to bring the journal to a close, in spite of the sore disappointment which we are aware this message will cause to our many subscribers, to whom we take this opportunity of bidding a sad farewell.⁵

The writer of that notice must have been a man of little faith. The battery, it is true, had worn out. The great soul that had charged it, however, remained. Soon another dynamo was put into service. Of this we shall learn in the section that follows.

(To be continued)

⁴ *ibid.* June 1898, p. 134.

⁵ *ibid.* p. 135.

MOTHER

BY P. SAMA RAO

When in the lap of God,
Peace and goodwill
Charmingly lie,
Prattling mayhap
Of Spring and stars,
Of dolls and Dawn,
Of birds and song,
Of babbling streams,
And 'merald glints
In luscious Nature's stalls, . . .
There upbrews a terrible storm,
Of deathly grin and stifling smoke,
Of ghostly pallor and crimson ire,
With the mad rush

Of elemental flame.
The Mother like a lightning potent,
Garlanded with the ravished lotuses blue,
With tresses upblown, and shimmering
Like the electric waves—
With face beaming a beatific vision—
Raises the babe up to her breasts . . .
With a mystic-syllabled lullaby
Formed of Her supernal breath,
And telling a tale of life in death,
Croons She softly, . . .
Caresses it fondly
To its eternal rest.

EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION IN INDIA

BY DR. DEBENDRA CHANDRA DAS GUPTA, M.A., ED.D.

A radical reconstruction or a total change in the system of education in India is a supreme necessity. It is demanded by the spirit of the times, the changing environment and circumstances and above all by the dire economic situation created by the war which will by no means end with its termination and the Allied victory which is evidently in sight. The system that is, is inherently defective: it is utterly divorced from reality, totally unsound in its psychological conception and it is at war with reason and truth. Many keen-sighted observers, both Indian and European—among the Europeans is to be noted the honoured name of the Marquis of Zetland—have noted the basic absurdities of the system of education in India. It is alien in spirit, perverted in method; it is infected with a spirit of abnormalities from top to bottom. The necessity of employing a foreign tongue for imparting higher education, the choice of topics, which are not psychologically rooted in the mind, these and things like these are among the evils which have been repeatedly pointed out.

An enquiry into a thorough-going reconstruction of the educational system of India is bound to lead us into the detailed discussion of topics like these for which we have no space at our disposal in the present article, the object of which is to offer in a tentative manner an ideal scheme of education in outline, the adoption of which is calculated to remove some of the glaring defects under which our present educational system suffers.

We propose to discuss the entire educational system in its primary, secondary, collegiate, and university phases. At the very outset, it will not be amiss to mention that several schemes of ideal reconstruction in the field of education have been offered, the most notable of which is the Wardha system. It is not without serious defects. It does not aim at producing boys and girls with their mind fully developed but aims at training experts in the mechanical concern of life. It looks upon the young children as adults in miniature and thrusts upon them a scheme of vocational education at an early stage in life when they will receive proper education for the

fullest development of their sense and motor activities.

Let us begin our ideal scheme with a reference to a pre-school training prevalent in ancient India resembling in spirit the modern nursery and kindergarten schools. These two types of schools should be a unique feature in our school system.

The present practice of completing the elementary education in four years should be replaced by a term of six years followed by a four year regular high school. The four year primary school training is not at all adequate for academic and vocational training. Over and above, the longer period will give the infants who are not fortunate enough to go up for next higher course in education enough to embrace successfully different occupations enabling them to earn their bread. This is a very practical aspect of the problem of which we should by no means lose sight. The elementary education of four years should be followed, in case of students bent on learning technical arts, by an altogether separate course of three years devoted to instruction, theoretical and practical in the arts and crafts. Four year high school should be superimposed upon the six year elementary school so as to facilitate the transfer of more intelligent pupils to the secondary school after their graduation from the elementary schools.

The primary school curriculum like the art curriculum in ancient India, should be both practical and theoretical and it should include the Three R's, vernacular language, history, geography, mathematics, social science, natural science, fine arts, physical education and other courses of studies according to the needs of locality.

Special care should be taken to distribute the primary schools in answer to the needs of the locality. Unnecessary multiplication of similar institutions should by no means be permitted by the local authority. There should be a department of primary education under the direct control of the local Government to stimulate the spread of primary education among the mass. Primary education should be made both compulsory and free as in all other civilized countries of the world. Adequate provision should be made for the supervision of primary education by appointing a well paid hierarchy of officials for the purpose. The accommodation of these educational in-

stitutions should be adequate and they should be within the easy reach of young scholars.

The primary school teachers should receive proper training and their payment should be made from the treasury of the state.

The secondary schools should be consolidated. Like the primary education, the secondary education should be the concern of the state. All the institutions imparting secondary education should be financed and controlled by the state. We know that exactly the reverse of this process prevails in the country with disastrous results. The curricula in the secondary schools should include college preparatory courses, agriculture, commerce, industry, home economics, technology and other useful courses according to the needs of the scholars and of the locality. The secondary schools should maintain a much higher standard admitting students of superior mental calibre capable of making the best use of the training received in the secondary schools.

The Indian universities should inaugurate two distinct types of examinations—one college preparatory course qualifying the students for admission to colleges and the other vocational course ensuring their fitness for entrance into higher technical or vocational colleges. Thus secondary schools should prepare the scholars for colleges and for life's career. According to the present arrangement the secondary schools prepare the students only for the university examinations and not for vocations. The teachers in the secondary schools should be professionally trained and they must be adequately paid. Under the present system teachers in the private schools are very inadequately paid with the result that really first-class men are not available for the educational profession. And people of inferior mental calibre manage the whole of our secondary education, and it may be mentioned in this connection that in the civilized countries of the West, e.g. England and the U.S.A., the school teachers are invariably brilliant intellectuals who are well paid and who do full justice to their choice. There is no earthly reason why this healthy ideal should not be followed in this country. As for the financial aspect of the problem it may be suggested that the expenses in other departments should be curtailed in the interests of education which should be the

dominant concern of all progressive communities.

It is exceedingly happy to note that the system of our higher education imparted through colleges has undergone remarkable changes from time to time, thanks to educational reformers- English and Indian. The name of Lord Curzon is to be especially mentioned in this connection because it was he who emphasized the need of the spread of culture in India, the preservation of India's ancient heritage and the methodization of training in modern science and arts. He advocated the bifurcation of the arts and science courses, thorough overhauling of Indian universities on a residential system. He instituted new types of Degrees in Science, Arts, and Medicine. Subsequent Commissions recommended salutary reforms of our entire educational system. The Sargent Commission has given us a detailed scheme of educational programme for the post-war period. In our opinion pre-professional courses covering two to three years, as the case may be, for various professions such as engineering, medicine, dentistry, and other branches of human knowledge should be instituted in our undergraduate courses. Students pursuing the respective pre-professional curriculum should be guided by specialists who will guide the students failing to make satisfactory progress in their studies. These specialists should prescribe for the students a course of study for which they are really fit by their natural endowment. This means the avoidance of the wastage of human energy and money. Though students under the present system of our education are allowed the freedom of choice in the matter of the subjects of their studies, in concrete practice this privilege is denied to them.

The advocacy of university reforms of Lord Curzon was carried into practice in Bengal by Sir Asutosh. He was chiefly instrumental in opening post-graduate classes and it is he who provided facilities for independent and original researches. He invited eminent scholars to take charge of the various departments in the university. The patriotic efforts of Sir Asutosh in this connection may fitly be compared to the laudable patriotic zeal of the German philosopher and educationist Fichte. The post-war reconstruction following the first world war witnessed the movement in the

direction of the establishment of a good many residential universities in important cities of India.

Our Indian universities need further expansion of curricular changes and the establishment of new departments of studies in agriculture, technology, sociology, journalism, fine arts, etc. The university courses stand in need of reorganization on an improved scale and the university standards in teaching should be raised on a par with those maintained in the renowned universities of Europe and U.S.A.

The academic year in our Indian universities should be split up into two sessions or semesters divided into two equal halves, each session being closed with a final university examination.

There should be advisers in the various departments in the universities whose function it would be to help the scholars in making intelligent selection of their courses. Instead of fixing stereotyped courses for a degree requirement in each department, the scholars should enjoy full freedom to select courses from various departments to make their own programme of studies leading to degrees. To facilitate the spread of higher education among the people working in the day-time, it is desirable to open university and college classes from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. with recess for lunch and supper. This practice is followed in America to the great benefit of the people and with excellent results. This practice will enable the scholars to earn their bread and at the same time to improve their mind. To carry this project into practice many sections of the same course should be offered at different periods of the working hour in the university.

Extension courses in different branches of knowledge leading to the degree course should be instituted in the Indian universities. Vacation courses may also be offered in the universities for the diffusion of knowledge among the citizens.

Some of the Indian universities maintain employment bureau under a secretary to place unemployed educated youths in occupations. This bureau should be thoroughly overhauled under a competent director of vocational guidance, well-versed in educational courses, such as vocational education, vocational guidance, vocational surveys,

vocational psychology, statistics, sociology, commerce, etc. He should be assisted by specialists in tests and measurements who will administer intelligent tests and special aptitude tests to candidates to discover their 'G' and 'S' factors before they are placed in industry and in other occupations. The placement officer will be assisted by a co-ordinator whose function it would be to follow the candidates in their work and to report to the placement officer of their progress in work. The officers of the Vocational Guidance Bureau will prepare occupational charts showing the proper correlation between the levels of native and specific intelligence and success in various occupations and professions. This body will also make periodical vocational and educational surveys in co-operation with other agencies in the local community to inform the university about the changes in society and corresponding needs in educational programme. This will undoubtedly eliminate the wastage of human energy and money, which is a vital thing especially in the era of economic distress. There shall be a substantial improvement in the scale of pay received by the teachers of the private colleges as well as those of the university. These people constitute a motely fraternity whose lot is more pathetic than could be described adequately in words. The practice of appointing part-time lecturers should be altogether discontinued. Education is a serious thing and the workers in it must be whole-time workers identifying themselves with their task efficiently and thoroughly. Eminent professors should be exchanged not only with the different Indian universities but also with the foreign universities to import fresh ideas and thought.

There is a remarkable absence of the amenities of social life in all our educational institutions. The clubs and associations that exist are not warmly patronized by the parties concerned. Steps should be taken by the institutions to foster the spirit of social grace, exchange of courtesy and communication of ideas in an atmosphere of freedom of thought between students and students and between students and teachers alike. It is regrettable that the factors of moral discipline, which has been the *soul* of Indian culture in all its phases, are so sadly lacking among the recipients of higher education today. In this respect

modern India can immensely benefit by the examples of the Jains and the Buddhists who appointed *niryapakas* and *karmadanas* for supervision of morals of the pupils. We, too, should have modern *niryapakas* supervising the morals of our young men—*niryapakas* well equipped for their task by their character, training and dignified position in life due to their culture. It is desirable that the students should be trained through group and social activities to develop civic virtues as a preparation for their citizenship. A course in Indianization should be offered in our high schools, colleges and universities as a means to solve communal dissension.

Co-education, though an unavoidable necessity should be avoided if possible on psychological grounds. It may be noted that even in the United States of America where co-education is universally allowed in all the state controlled institutions, there is a group of parents or guardians who do not favour co-education beyond high school, and special colleges for girls are organized in some of the progressive States of the Union. We suggest the opening of post-graduate classes in government colleges for girls. A separate university for girls in the major provinces of India will be a pleasant feature in the history of our post-war reconstruction. Appointments in such post-graduate departments and universities should all be made from among the female candidates.

Under the present system of education per capita cost of educating pupils is not uniform. This is due to the existence of private institutions and to the variability of financial resources of the local communities. This variability exists even among the government colleges, some localities enjoy the benefit of having an excellent institution for their children and some poor and backward communities cannot support even an ill-equipped institution. This variability in per capita costs exists not only among the students of the same sex but also among the pupils of the fair sex. Per capita cost for girls is much higher than the per capita cost for boys. In a word the wealth of the state is not equitably spent to educate its children. Sound scheme of equalizing the state funds in the education of a child should be devised by the authorities of the education department

and special funds should be set apart in enabling the backward communities to maintain at least a minimum standard of education for their children. Finally, increased grants should be made to educational institutions and various devices should be planned by the finance specialists in raising funds for the support of education.

We have pointed out some of the glaring defects of the system of education prevalent in India and we have offered a brief scheme of our own. In a few words our educational

authorities should make it a point to effect a harmonious co-ordination between the primary and the secondary systems of education. They should elevate the occupation of teaching by making it remunerative and attractive. They should introduce the feature of moral discipline in the educational system in the spirit of our ancient ancestors. If the simple but nevertheless very radical ideas—ideas that are difficult for realization—be carried out, our educational system will be as perfect as it might be expected to be under the present conditions.

IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

BY P. S. CHITALE

The word 'prayer' comes from the Latin 'precari' which means to ask. Whenever, therefore, we pray to God we ask for something. Well, what should that something be? Every human being is endowed with 'conscience' which means the power of deciding what is right and what is wrong. We are, therefore, expected to do the one and avoid the other, and in order to see how far we are able to discharge this, our foremost duty as human beings, it is necessary that we should daily examine our conduct and take stock of the various thoughts entertained by us in our mind and the various acts done by us during the day. This self-examination may reveal to us that there were occasions on which we had entertained evil thoughts, or said or done wrong things. Nay, we may also realize that in spite of our sincere desire for self-improvement, we find ourselves to be quite powerless to overcome the evil in us, and it is at this stage that realizing our utter helplessness, we instinctively come down on our knees and most humbly ask God to give us strength enough to conquer the evil in us; and as religion is only meant to enable people to achieve this conquest, prayer is the very essence of every religion.

We should, therefore, take to the practice of rising early in the morning with His name on our lips and invoking His aid to help us in our struggle during the day; and at

night time, before retiring, we should take stock of the day's failures and lapses, make a confession of them to our Maker and do a sincere penance for them. The only fitting penance for a lapse is to make a firm resolve not to allow it to happen again and to try to live up to what we resolve. Similarly when we pray for any virtue, we must also try to cultivate it. The form of our prayer should, therefore, be the rule of our life, i.e. we must look upon our prayer as an imperative necessity. In short, we must not unsay our prayers in our conduct. So also although we may kneel down for praying, we must not leave off praying when we rise up, except when otherwise employed, for every good and holy desire, though it lack the form, hath in itself the substance and force of a prayer to God. And whatever be the attitude of our body, the soul should be always on its knees.

We must not waste our time in foolish merry-making, but devote all the time we can spare from labour and rest to devout prayer.

Prayer, however, does not mean merely recitation with the lips; it should be a yearning from within, as otherwise 'your words may fly up, but your thoughts would remain below; while words without thoughts can never to Heaven go'. In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart, for God hears no more

than the heart speaks, and if the heart be dumb God will certainly be deaf.

Since a heart-felt prayer is the only potent instrument that man possesses for achieving victory in his struggle for self-improvement, it is as indispensable for the soul as food is for the body.

Success, however, does not attend the very first effort at such a living prayer. We have to strive against ourselves, we have to believe

in spite of ourselves. We have to cultivate illimitable patience if we will realize the efficacy of prayer. There will be darkness, disappointment, and even worse; but we must have courage enough to battle against all these, there being no such thing as retreat for a man of prayer.

If we continue this practice of praying, we shall thereby build, as it were, a solid wall of protection round ourselves, and our faults will gradually abate of themselves.

ADAMANT

BY NICHOLAS ROERICH

To the sacred ideals of nations in our days the watch-words: 'Art and Knowledge', have been added with special imperativeness. It is just now that something must be said of the particular significance of these great conceptions both for the present time and for the future. I address these words to those whose eyes and ears are not yet filled with the rubbish of everyday life, to those whose hearts have not yet been stopped by the lever of the machine called 'Mechanical civilization'.

Art and Knowledge! Beauty and Wisdom! Of the eternal and still renewed meaning of these conceptions it is not necessary to speak. When but starting on the path of life, every child already instinctively understands the value of decoration and knowledge. Only later, under the grimace of disfigured life this light of the spirit becomes darkened, while in the kingdom of vulgarity it has no place and is unknown. Yes, the spirit of the age attains even to such monstrosity!

It is not the first time that I have knocked at these gates and I here again appeal to you.

Amongst horrors, in the midst of the struggles and the collisions of the people the question of knowledge and the question of art are matters of the first importance. Do not be astonished. This is not exaggeration, neither is it a platitude. It is a decided affirmation, the only road to Peace.

The question of relativity of human knowledge has always been much argued. But

now, when the whole of mankind has felt directly or indirectly the horrors of war, this question has become a vital one. People have not only become accustomed to think, but even to speak without shame about things of which they evidently have not the slightest knowledge. On every hand men repeat opinions which are altogether unfounded. And such judgements bring great harm into the world, an irreparable harm.

We must admit that during the last few years European culture has been shaken to its very foundation. In the pursuit of things, the achievement of which has not yet been destined to mankind, the fundamental steps of ascent have been destroyed. Humanity has tried to lay hold on treasures which it has not deserved and so has rent the benevolent veil of the goddess of happiness.

Of course, what mankind has not yet attained it is destined to attain in due time, but how much man will have to suffer to atone for the destruction of the forbidden gates! With what labour and self-denial shall we have to build up the new bases of culture!

The knowledge which is locked up in libraries or in the brains of the teachers again penetrates but little into contemporary life. Again it fails to give birth to active work.

Modern life is filled with the animal demands of the body. We come near to the line of the terrible magic circle. And the only way of conjuring its dark guardians and escaping from it is through the talisman of true knowledge and beauty.

The time when this will be a necessity is at hand.

Without any false shame, without the contortions of savages, let us confess that we have come very near to barbarism. For confession is already a step towards progress.

It matters not that we still wear European clothes and, following our habit pronounce special words. But the clothes cover savage impulses and the meaning of the words pronounced, although they are often great, touching, and uniting, is now obscured. The guidance of knowledge is lost. People have become accustomed to darkness.

More knowledge! More art! There are not enough of these bases in life, which alone can lead us to the golden age of unity.

The more we know, the more clearly we see our ignorance. But if we know nothing at all, then we cannot even know we are ignorant. And that being so, we have no means of advancement and nothing to strive for. And the dark reign of vulgarity is inevitable. The young generations are not prepared to look boldly, with a bright smile, on the blinding radiance of knowledge and beauty. Whence then is the knowledge of the reality of the things to come? Whence then are wise mutual relations to arise? Whence is unity to come, that unity, which is the true guarantee of steady forward movement? Only on the base of true beauty and of true knowledge can a sincere understanding between the nations be achieved. And the real guide would be the universal language of knowledge and of the beauty of art. Only these guides can establish that kindly outlook which is so necessary for future creative work.

The path of animosity, roughness, and abuse will lead us nowhere. Along that way nothing can be built. Does not a conscience still remain in human nature? The real being in man still seeks to attain justice.

Away with darkness, let us do away with malice and treachery. Mankind has already felt enough of the hand of darkness.

Let me tell you, and mind you, these are not platitudes, not mere words, I give voice to the convinced seeking of the worker: the only bases of life are art and knowledge.

It is just in these hard days of labour, in this time of suffering, that we must steadily recall these kindly guides. And in our hours

of trial let us confess them with all the power of our spirit.

You say: 'Life is hard. How can we think of knowledge and beauty if we have nothing to live on? "or" We are far away from knowledge and art; we have important business to attend to first'.

But I say: You are right, but you are also wrong. Knowledge and art are not luxuries. Knowledge and art are not idleness. It is time to remember this: They are prayer and the work of the spirit. Do you really think that people pray only when over-fed or after excessive drinking? Or during the time of careless idleness?

No, men pray in the moments of great difficulty. So too, is this prayer of the spirit most needful, when one's whole being is shaken and in want of support, and when it seeks for a wise solution. And wherein lies the stronger support? What will make the spirit shine more brightly?

We do not feel hunger or starvation; we do not shiver because of the cold. We tremble because of the vacillation of our spirit; because of distrust, because of unfounded expectations.

Let us remember how often, when working, we have forgotten about food, have left unnoticed the wind, the cold, the heat. Our intent spirit wrapped us in an impenetrable veil.

'The weapon divideth it not, the fire burneth it not, the water corrupteth it not, the wind drieth it not away; for it is indivisible, inconsumable, incorruptible and is not to be dried away; it is eternal, universal, permanent, immovable. . . . Some regard the indwelling spirit as a wonder, whilst some speak and others hear of it with astonishment; but no one realizes it, although he may have heard it described.'—Gita, Ch. II.

Of what does the great wisdom of all ages and all nations speak? It speaks of human spirit. Penetrate in thought into the deep significance of these words and into the meaning of your life. You know not the limits to the power of the spirit. You do not know over what impassable obstacles your spirit bears you, but some day you shall awake, unharmed and everlastingly regenerated. And when life is hard and weary, and there seems to be no way out, do you not feel that some helper, your own divine spirit, is

speeding to your aid? But his path is long and your faint-heartedness is swift. Yet does the helper come, bringing you both the 'sword of courage' and the 'smile of daring'. We have heard of a family which in despair put an end to their lives with fumes of charcoal. Now this was intolerably faint-hearted. When the coming victory of the spirit arrives, will not they who have fled without orders, suffer fearfully because they did not apply their labour to that to which they should have applied it? It matters not what labour. The drowning man fights against the flood by all possible means. And if his spirit is strong, then the strength of his body will increase without measure.

But by what means will you call forth your spirit? By what means will you lay bare that which in man is buried under the fragments of his everyday life? Again and again I repeat: by the beauty of art, by the depth of knowledge. In them and in them alone are contained the victorious conjurations of the spirit. And the purified spirit will show you what knowledge is true, what art is real. I am assured that you will be able to call your spirit to your aid. That spirit, your guide, will show you the best paths. It will lead you to joy and victory. But even to victory it will lead you by a lofty path, whose steps are bound together by knowledge and beauty alone. . . . An arduous trial awaits the whole world: the trial by assimilation of truth. After the medieval trials by fire, water, and iron, now comes the trial by assimilation of truth. But if the power of the spirit upheld men against fire and iron, then will that same power raise them also up the steps of knowledge and beauty. But this test is more severe than the trials of antiquity. Prepare to achieve! Prepare for that achievement which is a matter of daily life. Meanwhile have care for everything that serves to advance the perception of truth. Approach with special gratitude all that shows forth the stages of beauty. At this time all this is especially difficult.

But adamant-like stands Beauty, and Culture—the only road to Peace.

Our motto is: Humanity is facing the coming events of cosmic greatness. Humanity already realizes that all occurrences are not accidental. The time for the construction of future Culture is at hand. Before our eyes

the revolution of values is being witnessed. Amidst ruins of valueless banknotes, mankind has found the real value of the world's significance. The values of great art are victoriously traversing all storms of earthly commotions. Even the 'earthly' people already understand the vital importance of active beauty. And when we proclaim Love, beauty and action, we know verily, that we pronounce the formula of the international language. And this formula, which now belongs to the Museum and stage must enter everyday life. The sign of Beauty of will opens all sacred gates. Beneath the sign of Beauty we walk joyfully. With Beauty we conquer. Through Beauty we pray. In Beauty we are united. And now we affirm these words: 'Not on the snowy heights, but amidst the turmoil of the city. And realizing the path of true reality, we greet with a happy smile the future.'

During the days of the present Armageddon I have been asked to send my message to several art exhibitions in India. My message was: Art should be protected by all means. Armageddon is roaring. Art and knowledge are the corner-stones of evolution. Art and science are needed always, but in our Armageddonial days they must be especially guarded by all powers of our hearts. It is a great mistake to think that during troubled times culture can be disregarded. On the contrary the need of culture is especially felt in times of war and human misunderstandings. Outside of Art, Religion is inaccessible, Outside of Art the spirit of Nationality is lost, Outside of Art, Science is dark. This is not an utopia. The History of Humanity gives innumerable examples of Art being the great Beacon Light in times of calamity. Scientists assert that colour and sound are a panacea. By Beauty and Harmony even wild beasts were tamed. Let the sacred flute of Sri Krishna resound again! Let us visualize that peace in which the majestic frescoes of Ajanta were created! In times of war let us think of future peace, affirmed by creativeness, labour and beauty. Travelling through India we passed along a road in the shadow of mighty chinars. Our guide told us: 'The great emperor Akbar thought of the future travellers who will be sheltered by these beautiful trees. He looked into the future'. 'To regard the Beautiful means to

improve'—said Plato. 'Man becomes that of which he thinks'—preordained the *upanishads*.

'A renaissance of art is the evidence of the renaissance of a nation. In a declining country, art becomes only an abstract luxury. But when a country is in its full prowess, art becomes the real motive power of its people. Let us imagine the history of humanity without the treasure of beauty. We will then readily realize that the epochs are felt meaningless, denuded of their soul. Without a manifestation of the spirit of the Beautiful, we shall remain amid the ugliness of death. And when we proclaim that beauty, art, is life, we speak about the coming evolution of beauty. Everything accomplished for art is an attainment for evolution. Every co-worker in this field is already a hero.

'It is great praise to this country that the roll of its creative workers cannot be expressed in one list but merits an entire great series,

even with the briefest appreciations. We are happy to feel what a vast material is before us and what a joy it is to show to the young generation the brilliant legion which has constructed the most beautiful achievements. Wherever art and knowledge flourish we may be enthusiasts. And in this joyful enthusiasm we may greet the true creative forces of the nation. An exhibition is not only a monument to the creator, the worker, but it is the best avocation for the youth to come. I am happy to greet the brilliant artists, to hail the essence of beautiful creative thought and to salute the young generation to which this creative thought brings its coming happiness.'

O Bharata, all beautiful, let me send thee my heart-felt admiration for all the greatness and inspiration which fill thy ancient cities and temples, thy meadows, thy *deobans*, thy sacred rivers and the Himalayas!

THIS IS HISTORY

BY PROF. SUDHANSU BIMAL MOOKERJI, M.A.

It is said that when Napoleon required a volume of history, he would cry out, 'Bring me my liar'.

Sir Walter Raleigh, during his captivity in the Tower of London, once heard an uproar outside. He sent one of the guards to ascertain what the matter was. His report did not satisfy Sir Walter. Another man was sent. He gave an entirely different report. Several more were sent one after another and on the same errand. Sir Walter was treated to a new story by each. The reports of different eyewitnesses of the same incident thus varying from one another, the illustrious prisoner lost all faith in history and was about to consign to flames the manuscript of the 'History of the World' written by him. He was convinced that any attempt to ascertain historical truth was not a whit wiser than chasing the wild goose.

Evidence in plenty may be adduced to show that story sometimes passes for history. There is, of course, what is known as the scientific method of arriving at truth. Yet it cannot be gainsaid that purely personal sentiments, sympathies, and antipathies have lured

many a historian away from the path of truth. Fancy again counts many victims among the students of history, whose works can be hardly distinguished from fiction. Macaulay and Froude, for example, had no scruples to sacrifice truth on the altar of their pet theories. It must, however, be admitted that few, if any, of the modern historians do deliberately mix the alloy of fiction with the gold of historical truth. We propose to expose, in the following paragraphs, some widely prevalent historical myths—a few selected at random out of a whole galaxy.

What is the truth about the battle of Thermopylae? It has been handed down from generation to generation that the Spartan King Leonidas at the head of a valiant band, but 300 strong, opposed at Thermopylae the countless hordes of Xerxes of Persia. But we have it on the authority of Herodotus, 'the Father of History', that Leonidas had the Spartan, Thespian, and Theban contingents with him to the last. The strength of this combined army was well above a thousand, some 1,400, to be more accurate.

Much has been spoken of the Turkish brutality on the Greeks during the Greek War of Independence. What are the facts? The Greeks perpetrated inhuman cruelties on the Turks, who, in retaliation, massacred the Greeks of Chios. Historians like Lodge and Oscar Browning are silent so far as the conduct of the Greeks is concerned. They, however, make ample amends for this lapse by giving harrowing details of how the infidel Turks slew the Christian Greeks in cold blood. Allison Philip's is almost the only voice in defence of truth. What actually took place was that the Greek clergy, under the leadership of Bishop Patrus of Germanos, declared a crusade against the Turks. The Mohammedans of Morea, numbering 25,000, were attacked so suddenly that they found little time for defence preparations and the entire Mohammedan population of Morea was wiped out within six weeks. No quarter was given. After the capitulation of the Fort of Tripolitsa, 2,000 Mohammedans—men, women, and children—fell into the hands of the Greeks. They were all put to the sword.

To come nearer home. It is popularly believed that Bakhtyar Khilji, at the head of eighteen horsemen, wrested the sovereignty of Bengal from the imbecile hands of the craven king Lakshmana Sena, who made good his escape barefooted. Bengali poets and artists (Nabin Chandra Sen, D. L. Roy, and Nandalal Bose, for example) have given wide publicity to the alleged cowardice of Lakshmana Sena.

The only detailed account of the Muslim invasion of Bengal during the reign of Lakshmana Sena is given by *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* of Maulana Minhajuddin Abu-Umar-i-Usman. It is obvious from this account that Mohammed made a sudden raid upon Nadia where Lakshmana Sena was residing. The invader came by an unexpected route and by forced marches. Minhaj does nowhere say that Bengal was conquered by eighteen Mohammedan horsemen. The eighteen formed the vanguard, with the intrepid Bakhtyar himself at its head, of a far larger army which must have been in the city before the raid was over.

Is it worthy of credence that the officers of the Sena kingdom were ignorant of the movements of Bakhtyar even when he had crossed the frontiers, and that at a time when the government was apprehending an invasion? Is it wise to believe that they admitted into the

city a band of foreigners without asking a question? Minhaj would have us believe that Nadia capitulated without striking a blow and neither a general nor an army was left to defend it. This state of affairs presupposes an utter paralysis of the governmental machinery. Minhaj contradicts himself when he says that for nearly half a century after the raid the descendants of Lakshmana Sena continued to rule in Eastern Bengal.

What are the sources tapped by Minhaj? On his own admission, he gathered his information from 'trustworthy persons' and that after nearly half a century later than the raid. The mental calibre of the informants of Minhaj may be judged from the silly stories they told him about the birth of Lakshmana Sena and the astrological prediction about Muslim invasion of Nadia (cf. 'When the birth of Lakshmana Sena drew near, the astrologers observed that if this child were born then, he would never become king, but if born two hours later, he would rule for eighty years. The queen-mother having heard this commanded that she should be suspended with her head downwards, with her two legs bound together. At the auspicious hour she was taken down but died after giving birth to the child.' -*Tabaqat*, p. 555. Minhaj next proceeds to say how after Bakhtyar's fame had reached the ears of Lakshmana Sena and his subjects, following the former's conquest of Bihar, a number of astrologers, wise men, and counsellors of the king advised him to leave the country as according to the holy books the country would shortly fall into the hands of the Yavanas.)

The lack of historical knowledge of the 'trustworthy persons' of Minhaj is clear from their statement that Lakshmana Sena reigned for eighty years, which, on the face of it, is absurd. In the words of Dr R. C. Mazumdar, 'More than 40 years had passed since the raid of Nadia and the establishment of the Muslim rule, and the story of the first Muslim conquest must have been embellished by popular imagination and fire-side tales of old soldiers who naturally distorted the accounts of the old campaigns in order to paint in glowing colours their own valour and heroism.' (*The History of Bengal*, Vol. I, p. 245.) The learned Doctor concludes :

‘Considering the materials on which Minhaj had to rely, we can hardly blame him for his account, but cannot certainly accept it in all its details, specially when these are in conflict with the probable and commonsense view of things. That Nadia was the first conquest of Mohammed Bakhtyar may be readily accepted as a fact, but the details of the campaign must be taken with a great deal of reserve.’ (*ibid.* pp. 245-246.)

Even if the account of Minhaj be taken at its face value, it is hard to believe that Lakshmana Sena was a coward. Evidence available points to the contrary. According to Minhaj himself the old king decided to stay on in Nadia when his panicky subjects left it in fear of the impending Mohammedan invasion and on the pretext that the holy books said that Nadia would fall a prey to Muslim invaders. If he really fled away barefooted, it was only after the enemy had entered his palace. This same Lakshmana Sena, in his earlier years, had carried on military expeditions far away from the province of Bengal in all directions. He reaped laurels of victory on many a field in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Assam, and led his victorious army as far as Benares and Allahabad. Since the days of Dharmapala and Devapala (eighth and ninth centuries A.D.), centuries earlier, no other king of Bengal had pursued such an aggressive policy, and so far as can be judged from existing evidence his policy was crowned with a fair measure of success. Minhaj himself admits that Lakshmana Sena was ‘a very great Raa’ (king).

Another classical example of historical myth is the current version of the Shivaji-Afzal Khan episode. Grant Duff and others would have us believe that Shivaji treacherously murdered Afzal Khan. They have accepted the version of Khafi Khan in total disregard of the testimony of the Marathi Bakhars. But Kimkaid, Sarkar, and others have proved irrefutably that though Shivaji went for the interview with the Khan, fully armed, it was defence in anticipation and that Shivaji’s murder of the latter was a ‘preventive murder’.

Khafi Khan’s hatred for Shivaji is notorious. So intense was this that the Mogal historian invariably refers to him in such terms as ‘that hell-dog’, ‘that hated infidel’, and the like. As the Afghan general,

together with his entourage, had been done to death, Khafi Khan could have no report from eyewitnesses. Duff has summarily, and to our mind arbitrarily, rejected the version of the Hindu chroniclers without giving any reason for such rejection. These latter never suppressed the truth even in cases where Shivaji had recourse to treachery and questionable tactics. It passes our comprehension why this particular incident should be an exception to the general rule. The Marathi Bakhars,—Savasad Bakhar, Siva Digvijaya Bakhar, Chitnis Bakhar, Malkare Bakhar—are unanimous in their testimony that the Bijapuri general struck the first blow and Shivaji disembowelled him in self-defence.

That Afzal Khan meant treachery from the very beginning is evident from the contemporary English factory record—Rajapur Letter of 10 December 1659—which tells that Afzal Khan was instructed by his government to secure Shivaji by ‘pretending friendship with him’ as he could not be resisted by armed strength. But his plan leaked out and the astute Maratha made the intended treachery recoil on the Khan’s head. It was, as Sarkar puts it, ‘a case of diamond cut diamond’. This is corroborated by the Marathi chronicles on the point that Shivaji’s intelligence department learnt from Afzal Khan’s officers about the Khan’s plan to arrest him by treachery at the proposed interview, and that Afzal Khan’s envoy Krishnaji Bhaskar also divulged the secret of his master.

In the biography of Ramdas, written by his disciple Hanumant, Shivaji is represented as narrating the Afzal Khan episode in the following language: ‘When, during our interview, Abdullah (i.e. Afzal Khan) gripped me in the throat, I lost consciousness. I could not have freed myself but for the blessings of the Swami.’

Had Afzal Khan been wounded at the beginning, he would not have sufficient strength left to make Shivaji unconscious. Would it be unreasonable to conclude that Afzal Khan attacked Shivaji before being wounded himself?

It may be asked quite pertinently—why did Shivaji put on defensive armour before going to the interview? The reply has been given by Sarkar, who says: ‘Secret assassi-

nation is the favourite weapon of decadent monarchies, and many such murders had taken place in the Sultanates of the Deccan before this time. . . . Shivaji was fully convinced—and with good reason, as we know,—that Afzal Khan meant treachery. He would have been wanting in common prudence if he had not taken these precautions to save himself.’ (*Shivaji*, pp. 72-73.)

Who built the ‘Taj’? Tradition ascribes this ‘dream in marble’ to an Italian architect. This tradition is based on the statement of

Father Maurice. Havel, that great art-critic and authority on Indian art, on the other hand, is of opinion that this crystallized tear-drop is the finest product of the synthesis of Indian and Persian styles of architecture. A similar difference of opinion divides scholars as to the architecture of the ruins of Ashoka’s place at Kumarhar near Patna and of that of his Pillars. Dr. Spooner opines that these structures are permeated through and through by Persian influence. If this be true, an approach *de novo* has to be made to the history of India in bygone days.

THE DRAFT HINDU CODE

(*The following statement on the Draft Hindu Code has been issued over the signatures of Hon’ble Mr. Justice R. C. Mitter, Hon’ble Mr. Justice B. K. Mukherjee, Hon’ble Mr. Justice C. C. Biswas, and Hon’ble Mr. Justice A. N. Sen.*)

We should be loth to add to the controversy which the Draft Hindu Code has already given rise to, but having regard to the importance of the subject, we as Hindus find it difficult to resist the request, which has been conveyed to us from several quarters, to express our views. We do not propose, however, to examine all the provisions of the Code, but shall touch upon some of the broader issues only, noticing, as regards details, just a few of the matters which appear to us to be of outstanding importance. A detailed discussion would have been more useful and appropriate with the members of the Rao Committee, if they had thought it fit to invite us to meet them during their last visit to Calcutta.

At the outset, we must express our serious doubts as to the wisdom, necessity, or feasibility of enacting a comprehensive Code of Hindu law. The Draft Code does not profess to be exhaustive, but it definitely aims at being a stage in the preparation of a complete Code, and that makes it necessary to consider how far such codification is proper or desirable.

Most of the rules of Hindu law are now well settled and well understood and a Code is not, therefore, called for at all. There is, in fact, no general demand for it; neither those who are affected by Hindu law, nor those who have to administer it have felt the necessity of a Code.

We are not aware that the whole of the personal law of any community in any country has been or been sought to be embodied in a Code, and it is our conviction that all communities in India, like the Moslems, for instance, will stoutly resist any attempt to foist a Code of personal law upon them. We see no reason why the Hindus should be treated differently.

As regards matters on which there may be divergences of opinion or conflicts of judicial decisions, legislative action may perhaps be called for or justified to remove doubts or obscurities, but it is quite a different proposition to try and effect fundamental changes in the structure of the law by means of legislation, when changes are not demanded by the community itself. For one thing, it is doubtful how far the legislature, particularly a legislature constituted as it is in this country, may be regarded as a fit instrument for carrying out such social reform.

We do not say that no changes are called for in Hindu law. Like every other system of law, Hindu law must be prepared to meet the challenge of the times. In fact it is the adaptability of Hindu law to changing conditions and circumstances that has helped to maintain it as a living force, and it is significant that the *Smritis*, which are the ultimate repository of the law, themselves recognize the principles of such growth and development.

Up to the advent of British rule, it was the Hindu jurists and commentators who helped forward the continuous evolution of the law, but this they did only by a judicious selection and exposition of the ancient texts without any attempt to undermine their basic authority. That process has since been arrested, and the only agencies which now exist for bringing about any changes are the courts of law and the legislature. So far as courts are concerned, their function in this respect is necessarily limited; all the same as every student of Hindu law knows the contribution which they have made to its development has indeed been very remarkable. The legislature, however, wields much wider powers, which extend not merely to the interpretation but to the making of the law, but it is precisely this circumstance which in our opinion casts upon it a special obligation to act with the utmost caution and circumspection.

The Rao Committee in their report have themselves indicated the conditions of legislative action in the field of Hindu law. 'Nor can we believe', they state, 'that the thoughtful reformer will wish to lay violent hands on the ancient structure of Hindu law except for proved necessity. It is a spacious structure, with many schools, and by a judicious selection and combination of the best elements in each, he should be able to evolve a system which, while retaining the distinctive character of Hindu law, will satisfy the needs of any progressive society.' But even in making such changes, as the Committee themselves recognize, 'the aim should be, so far as possible, to arrive at agreed solutions and to avoid doing anything likely to arouse acrimonious controversy'.

Drop the Code

According to their own tests, therefore, the Rao Committee ought to drop the proposed Code. Some of their proposals are little short of an attempt 'to lay violent hands on the structure of Hindu law', without any clear proof of necessity, and, as should be obvious to them by this time the 'aim' of arriving at 'agreed solutions' is beyond any hope of fulfilment.

One of the objects of the Committee is stated to be that of evolving a uniform code of Hindu law which will apply to all Hindus by 'blending the most progressive elements in

the various schools of law which prevail in different parts of the country'. It seems to us, however, that apart from anything else, as matters stand, uniformity is an impossible ideal. The Committee themselves recognized that all the topics of Hindu law do not come within the sphere of central legislation, and, in particular, that of devolution of agricultural land, which, by the Constitution Act, is exclusively a provincial subject. And it may be noted in this connexion that agricultural land constitutes by far the bulk of immovable properties in Bengal, nay, in the whole of India; and, as has already been judicially held, the expression 'agricultural land' embraces within its scope a large variety of interests, from that of the proprietor of the highest grade to that of the actual tiller of the soil. The Committee hope that the provinces will move on the lines prescribed in the Code. We doubt, however, whether this hope will be realized. It is too much to expect that all the provinces would adopt all the provisions of the Central Act. It is highly improbable that the provinces, especially Bihar and U. P., would adopt Part III-A of the Code, relating to the abolition of survivorship, or Bengal would adopt S. 5 of Part II *en bloc*. Assuming, however, that this will happen, will the operation of the Code be held up till the last of the provinces has expressed its views? What would happen if the provinces finally legislated on different lines? Religious and Charitable Endowments, again, happen to be an exclusively provincial subject, and if 'Shebaitship' is deemed to be a part of this subject, complicated questions are bound to arise regarding the devolution of such interest also.

But, after all, is uniformity such a desideratum that it must be purchased at any price? Diversities of usage are inevitable among the very large number of Hindus who inhabit this vast sub-continent, and it was not for nothing that the Hindu law-givers recognized the paramount authority of local usages and customs. Why, then, it may be asked, must the Hindus of any particular locality be necessarily called upon to forswear their own distinctive traits and traditions in the interests of a theoretical symmetry? And why, further, for the sake of attaining an ideal uniformity, must the law be cut off from its ancient moorings? Hindu law, divorced

from the *Smritis* and *Nibandhas*, would be a contradiction in terms.

We are definitely of opinion that any attempt to break down the various schools of law and merge them all in one uniform system is a move in the wrong direction. But this is not saying that there may not be elements in any existing school of law that do not call for a change. Nor would it be right to decry any proposal to introduce such specific changes by legislative action as 'piecemeal legislation', and to insist on comprehensive legislation as the only alternative. We think that there is a certain amount of unfounded prejudice against what is usually called 'piecemeal legislation'. Unlike other countries in Europe, legislation in England has always been piecemeal, and has led to no untoward results.

It is piecemeal, compared with the totality of the laws, but may be quite exhaustive so far as that particular topic or branch of law is concerned. In such partial legislation, however, care must be taken to see that it is not a misfit with the rest of the law, as was undoubtedly the case with Act 18 of 1937 (Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act).

Some Omissions

It is pertinent to ask in this connexion whether, apart from the legislative restrictions imposed by the classification of powers between the central and provincial legislatures under the Constitution Act, it is at all possible to draw up an exhaustive Code of the personal law of the Hindus, complete in all its branches, and providing for all possible contingencies. The Code as framed by the Rao Committee appears to us to be itself incomplete in regard to some of the matters which it professes to deal with as being within their sphere of competent legislation. Thus, for example, there are various important questions relating to joint family and partition, which have not been touched upon at all. By merely abolishing the rule of survivorship or the right by birth, you cannot abolish the Hindu joint-family law. Matters relating to management of joint family, to the *karta's* rights and privileges, to the mode of partition and the taking of accounts would still require consideration. Rights and liabilities in connection with joint-family business is another important topic of Hindu law, and

so also the important subject of 'self-acquisition', so fully dealt with by the commentaries and judicial decisions; but all these have been completely ignored in the Draft Code as it stands. When such questions come up before the courts, as they must, they would have to be dealt with under the existing rules of Hindu law, or rather, under the rules of the particular school of law which would be applicable. The Hindu Code would, therefore, neither be the sole repository of Hindu law, nor of a uniform body of law, as it is intended to be.

Holding, as we do, very definite views about the codification of Hindu law in general and the present Draft Code in particular, it would not serve much useful purpose to go into details, but we would only refer to some of the provisions of the Code. In the rules regarding inheritance, we recognize with satisfaction that the Committee have brought in many blood relations who are now excluded from the list of heirs, either because they belong to the female sex, or because they do not come within the scope of the *pinda* theory. We also find that the Committee have, in an admirable way, framed rules for precedence among non-enumerated heirs (Part II, Rules 8-9). These matters were not dealt with by the commentators, and might in our opinion fittingly form the subject of partial or auxiliary legislation like Act II of 1929, which set a useful precedent for such legislation by remedying certain defects in the Mitakshara law of inheritance.

Two Things That cannot be Supported

There are, at least, two matters in the chapter on inheritance in respect of which we find it difficult to support the Committee's proposals.

The first of these relates to the order of precedence among the enumerated heirs, by which the whole group of nine descendants specified in Class II is given priority over every one of the five heirs grouped under Class III. The first two of Class II, viz. son's daughter and daughter's daughter, might perhaps be allowed to come before the heirs described in Class III, and their rights so far as Mitakshara law is concerned have already been recognized by Act II of 1929; but, in our view, the same preference should not be given to the other seven relations mentioned in this group. All of them are, no

doubt, descendants of the propositus; but it can be safely asserted that no Hindu regards such relations as son's daughter's daughter, daughter's daughter's son, or daughter's daughter's daughter as nearer than, say, brother's grandson or sister's son—in fact they are regarded more or less as strangers who can have no place in the scheme of inheritance. It is obvious that between a man and his daughter's daughter's daughter, three families intervene. We cannot ignore the normal constitution of a Hindu family and give the descendants of a man precedence over ascendants or collaterals under all circumstances. It is to be noted that out of these nine relations, with the single exception of the son's daughter's son, the rest are not heirs at all under Dayabhaga law. The Benares school recognizes only 3, 6, and 8 as *bandhus* and it is only under the Bombay and Madras schools that all these relations are heirs, but then again they come after all the enumerated heirs are exhausted.

The other matter to which we should like to refer is the proposed inclusion of the daughter in the list of simultaneous heirs under Class I. This we consider to be a change of a revolutionary character, which, of all the proposals in the Code, has perhaps evoked the strongest and most widely expressed protest. The framers of the Code themselves do not appear to have been so very sure as to how far their proposal would react on the Hindu mind; and this perhaps dictated a cautious move on their part in providing for the daughter only a half of the share of a son, as under the Moslem law.

Serious Objection

One serious objection to this provision is that it would lead to further fragmentation of the property; and the other is the traditional dislike in the Hindu mind of allowing strangers to the family to come and share the inheritance. Each of these, in our opinion, is a valid and well founded objection. The splitting up of estates due to plurality of heirs is an undoubted economic evil, and merely because the risk of such splitting up cannot be avoided, when there is a multiplicity of sons, it does not follow that the evil should be further aggravated by the introduction of a large number of simultaneous heirs. It will not, perhaps, be out of place here to

call attention to the significant fact that in connection with the Wakf Act (VI of 1913), one of the reasons which the Moslem leaders put forward in support of that measure was that it would tend to check this evil of fragmentation in their community.

As regards the other objection, it cannot be denied that a Hindu primarily desires that his dwelling house and other immovable properties should remain exclusively in the hands of his male descendants, if there be any. That the framers of the Code were fully alive to this popular feeling is evident from the fact that they have allowed the provisions of the Partition Act of 1893 to be invoked by a male heir against a female co-heir, in case the latter sues for partition; and this relief has not been confined to dwelling-houses merely, but has been extended to all other immovable properties jointly inherited. But whether the remedy provided is not worse than the disease is a matter for consideration.

Examining the question entirely on its own merits, we also find it difficult to support the proposal of making the daughter a co-heir with the son. No *Smṛiti* writer, ancient or modern, no school of Hindu law, progressive or otherwise, has recognized the daughter as such heir. Neither, so far as we are aware, is such a right in the daughter sanctioned by usage in any part of India. The legislature, therefore, is introducing an innovation, pure and simple, and as such it could be supported, only if an exceptionally strong case could be said to exist on grounds of justice and equity. But could such a case be really made out?

We are certainly in favour of making adequate provisions for the indigent daughter, and should welcome any attempt to remedy whatever defects there may be in the present law on the subject. But we can find no justification for going to the opposite extreme, by placing the daughter in a better position than the son himself, as would undoubtedly be the result under the Code. As a wife or a widow, the daughter gets a share in her husband's property and even as a widowed daughter-in-law, she has her rights of maintenance out of the estate of her father-in-law. In case the husband or husband's father leaves no property, she will be entitled as a widowed daughter to maintenance out of her father's estate. The unmarried daughter has

also her rights under the existing law to maintenance and marriage expenses out of her father's property: if necessary we should have no objection to legislation in order to secure such rights by creating a charge on the paternal estate. A daughter, married, unmarried or widowed, is also entitled to inherit the *stridhan* property of her mother. Where the daughter happens to be married, but the husband is extremely poor, cases are not rare when her father, if he can, makes adequate provision for her by will or otherwise, and the mother also will not unoften be found providing for the daughter out of her own *stridhan* properties.

An Excellent Chapter

The chapter on maintenance, we must say, has been admirably worked out, and removes certain long-felt grievances.

The only other topic that in our opinion deserves serious comment relates to the question of marriage. We are constrained to observe that the Committee's approach to the subject has not been correct. The first thing that the legislature should do in dealing with marriage is to lay down the essential conditions of a valid marriage, viz. physical and mental capacity, age restrictions, prohibited relationship and so forth. The question of form, which is also essential, then comes in; and most systems of modern law prescribe a form of civil marriage as an alternative to religious marriage. In a civil marriage, however, the essentials remain the same, except that no religious ceremony need be gone through. It is against elementary rules of civilized jurisprudence to lay down that there should be one kind of prohibited degrees in the sacramental marriage, and a different kind in case of civil marriage. But that is what the Draft Code seeks to do for Hindus. Civil marriage should in that case cease to be a part of Hindu law, and must remain a separate branch of the law altogether. We notice with some surprise that the framers of the Code have gone much beyond the rules of the Special Marriage Act, and have permitted marriages even between first cousins, which is entirely obnoxious to Hindu sentiments. Whether civil marriage is made a part of Hindu law or is left to be

regulated by the Special Marriage Act, we are definitely of opinion that the essentials of a Hindu marriage except in the matter of ceremonies, should be the same in either form. In our opinion, the best thing would be to keep the civil marriage out of Hindu law altogether, and leave it to be regulated by the Special Marriage Act, with a repeal of those provisions thereof which provide that even when Hindus marry thereunder, they would be governed by the Indian Succession Act.

Prohibited Degrees

While on this subject we might perhaps offer a few suggestions with regard to prohibited degrees, we are of opinion that the *sapinda* relationship should be reduced to five degrees on the father's side and three degrees on the mother's. This is quite in accordance with the *patthinashi* rule which is followed in Bengal, subject at the same time to the *trigotra* rule. As regards intercaste marriages, we think that such marriages, if they have taken place in fact, should not be regarded as invalid. As regards monogamy, we share the general view that as polygamy has practically disappeared from Hindu society, it is not necessary to enforce monogamy by legislation. We are entirely opposed to introducing divorce into Hindu law. We do not think that the right of divorce has conduced to greater social well-being or harmony in the systems where this right exists. At any rate the Hindu conception of marriage as a sacrament is diametrically opposed to the idea of divorce, and we feel this idea is abhorrent to the average Hindu. We may add that if divorce is at all allowed the grounds of divorce should be such as are recognized in other systems where it exists, and not what the Committee have thought fit to provide.

As we have said already, our comments on the Code do not profess to be exhaustive, but we believe we have said enough to justify our disapproval of it as a whole. Hard cases do and may arise under the existing law, but can human ingenuity devise any system of law which will be a guarantee against hardships in individual cases? Lastly we would add that the present time is singularly inopportune for introducing such controversial legislation.—*Hindusthan Standard*.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

In this number the *Conversations* are continued. . . . Swami Yatiswarananda, who is in Philadelphia, America, had sent *Religious Revival in East and West* for publication in the Golden Jubilee issue of this journal, but unfortunately it was received here too late for the purpose. The article will be found to be instructive and thought-provoking, as the Swami's writings usually are. . . . St. Nihal Singh continues his charming and delightful account of the past history of the *Prabuddha Bharata* in *A Backward Glance*. . . . Professor Das Gupta makes a vigorous plea for a well thought out plan of education in *Educational Reconstruction in India*. . . . Prof. Nicholas Roerich pleads in *Adamant* for a development of knowledge and art in terms of spirituality. . . . Prof. Mookerji shows up in *This is History* the one-sided nature of most historical accounts. . . . For the benefit of our readers we are giving *The Draft Hindu Code*, a subject which is now seriously exercising the minds of Hindu India.

RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS IN SOCIAL LIFE

Emphasizing the need for true religious consciousness in all spheres of our life, and presenting a considered and correct interpretation of religion, Mr. Vishnu Prasad V. Baxi writes in the *Social Welfare* (15th June 1945) :

In ancient times, importance was placed on the need for the evolution of religious consciousness in man before he could be sent out to play his part in the social order of which he was an important member, and, therefore, the ancients evolved certain principles of inculcating culture, right from the stage from which the child began to live in the womb down to the time he became a householder and a full-fledged member of the society. For it was realized, above all, that for a soul to realize the ultimate end of existence, it was but essential that he must know what he really was and what part he was destined to play in the great plan wherein it was his lot to be placed.

The modern man, who is seldom sure of what the priests mean by religion, is unwilling to accept anything that is not, according to him, rational, and, therefore, does not satisfy his reason. He is unable to understand and

appreciate the value of religious teachings in practical life, especially when he finds a wide divergence between theory and practice of religion. Sectarianism, intolerance, and social inequality are often found among sections of people who call themselves religious. As a result, religion is held responsible for the evils of society. Those who hold this view are unaware of the correct meaning of the term religion. Mr. Baxi observes :

It must be understood that religion is not a creed or a sectarian dogma. It is a real living force. It is light and not darkness. Religion connotes the presence of fundamental essentials of an individual's existence. It is, as Vivekananda rightly explains 'the manifestation of divinity already in man'. . . . Right perception of the forces of life, right thinking on the problems of life, right conduct on the pathway of life, right appreciation of the moral values of life, these are the ingredients that explain the term religion. . . . Religion is not the tenets of a school of thought or a cult. Religion is the dynamic force giving life-blood to human existence through all ages. It is in essence a way of life.

All religions are based on morality and personal purity of the individual. They aim at reforming the members of society, and thus help to build a healthy social order. The basis of social ethics which govern the relations between man and man, is to be found in the Vedantic truth of the divinity of man and the oneness of existence.

Religion is the harbinger of strength, power, light, joy, and peace. It is not only a happy blending of the inner forces of our life but the harmonious fusion of the external currents of life's forces. . . . It is the inward monitor directing right conduct of life. Religion is self-knowledge, self-reverence, and self-control. . . . It does not lie in the cloistered existence of the hermit nor in the rituals of the priestly order nor in the precincts of temples erected for the propagation of the ideals of the various cults nor in the free thinker's loose way of life. It exists in the perennial depths of the human heart, in the individual and individual alone.

The trend of modern man is to become more group conscious—social, national, or communal—and to think and act in consonance with the demands of the group. In his attempt to follow the multitude, he is often called upon to subordinate his own reason or faith to what are said to be the interests of the state or community. A true

religious attitude rightly applied to social life inspires and guides one's relation to one's family, one's society, and to humanity in general. Therefore, it is clear that

So long as an individual remains imperfectly evolved he remains a clog on the wheels of society. Thus no evolution or progress is possible unless like the body physical the body social has all its organs in perfect health and normal condition, functioning each according to its allotted sphere, neither overlapping nor contradicting the functions of another member, but working as co-operative force aiding the other members to function properly. . . . This can be achieved only if the consciousness of his supreme and effulgent Self without which none of his actions can be conducted has dawned on him. . . . The improvement of the individual is thus the first essential of a healthy social order.

VEDANTA MOVEMENT IN AMERICA

The following account of the preaching work carried on by the monks of the Ramakrishna Order in the United States of America, testifies to the increasing appreciation of Hindu thought by the Americans. Even such well-known persons as Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood have evinced keen interest in the study of Vedanta.

The growth of the Vedanta movement in the United States has established a link between the spiritual faiths of the East and the West.

In 12 major American cities, monks of the Ramakrishna Order have drawn hundreds of followers to the teachings of Hinduism, particularly the Vedanta. It is the only genuine Hindu movement in this country, yet the fact that students and followers consist almost entirely of Americans testifies to the universality of its appeal.

The movement first took root in America when Swami Vivekananda presented his interpretation of the Hindu faith at the great Parliament of Religions in Chicago in connection with the World's Columbian Exposition.

Since then, 13 centres have been established (there are two in New York), all under the direct spiritual guidance of monks of the Ramakrishna Order. The Hindu teachings are disseminated through public services at the centres, lectures at educational institutions, private instruction in spiritual discipline and publication of books on Vedanta and related subjects.

Unlike the work of the Ramakrishna Order in India, there has been no effort to engage in philanthropic or social welfare work, since these fields are adequately handled by established American agencies.

In carrying forward the precepts of Sri Ramakrishna, the Swamis of the American centres make no attempt to convert followers to Hinduism, but emphasize the underlying unity and harmony of all religions. For this reason the movement has appealed to persons of many faiths who, dissatisfied with the dogmas of their own churches, seek spiritual faith that will give richer meaning to their respective religious ideals.

New York Centre

One of the most active centres is the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York, which is under the leadership of Swami Nikhilananda. Services are conducted each Sunday by the Swami, with the attendance averaging about 100 persons. Classes are held twice a week for the study and interpretation of Hindu scriptures. In addition, the Swami is constantly visited by persons wishing private instruction in spiritual discipline.

Swami Nikhilananda has written several books, whose wide distribution testifies to the growing interest in the Hindu faith in this country. Two thousand copies of the Swami's 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna' have been sold since its publication in 1942. His translation of the 'Bhagavad Gita', published a year ago, is now in its second edition with 5,000 copies sold.

Swami Nikhilananda, ordained at Benares in 1922, came to America in 1931. After a year's work at the centre in Providence, Rhode Island, he founded the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre in 1933. Besides conducting the work of the Centre, the Swami gives frequent lectures in schools and universities. Reciprocally students of religion and philosophy visit the Centre and attend the Sunday services.

The Swami, interviewed in the large and comfortable building owned by the Centre, pointed out that another important feature of his work is giving spiritual instruction through correspondence to persons who live too far away to attend the Centre.

The universal character of the Hindu faith is visually expressed in the Centre's chapel. Raphael's Madonna and the Child and a painting of Sarada Devi adorn the walls. The altar is inscribed with the Hindu motto, 'Truth is one—sages call it by various names'.

The Centre observes all major Christian Holy Days, such as Christmas, Good Friday and Easter, with the Swami preaching on their universal meaning.

In the Swami's own words, the Vedanta philosophy, 'as a movement of goodwill, friendship, and spiritual understanding has strengthened the bond between India and America'.—U. P. A.

INDEPENDENCE THROUGH SELF-CONQUEST

The present war has shown that to secure or maintain its independence every country has had to make heroic sacrifices. Rich and poor alike, though belonging to different social or political groups, were called upon to sacrifice their individual interests in the cause of the nation. Conquest of personal prejudices and self-discipline are as much necessary as political acumen and martial spirit. Wars and famines are inevitable so long as jealousy, greed of gain, and the desire for exploitation reside in man. In the course of a dialogue, referring to the problem of self-government, Swami Vivekananda observed:

Well, where is that martial spirit which, at the very outset, requires one to know how to serve and obey, and to practise self-restraint. The

martial spirit is not self-assertion but self-sacrifice. One must be ready to advance and lay down one's life at the word of command, before he can command the hearts and lives of others. One must sacrifice himself first.

Pride and love of power egg a man to put himself foremost. He is often anxious for name and fame. Therefore he makes a show of self-sacrifice, while at heart he is seeking an opportunity to earn public appreciation. The efforts of such persons, inspired by selfish ends, however spectacular, may not achieve lasting results. That a true worker of the nation has to aim at self-purification through faith in God and prayer was the advice given by Mahatma Gandhi before he left Panchgani last. He said that God is the greatest saviour in this world, and that man's pride could never stick before God's plans. He told those who attended his prayers not to do

so in a light-hearted manner but to sincerely commune with the Lord to gain strength and confidence in order to be able to do His work better.

Gandhiji observed that his conception of *Swaraj* was not mere political independence. He wanted to see dharma raj establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, the reign of truth and non-violence in every walk of life. He, too, believed, along with others, that the time for India's independence had come nearer. Nevertheless, he wanted that people should repose their faith in prayer more than in the words of men. Gandhiji drew the attention of his hearers to the fact that most of them were still slaves to their passions, and added, 'if we conquered them, we could easily overcome the slavery under foreigners or our own conquerors'.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

I CANNOT DIE. BY KRISHAN CHANDAR. (TRANSLATED BY K. AHMAD ABBAS). Published by Kutub, The Indo-Foreign Publishers, Windy Hall Lane, Bombay 5. Pp. 25. Price Rs. 2-4.

The Bengal famine is past, but not so its horrors. They are still there and, like a nightmare, they still haunt the mind. The wounds the famine has left on the people of Bengal cannot and will not heal up soon, and even when they heal up, life will not be the same for them. The people are struck low, are down on their faces, completely prostrate, completely exhausted, and are panting and are trying to regain breath, and it will be generations before they are up on their feet again. Economically and socially they are shattered, morally they are degraded, and politically they are dead. Of course things have improved a lot during the past one year, but still the problem for them is to *live*—only to live, and that is all that they care for and that is all that fills their minds. It is immaterial to them that the European war is ended and Hitlerite Germany is crushed and dead. It is even immaterial to them that the ministry, largely responsible for the famine and for all they have suffered from, has fallen, and there is, instead, the Section 93 rule in Bengal. What is material to them is if they can have more to eat and more to wear, if any measures are going to be taken to fight the rising death-rolls among them due to epidemics, if anything is going to be done to stamp out the many evils that beset their lives now following on the famine. They don't want to know and don't care to know what may happen outside their narrow little individual lives or the

lives of their families. If they want to know anything at all, they want to know if there is any power on earth (or in heaven) that can check the corruption and the greed and the rocketeering which surround them now and are about to choke them to death.

So this is the tale Bengal has to tell and it is the most moving, most pathetic tale that has ever been told anywhere and at any time. So many books have recently been published with the famine as the background and Bengal's sufferings as the theme, and how powerfully and vividly some of them depict the picture, too! But more books can be added and yet more, and still the tale may not be fully told and the picture may not be clear and complete. Of the books so far published on the subject, one most remarkable—remarkable in many ways—is *Ann Data* by Krishan Chandar. It is a long short story written in Urdu, and it is a story that can rank among the best written in any language. Superb in technique, vivid and penetrating in delineation, and with a vein of subtle, stinging satire running all through, it is a masterpiece of which any country can be proud.

The story is complete in three parts, each almost a story by itself; but the parts are closely knit together, and together they form a composite whole. But what is it the story tells in particular? Does it tell anything new? Of course it does not. It tells what so many other stories have told. It tells of the bungling of the bureaucracy, of its exasperating callousness in spite of the approaching calamity, of corruption, of uncontrolled prices, of hoarding, of the tricky blood-sucking profiteers,

of the confusion of the people and their utter helplessness—and, above all, of death—death stalking everywhere, in every village, in most homes, snatching away their dearest, sometimes completely wiping them out. It gives the same ghastly picture of hungry, famished people of the country-side trekking towards Calcutta in the mad hope that they may get some relief out of its plenty, but before reaching it, dying on the way, dying from sheer exhaustion, from hunger, from disease, and dying like cattle, like insects, by thousands, by tens of thousands. And the picture does not change when they reach Calcutta, for there they meet nothing but the much too familiar supercilious contempt of the privileged for the under dog, or, worse still, they meet the wily loathsome traffickers in women who, anxious to make gains out of the young flesh of their sisters and wives and daughters, induce them to barter away those dear ones for a morsel of food.

So this is the picture Krishan Chandar presents through his story, and it is the ablest, the most vivid picture so far drawn of Bengal's sufferings. Congratulations to him and to his translator, Abbas, who has done his job exceptionally well. Abbas has changed the title into 'I cannot die', and that is good, for it is more appropriate, for the spirit of man can never die; and it shall not die so long as the present state of affairs continues, so long as the under dog is treated as he is now, and he is not given a chance to play his role in the re-shaping of the world, and the privileged few go on ruling and, as inevitably as ever, bungling. Both the author and the translator are talented, and both are young and full of promise, and they have yet much to give to the country and to the world and they must give it. Once again congratulations to them.

SHORT STORIES. (INTERNATIONAL SERIES NOS. 1 AND 2.) *Published by International Book House, Ltd., Bombay. Pp. 212 and 171. Price Rs. 3-8 each.*

In these handy and excellently got-up volumes are presented select stories written by authors representing a wide variety of nationalities—authors, some of whom are well known and some obscure. Five more such volumes are scheduled to follow to complete the series.

It is good the publishers have undertaken the publication of such a series, for in these days when short stories are the craze, a collection of stories like this is bound to prove immensely helpful to the young litterateurs of our country. But more than this, there is the joy of having such an array of great masters brought together within a narrow compass, and it is a joy too great to be missed. And it will not do to forget that this is the first time such a joy is being made available to the Indian reading public. The publishers do indeed deserve much commendation.

It is not claimed by the publishers that their selection will satisfy all tastes. It will not, for it cannot. It represents, as it must, only their own tastes, which they are only too conscious others may not share. It is, therefore, no use

quarrelling about the selection, though there is really much room for it. But this need not deter one from making one criticism: that is about the insertion of poems here and there. These, in what purports to be a collection of short stories are out of place. If the excuse is made that otherwise some authors would have gone unrepresented, even then their inclusion would not seem justifiable.

There are a few galling printing mistakes in the volumes. These must at any rate be removed in the second edition.

EDUCATION, POLITICS, AND WAR. By S. RADHAKRISHNAN. *Published by International Book Service, Poona 4. Pp. 208. Price Rs. 5.*

Sir Radhakrishnan has spared no pains in rightly interpreting the cultural heritage of India to other nations. And in most of his speeches delivered in India, he has repeatedly drawn the attention of Indians to the right and healthy type of nationalism at a time when the tendency to imitate foreign doctrines and ideologies is growing. The illuminating speeches of Sir Radhakrishnan, collected together in this volume, cover a wide range of interesting subjects such as education, religion, politics, social service, Indian culture, communal amity, and war. This collection also includes statements to the press issued by him. These speeches and statements were made at different times during the years 1938-44, and reveal the sound and liberal views of this reputed patriot-philosopher on the burning problems of the day. The war and peace aims of the warring nations are critically analysed, and a stirring call made for the grant of self-determination to Indians and the establishment of a federation of free nations. Some of the remarkable speeches are: 'Religion and Politics', 'Federation of Free Nations', 'Education and Spiritual Freedom', 'Purpose of Education', 'India's Heritage', and 'Religion and Social Service'.

GANDHIJI'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE GOVERNMENT (1942-44). *Published by the Navajivan Publishing House, Kalapur, Ahmedabad. Pp. xxviii+308. Price Rs. 2-8.*

In the book under review is published the entire correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and the Government of Bombay, the Viceroy, and the Central Government, during the period August 1942—July 1944, together with some other miscellaneous correspondence. It is well known that during the greater part of this period, Gandhiji was in detention, and, therefore, these letters could not be published in the press at the time they were written. They have now been made available to the public in authentic form, and presented in separate well arranged sections. The correspondence is divided into nine sections for convenient understanding of the readers, and Gandhiji has written a short foreward. The notable portions of the correspondence are sections II and V—the former consisting of correspondence with the Government of India relating to the August disturbances, and in connection with Gandhiji's fast in detention; the latter section covering the corres-

pondence on and Gandhiji's reply to the charges contained in the Government publication 'Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances 1942-43'.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION FOR 1943. *Published by the United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. Pp. 609. Price \$ 2.*

We have received the *Report of the Smithsonian Institution of the United States for the year 1943*, and are glad to note that the useful and essential activities of the Institution have been maintained, though many of the research and exploration projects have had to be discontinued owing to war-time conditions. Mention may be made of the following contributions reproduced in this volume. 'The Sea as a Storehouse' by E. F. Armstrong; 'Dangerous Reptiles' by Doris M. Cochran; 'The Planks of China and Their Usefulness to Man' by Egbert H. Walker; 'Some Food Problems in War Time' by George R. Cowgill; and 'Some Biological Effects of Solar Radiation' by Brian O'Brien. There are numerous illustrative plants and drawings, and the printing and get-up of the volume are excellent.

BENGALI

BHAKTA MANOMOHAN. *Published by Udbodhan Karyalaya, Baghbazar, Calcutta. Pp. 276. Price Re. 1-12.*

Manomohan was one of the foremost among Sri Ramakrishna's lay disciples. Like many others of his age he had turned an agnostic under the spell of Western education and had learnt to pooh-pooh the traditional beliefs of his religion. But when he came to know Sri Ramakrishna, a great change came over him, as did over others who were even greater agnostics than he. In Sri Ramakrishna he saw the truth of those beliefs so palpably demonstrated that he found it impossible not to accept them. Even to his doubting mind, confirmed in agnosticism, Sri Ramakrishna's spell proved irresistible, for it was the spell of truth itself. He accepted Sri Ramakrishna whole-heartedly, unreservedly. And once his doubts were cleared and faith was established Manomohan's spiritual progress was phenomenal. Apart from Sri Ramakrishna, two other factors helped most in this progress: his own hankering after spiritual experience and the encouragement and example of his mother—the noblest mother imaginable. Although not neglectful of his worldly duties for Sri Ramakrishna himself would not allow such a thing—he was completely, to the uttermost degree, given to the quest of God. One is amazed to see how, in spite of all the demands of worldly

life, he could have done so. Indeed, the story of this simple soul—his struggles and ultimate success—must prove immensely helpful to those seekers of God who are similarly placed. The dominant notes of his life were faith and fervour, and these were so strong in him that even the most prejudiced reader is bound to be impressed. In later years Manomohan was all the time busy teaching and guiding others. By his simple but stirring words he drew hundreds and they derived much inspiration and help from him. It is wonderful how the magic touch of Sri Ramakrishna transformed this one-time agnostic into a saint, loved and respected by many.

As side-lights the book presents many interesting and intimate details about the other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Virajananda Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Mission, who knew Manomohan personally, has contributed a foreword and this has greatly enhanced the value of the book.

DHAMMAPADA. BY BHIKSHU SILABHADRA. *Published by Mahabodhi Society, 4/A, College Square, Calcutta. Pp. 103 Price 8 As.*

The *Dhammapada* is a concise and consolidated account of Buddhist doctrine and practice. Bhikshu Silabhadra has done a distinct service to the cause of the propagation, in Bengal, of the noble ideas contained in the sublime book by giving the Pali text (in Bengali characters) together with a readable and accurate translation in Bengali. The printing and get-up are good. The price is only eight annas and every religious-minded Bengalee ought to have a copy of it in his private library.

SANSKRIT—ENGLISH

SONGS DIVINE. BY SWAMI ABHEDANANDA. *Published by Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 19B, Raja Rajkrishna Street, Calcutta. Pp. 118+xx. Price Rs. 2.*

The book under review contains a collection of Sanskrit hymns composed by Swami Abhedananda, along with the English translation in verse by P. Seshadri Aiyer of Travancore University. The hymns are addressed to Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi, and reveal the inner message of their teachings. Some *upanishadic* prayers, *mantras*, and hymns are also included in this collection, together with the English rendering of these Vedic chants by Swami Abhedananda. This neatly printed book of hymns and prayers will be of much help to devoted spiritual aspirants. There is a glossary of Sanskrit terms. Musical notations of two hymns set to music by the Swami are also given.

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA. ASANSOL

REPORT FOR 1939-44

The activities of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Asansol, fall under the following three main heads:—

(1) *Religious and Cultural*: About 100 religious classes were held every year (except in 1943) during the period under review, the maximum being 300 in 1939. As usual some public lectures were organized every year, and birthday anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna and other saints were celebrated. Since 1940 Durga Puja, Kali Puja, and Sarasvati Puja were also duly observed, and on these occasions the local people took great interest.

(2) *Philanthropic*: The Ashrama conducts a charitable (homoeopathic) outdoor dispensary for rendering medical aid to the local people. A temporary medical relief centre, started in 1944, supplied free medicine to 1768 sufferers. Blankets and chuddars were distributed free to the poor of the locality in 1944. A free kitchen, catering to about 15,000 destitutes, was run on the Ashrama premises for six months, in 1943, under the patronage of the local Rotary Club.

(3) *Educational*: A day-school, which was started in 1939, has gradually developed into a high English school. It has recently been affiliated to the Calcutta University. A small students' home, for deserving boys, is maintained by the Ashrama, consisting of paying and free boarders. There is a library and a reading-room for the use of the public.

The urgent needs of the Ashrama are:—
(1) Rs. 30,000' for the construction of a separate building for the Ashrama inmates and for housing the shrine, thus setting apart the entire existing building for the high school. (2) A kitchen block is a great necessity, the estimated cost of which is Rs. 10,000/-.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, NARAYANGANJ

REPORT FOR 1941-43

We give below a short account of the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission, Narayanganj (Dacca), during the years 1941-43, including the distress relief work which was admirably organized by that Centre of the Mission during April 1943—September 1944. Its general activities fall under the following three heads:—

Educational: A students' home, started in 1940, continued to impart physical, moral, and spiritual training to a number of boarders, paying and free. There were 36, 26, and 33 students respectively at the end of each of the three years under review. The numbers of free students during the same period were 5, 3, and 2 respectively. In the Matri-

culatation Examination during the three years, 8 students appeared of whom 7 came out successful, 2 being placed in the first division. The boys were encouraged to take physical exercise and play games regularly. They were taken on excursions to several places. Debates and discussions were held for the intellectual development of the boys. The construction of a permanent building for the students' home was completed in 1941. The Mission library and reading-room were largely and profitably used by the public.

Religious: Scriptural classes were held in the Ashrama twice a week. Several public lectures were organized during the years under review in Narayanganj and other neighbouring places. Birthday anniversaries of saints and prophets were celebrated, and the Durga Puja was performed every year.

Charitable: The homoeopathic charitable dispensary treated 6,746 cases in 1941, 8,065 cases in 1942, and 9,248 cases in 1943. Several poor families were given rice doles, and pecuniary help was given to 125 needy persons.

Distress Relief: During the period of acute distress in Bengal, the Mission accepted the offer of the government to sell rice at controlled rates to the public who came from remote places to purchase rice. As the situation grew worse, free distribution of rice, dal, cloth, and blankets was undertaken as part of the general scheme of relief work organized and supervised by the Headquarters of the Mission. Up to 30th Sept. 1944, a total quantity of 5,695 mds. 29 srs. of rice was distributed among 152,426 recipients, and 5,048 pieces of cloth and blankets were distributed.

The present needs of this Centre are funds for the acquisition of land and construction of buildings for the start of an allopathic department to offer greater and up-to-date medical aid to the people of the locality.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASADAN, HOWRAH

REPORT FOR 1941-44

The activities of the Ramakrishna Mission Sevasadan, Salkia, Howrah, for the years 1941-44, may be brought under the following heads:—

Philanthropic: Regular monthly doles of rice and help in cash were given to 18 families in 1941, 17 families in 1942, 14 families in 1943, and 11 families in 1944. Besides these, blankets and cloth were distributed to 72 persons during the period under review.

The Centre organized relief work (in co-operation with other relief organizations) in Howrah during the period of famine and distress in Bengal in 1943 and 1944. About 500 mds. of rice and over 1000 pieces of cloth were distributed, and food centres for about 800 persons were organized.

The charitable dispensary, run by the Sevāsadan, treated 49,796 cases in 1941, 41,581 cases in 1942, 35,017 cases in 1943, and 43,738 in 1944.

Educational: The Sevāsadan conducts a free students' home for school and college students, which accommodated 16, 13, 5, and 7 students respectively, in the four years under review. As the buildings of the students' home are in a dilapidated condition, this activity has had to be suspended till suitable accommodation becomes available.

The library and reading-room were well utilized by the students and the public.

Religious: Owing to want of suitable accommodation the weekly scriptural classes and discourses have had to be suspended. However, the birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna, and some Hindu festivals like Durga Puja and Sarasvati Puja were celebrated each year.

Needs: A sum of at least Rs. 20,000/- is required for renovating the Sevāsadan buildings, and erecting new buildings for the dispensary and the students' home.

RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION, BANKURA REPORT FOR 1944

Religious: During the year under report, 12 lectures and 275 religious classes were held. Birthday celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna and other saints, as well as some Hindu festivals were observed. A new temple of Sri Ramakrishna has been completed.

Educational: There were 14 students in the homoeopathic school attached to the Mission dispensary, and the Saradananda Students' Home had 11 students.

The newly started free Primary School at Ramharipur had 55 students on the rolls. The library and reading-room with 1,323 books and 26 magazines were regularly utilized by the students and the public.

Philanthropic: The total number of cases treated in the charitable dispensary during the year was 81,860, of which 27,073 were new cases. The number of indoor cases was 66.

Relief work was carried on in 65 villages during the year. Over 600 mds. of rice, and about 5000 pieces of cloth and 1000 blankets were distributed,

together with a large quantity of dal, milk, biscuits, and barley. Medical relief was also organized, and quinine and multi-vitamin tablets were distributed.

The total income of the Mission centre for the year under report was Rs. 4,762-7-6, and the total expenditure was Rs. 3,904-14-9.

VEDANTA SOCIETY, PORTLAND

The work of the Vedanta Society of Portland, Oregon, U.S.A., has progressed steadily during the past year, despite the war-time handicaps. Swami Devatmananda spoke twice every Sunday, morning and evening. He also held the two week-day classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, when he gave discourses on the Gita and the *Vivekachudamani* respectively.

The following special events of the year were duly observed in regular succession. Worship of the Goddess Durga for three days, morning and evening; anniversary celebration; worship of the Goddess Kali; Christmas; New Year's Eve; birthday anniversaries of Swami Vivekananda, Holy Mother, Swami Brahmananda, Swami Saradananda, Swami Shivananda, Sri Ramakrishna, and Lord Buddha; and the Easter Sunrise Service at the Ashrama. The added feature of the year's activities under review, was a series of special worships, morning and evening, Swami Devatmananda conducted in the shrine, on the occasions of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and others. These occasions were a constant source of inspiration to a group of devotees that attended them. Also, the Society was happy to hold the annual birthday Dinners in spite of the food rationing and wartime difficulties of various sorts due to which the work at the Ashrama had been much hampered.

VEDANTA SOCIETY, SAN FRANCISCO

The programme of work of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco, for the month of April 1945, has reached us. The Swami-in-charge delivered nine bi-weekly lectures during the month. Some of the subjects chosen were: 'Spiritualizing Everyday Life', 'Yoga—Mystery or Science?' 'Divine Will, Free Will, and Karma', and 'How to Practise Detachment'.