

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

## TALKS WITH SWAMI VIJNANANANDA

Sunday, 13 December 1925. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Allahabad. Brahmachari Mahavirchaitanya, Swami Vasishthananda, Haren Babu, Naren Babu, Jagat Babu, Mr. Raja Rao and others are present.

Swami Vijnanananda expressed his eagerness to attend the ensuing session of the Indian National Congress at Cawnpore, saying, ‘I shall go there after my return from the Belur Math.’ He instructed his attendant to write to Bhupen Babu of Cawnpore and enquire if he could arrange for his short stay there. Then he said, ‘I am getting old. If I do not see one annual session of the Congress, what shall I say when God will ask me about it after death?’

‘Is the Congress session such an important function?’ asked a devotee present.

Swami: Certainly so. Where so many people assemble for a noble cause, be sure, God is worshipped there. To work in an organized way is as good as to worship God. Swamiji never condemned the Congress. Whatever it may be otherwise, it always thinks of the country’s welfare. Wherever men are united for a good cause, verily there

is manifestation of divine power. It seems to me that our country will rise once again. One after another how many countries have risen to power: China, Japan, and America are all awakened. Now India’s turn is at hand by the cyclic motion of world circumstances. The welfare of a nation depends on every one of its nationals. Every Indian must make himself worthy of India’s leadership, i. e. he must be good charactered, self-sacrificing, pure-souled and public-spirited. We have to love our countrymen sincerely. Each one of us should learn to do such work as benefits many. If they say that such and such a person was a benefactor of the public it is to be understood that whatever the man may otherwise be, his life has been somewhat successful. With self-control one has to think of God. It is He who provides us with necessary strength. The outer work is done by Him and the inner work by ourselves; just as the work of our family is done by ourselves individually and the social service jointly by all. It is ridiculous to work for others if one has not enough strength. It is like inviting three hundred people for a

banquet when there is nothing in the store even to feed three. Just think, how laughable will it be in such a case. By similar actions public faith is shaken. The downfall of our country is due to the cause that people used to give harmful advice to others in the name of religion. Hence, people lost their faith in religion. The public workers should be sincere, truthful, and pure. As Christ had no weapons and was crucified for the sake of truth, so we shall have to be. But India is destined to arise and awake in the near future. India's sun of glory will rise again with unprecedented effulgence.

All vitalizing and purifying currents proceed from the sun and moon. Our scripture too says: 'Meditate in the centre of the solar disc on Lord Narayana of lustrous form holding conch, disc, mace, and lotus in his hands, and adorned with a crown, ear-ring, crest-jewel etc.' This is how Lord Narayana is to be meditated upon in the sun. The conch signifies creative power, the primeval sound, hallelujah (or halleluiah) or Omkar. The disk stands for the law of evolution, mace for controlling powers, and the lotus for creation. These are esoteric meanings.

Similarly, Madya, Matsya, Mamsa, Maithuna and Mudra, the five requisites of Tantric practices beginning with the Sanskrit letter 'ma' have esoteric meanings. Madya is wine, which signifies intoxicated mood in the meditation of God. Sri Ramaprasad, the Shakta Saint of Bengal, rightly sings, 'I do not drink wine; but I drink divine nectar while chanting, "Victory to Kali".' Mamsa is meat signifying the bliss that accrues from the control of the palate. Matsya is fish symbolizing the power-current that rises upwards through the subtle nerves named Ida, Pingala, and Sushumna. Mudra is the symbol of the joy that is derived from sense-control. Maithuna stands for the union of individual self with the cosmic self.

In the same way car-festival and bath-festival of Lord Jagannath at Puri have the

following spiritual significations: Car-festival signifies that this body of ours is a chariot ridden by Self. He who places God in the heart and thus spiritualizes life enjoys the bliss of the real car-festival. The *Katha Upanishad* says that the body is the chariot and the Self seated in it is the charioteer. The bath-festival stands for bathing oneself with the best and purest ideas. The Avarana Devatas have also esoteric meanings. Do you know what are they? They are umbraic and penumbraic deities, reflected deities. As a light has two kinds of shadows, one called 'umbra' and the other 'penumbra'; so Lord Vishnu with His consort, goddess Lakshmi, is the luminous deity, and Indra and other gods, as well as Narada and other devotees are respectively umbraic and penumbraic deities. Similarly with Radha and Krishna and their Sakhis.

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Call on Sri Ramakrishna mentally with the whole heart. And then dedicate your life at his feet. That is what is required. He will ordain what is good for us. He will do his work in mysterious ways. Can we do good to anybody? The Master is among the first-class souls, world's immortals, who alone fully know the Divine Mother. They know, whatever happens is according to the Almighty will of the Mother. Where the Mother wills, the impossible becomes possible in the twinkling of an eye.

Swami Vivekananda and others may be classed among the second-class souls of the world who are born to broadcast the great ideas of the first-class souls.

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To call on Sri Ramakrishna is to aim at emulating some of his excellences. One imbibes the attributes of one of whom one thinks constantly. According to the Gita one becomes what one meditates upon. The first attribute of God is lordliness. By thinking of Him, be the lord of your senses i. e. have full control over them. We have to be the Lords of ourselves. Secondly, every

work, however great, is done by the mere wish of God. So whatever we wish to do should be done at any cost. Thirdly, God's love; like Him we have to love one and all and wish well of them. Thus the more one possesses the attributes of the Master the more truly one becomes like him.

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The Master used to speak highly of the oratorical powers of Keshab Chandra. But when Keshab was told that Krishnaprasanna Sen was also a good orator he did not like the remark. I noticed a peculiarity of Swamiji's lectures. I observed clearly many a time that when he used to deliver a lecture, spiritual power used to course from the lower to the higher parts of his body. He himself was astonished to find that he had become a changed man for the time being. And the lecture he delivered used to touch the hearts of the audience. He had wonderful powers. People in his august presence felt insignificant. I saw with my own eyes at Belur Math that he was seated in the chair and his Western

disciples including some big Englishmen sat cross-legged around him on the floor and looked at him with gaping mouths in order to hear some inspired words from him. What a tremendous force his words had! That is why great work is being done according to his ideas and people are drawing inspiration from them.

\* \* \*

You have to work out your own salvation. None can do it for you. Others may help or inspire you to some extent. That's all. You are your best well-wisher. Practise continuous remembrance of God. This enables the mind to soar higher and higher in the realm of the spirit. Rightly saint Tulsidas says, 'He who repeats the name of God with a rosary is ignorant and he who does so with the fingers is learned. But he who continues constant repetition through the mind is wise.'

This I say to all, 'Don't be idle.' The idle brain is the devil's workshop. All work should be done with a will. At the same time one must not have any hankering for their results.

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## RELIGION AND RIOTS AND OUR DUTY

BY THE EDITOR

### I

There is a general idea abroad that religion is a purely personal relation between man and his Maker, a matter to be kept confined to the chapel, or the church, or the cloister. It is contended that religion should be kept apart from politics, that secular and sacred form two air-tight compartments mutually exclusive of each other, and that all the ills of nations are due to the mixing up of religion with politics and other secular departments of life. Religion is considered now-a-days a matter for Sanyasis, Padres,

or Moulvis and to be confined to its proper place in the forest hermitages and temples, churches, and mosques. The Hindu Shastras, the Bible, the Koran and other sacred books are for people in their declining years who would like to soothe their approaching fear of death with promises of a future life in another world, for they have not the courage to face the observed fact that extinction is the final stage of all organisms including man, and would fain cling to the nebulous ideas of a heaven elsewhere—ideas which the imaginations of primitive peoples formed as

a psychical escape from misery and death but which modern science has exploded, so to say, with its bombs of reasoning and analysis.

In spite, however, of all our vaunted scientific advancement, reason, and secular attempts to decry religion, and confine it to the dark recesses of the human mind, or the dingy altars of temples, mosques, and churches, religion comes popping up every time into our mental field and refuses to be thrust into the limbo of oblivion, but demands its rightful place in our lives. For, however much we try to build on foundations other than spiritual, we can never attain that security, that freedom from fear and want which the human heart craves at all times and places. No atom bomb can ever give us security from old age, disease, and death, for the atom bombs that will destroy these enemies of men are spiritual in their nature, and no amount of reliance on physical force can ever save us from these agents of decay inherent in the physical constitution of man. For change is in the very nature of this world of forms, and only in the spirit is there changelessness.

## II

In a sense it is true that religion is primarily a matter between the creature and his Creator. For the essence of religion is the attempt of the individual to realize the Absolute, to merge in it and be freed from all limitations. The idea of God stands for this infinite perfect Being reaching Whom all the troubles of the creature are transcended. The individual has to come by his own efforts face to face with the infinite. No intermediary can do this work for him.

But social institutions as well as political and economic factors are also potent influences in the life of the individual. Though the individual is the architect of his own fate in the final analysis, yet the world around him does exert an uplifting or degrading effect upon his character, as surely as the climatic factors of wind, water, and sun affect the physical health of a man.

In spite of all efforts to the contrary no man can live a life unto himself. The animal in man is refined and kept in check by the tradition and culture of the society he is born into. Again, just as a plant grows well in its own natural habitat, a human being also grows to the height of the possibilities of his nature in the midst of his family and society that surround him.

It is in this sense that we conclude that religion is not a merely private or individual thing, but a force for good that envelopes the life of all the individuals that owe adherence to a society and its culture. It is in this sense that a Christian feels kinship with a Christian, a Muslim with a Muslim, and a Hindu with a Hindu.

Congregational prayers, processions, and worship are the outward manifestations of this inward spiritual kinship which individuals in a society feel for one another. Religion, therefore, is not merely a private matter of the individual, but is one of the most publicly recognized forces in cementing men together in fellowship and a common adventure in the supreme pursuit of all pursuits, the search for the kingdom of God. As in every other field of life so in the field of religion also men and women can help and sustain one another in a common endeavour. To confine religion to a place in the private life of the individual only is, under the circumstances, unwarranted and a disservice to the best interest of mankind itself. The Shastras are useless if they cannot help and guide men in all states and conditions of life.

## III

We cannot, as a consequence, exclude religion from affecting our secular life, whether social, economic, or political, no more than we can exclude politics from affecting economics or vice versa.

Shall we, then, introduce theocracy in our world? We emphatically answer, no. It is not necessary to have a theocratic state for people to have a common religious life. Man-

kind has long ago outgrown the days when the religious group was coterminous with the political group. In modern times there is not a single country, perhaps where there are not groups of people professing different creeds and following different forms of worship. Roman Catholics and Protestants have learnt through the bitter and bloody experience of centuries that their religious differences need not be a bar to their allegiance to a common body-politic. Hindus and Mussalmans in India also learnt through centuries of mutual throat-cutting that they could live together under a ruler like Akbar or Sher Shah, not to speak of the innumerable petty rajahs and nawabs whose principalities are scattered over the length and breadth of this ancient land of India. Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Jews and followers of practically every other variety of religion are found scattered here, and all were living for long, long centuries side by side under the same political ruler or State.

People professing differing religions can and must exist side by side in every modern State.

The attempts, therefore, to create a purely or predominantly Muslim State in Pakistan or a purely Hindu one in the rest of India are reactionary and retrogressive and can be supported only by the enemies of India and Pakistan.

On a dispassionate analysis the interests, temporary or permanent, of neither the Muslim religion, nor the Hindu religion nor the Sikh religion are protected by the creation of Pakistan and the consequent division of India.

Rather, the political interest of foreign powers who would prefer to prevent the rise to power of a rejuvenated India are served admirably by the creation of Pakistan in accordance with the requirements of the principle of the International Balance of Power. The ignorance of the masses in India and their mutual differences, specially religious, have been skilfully manipulated

towards this end.

The present quarrels between Muslims and Hindus should not, therefore, be ascribed to religious differences but to the machinations of the enemies of Islam and Hinduism using as tools the short-sighted leaders of these communities.

#### IV

The shedding of innocent blood calls for blood in retaliation, and so we find the great power of religion over the human heart being used to rend peoples further apart rather than to unite them in larger groups in a common brotherhood.

We are witnessing such a horrid tragedy in our midst today and our hearts are wrung in sorrow. What is the way out of this morass of madness and murder?

There are two ways possible. One is the annihilation of Hindus in Pakistan or Muslims in India, or their evacuation into India or Pakistan, and the creation of two mainly Hindu and Muslim States. That is, as Mahatma Gandhi has pointed out, the way to national perdition, national slavery, and eternal misery for both. Leaders in India, we mean responsible and enlightened leaders, have recognized this fact and are trying their best to act on this problem freeing themselves as far as possible from the blinding influence of the hot waves of mass murder and rapine. There are signs that some Pakistan leaders are also becoming alive to the ultimate realities of the situation.

The second way is the way of religion, of civilized human beings, of common sense, and the one conducive to common welfare politically, economically and otherwise, and that is to settle mutual differences in a friendly and peaceful way.

It is the way of religion because neither Hinduism nor Islam advocates or condones the barbarous murder of innocent masses of men, women, and children. False and wicked followers of Hinduism and Islam are they who advocate such diabolical massacres, and they deserve to be wiped out of the face of the

fair earth which they are disfiguring by their devilish presence.

It is the way of civilized human beings, for none but brutes masquerading in the form of human beings will advocate the slaughter of innocents and the looting of their property.

It is the way of common sense, for blind indeed are those fools who imagine that so many millions of Hindus in Pakistan, or Muslims in India can be wiped out of existence, and who imagine that they can establish purely theocratic states. Nor is it possible to destroy the various forms of religion. Swami Vivekananda said at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 :

If any one here hopes that this unity (of all religions) will come by the triumph of any one of the religions and the destruction of the others, to him I say: 'Brother yours is an impossible hope.' . . .

. . . 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.

If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others I pity him from the bottom of my heart. . . .

Mahatma Gandhi has condemned time and again in no uncertain terms this madness which would use religious differences for the most irreligious ends, and has exhorted people to eschew religious hatred. Quoting a verse from the Sikh scriptures he said: 'The verse affirms that man calls God by many names—Rama, Khuda, etc. Some go on pilgrimage and bathe in a sacred river; others go to Mecca, some worship Him in temples, others in mosques; some just bow their heads in reverence; some read the Vedas, others the Koran; some dress in blue, others in white; some call themselves Hindus, others Muslims. Nanak says that he who truly follows God's law knows his secret. This teaching was universal in

Hinduism.' Thus he exhorts the Hindus day in and day out, not to depart from the Sanatana Dharma.

Islam means 'peace' and Hinduism stands for Ahimsa as the greatest Dharma. If, therefore, Hindus and Muslims are wise they will see that their religions tell them correctly the path to their common welfare. Otherwise, as Pandit Nehru pointed out in a public speech recently, moral, economic, and political disaster faces both Pakistan and India. To quote Pandit Nehru :

Doors of looting and plundering will become difficult to close if once they have been left open. Taste of loot was hard to go. From areas in the West Punjab from where non-Muslims had been evacuated, Muslims were now looting members of their own community. Similar things had taken place in Delhi when rioting started here.

Consequences of rioting were much more serious than the people could imagine. A large number of persons had lost their lives in the disturbances, but a much larger number would die of famine and disease which were the direct outcome of breaking the peace of the country.

Politically also, India had lost much in prestige in the councils of the world, said Nehru, because of the riots.

## V

Now, it is true that the Muslim League had been preaching a gospel of hate, and ignorant and fanatical Muslims had been used as tools in the nefarious game of power-politics. They had sown the wind of communal hatred, but the whole of India including Pakistan has to reap the whirlwind. There is some evidence that the Muslim leaders are understanding the evil consequences of their recent hymns of hatred. There is hope that this present madness of private revenge and mass murder and anarchy will give place to ordered government in West Punjab which, according to the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore, which is edited by a Britisher, 'is being ruled not by Khan Iftikhar Husain Khan of Mamdot and his colleagues but by police constables and goondas. . . . At the moment the West Punjab Ministers are doing little in public to allay disorder or to rehabilitate

morale which is at the lowest ebb in recent history. Our advice to them would be to govern or get out—except that the political horizon is at the moment almost bare of pretenders to their portfolios who offer hopes of better things.’ Mr Suhrawardy of the Muslim League understands the situation perhaps more clearly than other Muslim leaders in Pakistan, and Pakistani Mussalmans should follow his lead if Pakistan is to be saved.

Hindus, also, have a great duty if they are to be true to their religion, culture, and civilization. They must refuse to be maddened into committing any acts unworthy of their Dharma. It is their Dharma to protect all the people, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and all others who live in India and are loyal citizens of the State. It is against the Sanatana Dharma to take vengeance indiscriminately on the minorities for the atrocities committed on Hindus in Pakistan. It may be heart-rending that we are unable to succour the victims of the unfortunate mass fury that has been invoked in certain parts of the country. But the surest, safest, and quickest way of succouring the oppressed Hindus is by our just treatment of all minorities in India, and by our refusing to make India a theocratic State whatever the provocation. Cool heads and strong hands in India will ensure order here, and Pakistan will certainly follow suit, once the Muslim leaders there are able to gain administrative control.

Even if the worst happens and Pakistan refuses to do justice to the minorities there, the path of Dharma lies not in victimizing the innocent minorities in India. The true path is to carry the minorities in India with us in preventing any perpetuation of injustice in Pakistan. This has to be done by the Union of India as a whole. Our political leaders are showing the proper path in this matter. As Swami Vivekananda says, ‘It is a change of the soul itself for the better that will cure the evils of life. No

amount of force or government or legislative cruelty will change the conditions of a race, but it is spiritual culture and ethical culture alone that can change wrong racial tendencies for the better.’

It is all good that we should make ourselves physically strong and united so that we are not subjected to political slavery any more. For without political freedom it is very difficult for a nation to live up to its ideals of culture and civilization in the fullest measure. India, like every other State, must make itself strong and help in the prevention of aggression and injustice. In this imperfect world of ours there is still much necessity for the employment of force.

But India’s gift to the world must be of the truths of religion and philosophy, of wisdom and spirituality. In India alone has the truth that God is One, though He is called variously, been taught in all ages, thus binding together all men in a common brotherhood. ‘No civilization can grow unless, fanaticism, bloodshed, and brutality stop. No civilization can begin to lift up its head until we look charitably upon one another and the first step towards that much needed charity is to look charitably and kindly upon the religious convictions of others. Nay more, to understand that not only should we be charitable, but positively helpful to each other, however different our religious ideas and convictions may be . . . It is here in India that Hindus have built and are still building churches for Christians and mosques for Mohammedans. That is the thing to do. *In spite of their hatred, in spite of their brutality, in spite of their tyranny, in spite of the vile language they are given to uttering, we will and must go on building churches for the Christians and mosques for the Mohammedans until we conquer through love, until we have demonstrated to the world that love alone is the fittest thing to survive and not hatred, that it is gentleness that has the strength to live on and to fructify, and not mere brutality and*

*physical force.* (Swami Vivekananda).

In the present grave crisis when spiritual values are likely to be supplanted by material ones, when false ideas of reconciling fleshly vanities with the highest ideals are gaining ground, let us remind ourselves of what Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa says at the end of the Mahabharata in the four Shlokas which he taught to his own son, Shuka :

Matapitrisahasrani putradarashatani cha,

Samsareshvanubhutani yanti  
yasyanti chapare.

Shokasthanasahasrani Bhayasthana-  
shatani cha,

Divase Divase mudhamavishanti  
na panditam

Urdhvabahur viromeysa na cha  
kaschit srinoti me,

Dharmadarthascha kamascha sa  
kimartham na sevyate.

Na jatu kamanna bhayanna lobhat dharmam  
tyajet jivitasyapi hetoh,

Nityo dharmah sukhadukkhe tvanitye,  
Jivo nityo heturasya tvanityah.

‘Fathers and mothers and wives and children, the soul has had again and again in thousands of births. Such relations it is having now, and will have in the future.

‘Manifold objects of joy as well as fear agitate the mind of the deluded person, but not the man of wisdom.

‘With uplifted voice, I cry aloud—From Dharma flows the acquisition of wealth and the fulfilment of desires (Kama). Why don’t men follow Dharma? But mine is a cry in the wilderness.

‘Never, never should one give up Dharma through desire for enjoyment, or through greed, or through fear, not even if one’s life is threatened thereby. For Dharma is eternal; pleasure and pain are fleeting; the Jiva (soul) is eternal; the conditions of its existence are transient.’

This is called the Bharata Savitri, and let no true son of India fail to follow these ideas in life.

## TRANSFORMATION OF WESTERN CULTURE INTO A SPIRITUAL CULTURE \*

BY SWAMI NIKHILANANDA

Father Hunter Guthrie, in the course of his letter inviting me to address this distinguished gathering on ‘Transformation of Western Culture into a Spiritual Culture,’ remarks :

‘Western culture (aside from the teachings of its religious and some of its philosophical traditions) bears as one of its most characteristic features an emphasis on the power element. Its most generally accepted standards of success consist of

accumulation of material goods, the harnessing of material resources, and the control of political, military, and economic power. The religious and philosophical traditions have of course produced examples of saintliness, but these are the exceptions and not the rule. To date one of the most effective means of energizing the peoples of the West remains the hunger for domination and prestige.’

Furthermore, Father Guthrie has formulated the following problem for our discussion :

‘How can we retain the essential advantages of our civilization, including its

\* Address delivered at the Institute for Religious and Social Studies held under the auspices of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York.



scientific and material assets, and yet bring the quest for power and the tendency toward aggression under control? Can we re-orient men's minds through influencing their cultural environment from infancy so that they will find fulfilment in achievement, rather than in the credit and recognition of achievement?'

I have been asked to deal with the subject from my Hindu background and experience.

The problem is essentially philosophical and religious and should be treated accordingly. Therefore at the very outset I intend to state in brief some of the basic principles of Hindu Religion and philosophy regarding the nature of the universe, the Godhead which is the ultimate Reality, and the soul, which may help you to follow my discussion of the subject.

The universe is a projection of the Godhead, and a spiritual entity. The Godhead dwells in all created objects as life and consciousness, manifest or unmanifest. The difference between one creature and another lies in the difference in the degree of its manifestation. Without the Divine Spirit, names and forms become unsubstantial. All objects, animate and inanimate, are inter-related and interdependent. A conflict between different entities is the result of ignorance, which disappears as soon as a man knows Truth. Competition is the law of progress on the physical level, co-operation on a higher one. But man must follow the law of consecration on the highest level of spirituality. The unity of existence is a basic experience of the Hindu mystics.

The Godhead is spirit and consciousness. Transcending time, space, and the law of causality, it is present everywhere and pervades everything. It is the inmost soul of man. In a unique manner it manifests itself in the relative universe as the personal God of different religions: the Father in Heaven of the Christians, Jehovah of the Jews, Allah of the Moslems, and Shiva, Kali,

or Vishnu of the Hindus. Hinduism believes in the Divine Incarnation. God assumes a human form from time to time for the vindication of truth and righteousness. Both the personal God and the Divine Incarnation are effective symbols through which one can contemplate the Godhead. The pure in heart see God. The heart is rendered pure through the spiritual discipline of right activity, philosophical discrimination, motiveless love, and the control of the mind. All without exception will realize God. Different religions are suited to different tastes and temperaments and are pathways that lead to hill-top of God-consciousness.

The soul of man is also pure consciousness and is entirely different from the body and the mind. It is birthless, deathless, and changeless. In its essential nature it is untouched by good and evil, pain and pleasure, and the other pairs of opposites of the phenomenal world. That it appears to be a victim of life and death, hunger and thirst, pleasure and pain, as we see in our daily lives, is, according to Hinduism, the result of cosmic ignorance, called Maya. Under this influence the Infinite Spirit appears to be the finite man whom we know as Mr Brown or Mrs Thomas. As a patch of cloud consisting of inconsequential water vapour covers the luminous and fiery solar disc, immeasurably greater than itself, and then creates various fantastic figures in the sky, so also the inscrutable and insignificant Maya obscures the all-pervading Pure Consciousness and then projects the various forms which constitute the relative universe. Then the Pure Consciousness identifies itself with the individual material forms and thus itself becomes individualized. The individual souls are apparent and not real. It is they who are subject to the birth and death, pain and pleasure, good and evil, of the relative world. It is they again who perform good and bad actions, consider themselves virtuous or wicked, and experience reward and punishment here and hereafter. Even when the

apparent soul undergoes the varied experiences of the relative world, the real soul remains pure, free, and illumined. The idea of the doer and the action, virtue and vice, progression and regression, have nothing to do with the Pure Soul or the Godhead. These ideas appear only when the knowledge of the non-dual Godhead is enveloped by ignorance.

According to Hinduism, the life in the relative world is determined by the law of Karma, which is the law of causality. Good produces good, and evil produces evil. Evil action creates barriers around the soul and covers its light. Good action removes the barriers and reveals its innate purity. As the covering of the soul is removed, it hears the call of the eternal and becomes eager to regain its forgotten spiritual heritage. No soul is ever lost. Every soul in its journey to earth is provided, as it were, with a round-trip ticket. As perfection is not possible in one lifetime, Hinduism believes in the reincarnation of the soul. In every birth the soul adds a little more to its merit and, thus purified, at the end becomes as perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect.

The purpose of human action in any form or shape cannot be happiness. The happiness or misery resulting from action is momentary. No real achievement is possible in the outer world. Everything in time and space passes away. Pleasure is followed by pain; exaltation by boredom; good by evil; life by death. The so-called pleasure which a man believes himself to have derived from his work is also pain in another form. Whenever we analyse our suffering, we discover that it has its origin in our attachment to pleasure. The true purpose of action is to gain knowledge. From knowledge comes detachment; and from detachment, freedom. This freedom, transcending time and space, is the ultimate purpose of life. Things should be evaluated not from the standpoint of time but from the standpoint of eternity.

The cardinal truths preached by Hinduism

are the divinity of the soul, the unity of existence, the non-duality of the Godhead, and the harmony of religions.

The ambition for outer achievements and the yearning for inner life are the two primary motivations in the relative universe. These are the primordial impulses that have sustained the world from the very beginning. The world will cease to exist if either of them is eliminated. They are responsible for our action and contemplation. The active man and the contemplative man always exist. In a spiritual civilization the desire for action is controlled by the law of the inner life. Action ultimately paves the way for a life of contemplation. The man of contemplation and inner vision rules a spiritual society.

Hindu philosophers set forth four ideals of human endeavour. They are ethical perfection or right conduct, economic security, aesthetic enjoyment, and lastly the attainment of spiritual freedom. The first three must lead to the last; otherwise the soul's hunger will not be appeased, and it will not find peace. Without the spiritual ideal of freedom, economic security leads to unbridled greed, and the desire for aesthetic enjoyment to the pursuit of voluptuous pleasure. The Vedas say: 'What shall I do with wealth, which does not lead to immortality?' Ethical perfection is the foundation of the worldly life. But the Hindu ethics is not a device to remove the friction between the apparently incompatible elements of human society and thereby increase our material happiness. It is the natural corollary of the spiritual experience of the divinity of the soul and the unity of existence. To hurt or rob or kill others is to hurt or rob or kill oneself and God, who dwells in all beings. Contrariwise, to love others is to love oneself and God.

Life is regarded as a journey to the goal of God-consciousness. It is marked by four stages. During the first stage, covering the student period, one should practice daily devotions, keep both body and mind unspotted, lead an austere life, and give

one's undivided attention to the acquisition of knowledge. During the second stage one becomes a householder. Marriage is a religious duty. The children are the means by which relationship is maintained between the dead ancestors and the living generation, and the culture of the family and the race is perpetuated. As a householder, a man fulfils his duties to the family, the community, and the state, and finds satisfaction in outer achievements. Righteousness is the basis of the householder's life. Besides the practice of daily meditation and prayer, he should render service to his fellow men and treat animals with kindness. Soon he passes the meridian and enters the third stage of life. If he has fulfilled conscientiously the duties and responsibilities of the first and second stages, he now begins to discover that material achievement is not substantial enough. He finds greater satisfaction in the pursuit of the inner life than of the outer. If he carries over to the third stage the desires and activities of the second, when his body and mind have undergone their natural and legitimate transformation, he creates inner conflicts and becomes a victim of neurosis. The husband and wife during this stage lead a life of retirement and divert their minds from the acquisition of material gains to the contemplation of eternal verities. These contemplative souls serve a very useful purpose in society by being examples of self-restraint and inner serenity to impetuous youth. It is painful to see people in their declining years imitating the activities of the young, as if a person's mellowed growth and inner richness were a stigma. The desire of young men and women to learn everything through their own mistakes, and their unwillingness to approach their elders for advice, may enable them to 'get a kick out of life,' but entail according to the Hindu tradition, a needless waste of time and energy.

The last stage of life must be walked single file. We are born alone and must go

out alone. All material possessions including our dear body we shall leave behind. Only the inner experiences accompany the soul after death. The thought uppermost in the mind before death influences, according to Hindu thinkers, what happens to it afterwards. During this fourth stage the traveller lives a life of detachment and freedom. He has found as a result of the spiritual disciplines of the three earlier stages the right perspective of things and serenity of soul. He remains unruffled by the pleasure and pain and the praise and blame of the outside world. He maintains an attitude of holy indifference to the pairs of opposites. He has detached himself from exclusive loyalty to family, community, and country. The whole world is his home, and all living beings are his kith and kin. There is a Hindu religious injunction which says that a man should renounce his ego for the sake of the family, the family for the sake of the country, the country for the sake of the world, and everything for the sake of the soul. But a man during this stage of life need not be a recluse. He is a servant of humanity. He is also its teacher and monitor. By his life of inner beauty and wisdom, he demonstrates the illusoriness of the sense-perceived world and the ultimate reality of the Godhead. The embodiment of godliness, he renders the highest service to humanity through the imparting of spiritual wisdom. The gift of food, clothing, medicine, or even education is not enough. The sick man will be sick again; the hungry will again be hungry. Even the dead man raised from the grave dies again; but the wisdom of God destroys for ever all worldly miseries and enables one to attain to immortality. Men of inner vision and not of outer achievements are the unseen pillars of a spiritual culture. They bring harmony to the different members of society and keep unrighteousness under control. By their very presence, humanity becomes blessed and the earth sanctified.

According to Hindu philosophers, there

are found three elements in the psychological makeup of every embodied soul, known by the technical terms Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. Of these, Tamas is the quality of inertia in man, the spirit of stupor. Under its influence he derives satisfaction only from the enjoyments of the senses. He remains ignorant of higher values. Secondly, there is a restless element in him known as Rajas. It accounts for his desire for power, success, and adventure. Thirdly, there is the noble quality of Sattva, which fosters goodness and righteousness, calmness and compassion. It strikes the balance between the two extreme elements of inertia and restlessness, lassitude and ambition—the golden mean. These three elements by their interaction determine a man's character and disposition. In all human beings the three elements are present in varying degrees. According to Hindu philosophers, men under the influence of these elements lead a life of happiness or activity or inertia; but these elements belong to the relative world. One attains to freedom when one is detached from them. A free soul does not lead a non-active life, but watches with calm indifference the functioning of the three elements, regarding with an eye of equality, activity and non-activity, success and failure, praise and blame. Though the body and the mind may be active or idle, the soul of the free man is immersed in its inner calmness. This is a very exalted state in which one realizes non-activity in activity.

The Hindu psychologists would describe a restless worldly man as being under the power of Rajas, that is to say, as being endowed with an excess of that element which impels one to ceaseless activity for the fulfilment of material ambition. Regarding those who are controlled by an excess of Rajas and Tamas, the Bhagavad Gita says: 'Purity is not in them, nor good conduct, nor truth. Such men say: "The world is devoid of truth, without a moral basis, and without a God. It is brought about by the union of

male and female, and lust alone is its cause: what else?" Holding such a view, these lost souls of little understanding and fierce deeds rise as the enemies of the world for its destruction. Beset with innumerable cares, which will end only with death, looking on the gratification of desire as their highest goal, and feeling sure that this is all; bound by a hundred ties of hope, given up wholly to lust and wrath, they strive, by unjust means, to amass wealth for the satisfaction of their passions. "This I have gained today, and that longing I will fulfil. This wealth is mine, and that also shall be mine in future; that enemy I have slain, and others, too, I will slay. I am the lord of all; I enjoy; I am prosperous, mighty, and happy; I am rich; I am of high birth. Who else is equal to me? I will offer sacrifice, I will give, I will rejoice"—thus deluded by ignorance, bewildered by many fancies, entangled in the meshes of delusion, addicted to the gratification of lust, they fall a prey to loathsome calamities.'

Regarding the dire fate of these people, the same scripture says that they are deprived of divine light and wander from birth to birth in this relative world fraught with pain, disillusionment, and death. When this passion is uncontrolled by inner serenity, men are led by a power-mania to the desire for domination, which brings misery to themselves and suffering to the rest of the world.

But one must not give up activity. The Hindu scriptures warn against attachment to non-activity. The Lord Himself is ever active in His creation. Who could live, who could breathe, if the benign Lord did not sustain the universe by his unceasing activity? To give up work is to come under the influence of Tamas, which is the same as stagnation and death. The people of the West, with their peculiar psychological make-up, cannot give up work even if they wish to. Their very nature will make them active.

The laws of science and technology are

manifestations of the divine law. As the spiritual laws support the universe on the spiritual level, so also the laws of science support the material world. Like religion, philosophy, and art, science and technology also ultimately lead their devotees to the realization of the infinite. They widen and deepen our consciousness. In the Vedas it is stated that by means of science a man overcomes pain, suffering, and death on earth, and by means of super-science attains to immortality. Great spiritual truths have no doubt been discovered through contemplation in solitude, but their application in society has been made possible through science, engineering, and technology. The Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the unity of existence, and the divinity of the soul will remain empty words if people die of starvation, suffer from disease, and lead animal lives for want of education. Religion may speak of fellowship and love, but science shows the practical way to translate these abstract ideals into daily action. The enduring super-structure of the spiritual life of a nation cannot be built if it neglects the good health, economic security, and education of its members. The truly illumined soul sees God with eyes open, as well as with eyes closed. The sage first realizes God within his own heart and then sees Him in all beings, and devotes himself to their service. The One and the many are the two manifestations of the Supreme Reality. The laboratory, the farm-yard, the workshop, the bank, and the thoroughfare are as fit places of worship as the church, the temple, the cloister, and the cave. To hold is as sacred a trust as to quit. But the first and most important thing is to change the animal nature of man. That is possible not through science but only by means of self-control, contemplation, divine communion, and the other disciplines of religion.

The West owes a great debt to humanity : to rebuild and direct properly the future civilization after the holocaust which it has brought to pass. Its responsibility is great.

But its message is great too. Think of the unnumbered human beings in Asia and Africa and the devastated parts of Europe who are looking to America for economic succour, technical education, and other necessary aids to improve their health and prolong their lives. The power of money has mainly built up the contemporary American culture. The laboratories, libraries, educational institutions, art museums, and other similar organizations which are the pride of this country and which have been conferring great boons upon the outside world could not have been established without the power of money.

The West will attain to the height of its perfection through work. It will find its self-expression through service to humanity. But the work must be undertaken as a spiritual discipline and with a spiritual end in view. Otherwise it frustrates its purpose. Even the almighty American dollar may very well become an instrument of dollar diplomacy. A philanthropic work is often undertaken just to kill the boredom of life or soothe a guilty conscience, or to earn name and fame.

All thinkers are aware of the evil effect of work. The Hindu philosophers say that it entangles the unwary workers in worldliness by creating in him a desire for power, by stimulating his ambition, and by inflating his ego. Power always corrupts. Thus, instead of being a help in man's spiritual unfoldment, work becomes a veritable barrier. To remedy this serious evil, the Hindu philosophers ask a man to undertake his work as a Yoga, a spiritual discipline by which the worker can ultimately attain to freedom and bliss. The Bhagavad Gita describes Yoga as the secret of right activity. The Yogi has the attitude of sameness towards the pairs of opposites such as success and failure, gain and loss, pain and pleasure. Further, the man practising Yoga controls his body and mind ; he sees himself in all and all in himself.

The three basic disciplines for a man who seeks the highest good through his work are

the relinquishment of longing for the fruit of action, the renunciation of the ego, and the surrender of the fruit of action to God.

The relinquishment of longing for the fruit of action does not mean that the work does not produce the fruit, nor does it mean that the worker does not reap it. Following the law of cause and effect, the work produces its fruit; good, good, and bad, bad. As long as the cause is there, the result inevitably follows. One must not long for it. A man suffers not by the work he has done, but by his longing for reward and recognition. We are entangled not by what we give but by what we expect in return. Let us do our duty well and pay no attention to what follows. In other words, we should not let the serenity of our minds be disturbed by demanding recognition for our action. We should not be elated by success or depressed by failure. The real joy of a work is in the performance thereof to the best of the worker's ability.

To relinquish the ego is the most difficult task. All our activities are egocentric. The ubiquitous ego is present in our eating, sleeping, loving, hating, earning money, or doing good to others. The unillumined person identifies the soul with the body, the mind, and the ego, and considers himself to be the doer of action, whereas the action is really done by them. But the wise man knows the separation of the soul from the ego, mind, and body. Thus he does not identify himself with the action and its result. His mind, body, and ego can be used as instruments of action for the welfare of others. The Bhagavad Gita says that if a man is really free from ego and utterly detached from the body, then he does not commit sin even though he should happen to kill another person to fulfil a spiritual purpose. But there is a possibility of tremendous self-deception. A man must be sure that he is not looking for the result. He must not be elated when his effort is a success, or depressed when he fails. He must

watch that his work be inspired by an ideal that is one hundred per cent righteous and totally free from national or communal aggrandizement and the desire for self-glory.

The surrender of action and its fruit to God is the special message of Hinduism. The Stoics have preached the ideal of duty for duty's sake. Hinduism does not consider this to be adequate. It speaks of work for God's sake. We are asked to practise the discipline of self-surrender in all actions, eating, sleeping, loving, performing worship, giving away in charity, or practising austerities and penance. God is the indwelling soul of all things, and we worship only Him through our work. Work done in this spirit can never be sinful. The only sin is attachment and egotism. But here also one can be deceived. In the name of God men and women have been persecuted, wars are inflicted upon society, and the poor and helpless exploited. The test is that he who works for God is entirely free from anger, hatred, jealousy, and malice; he is not actuated by the desire for material achievement or the aggrandizement of his country. Work done for the gratification of the Lord is a sacrifice in which humanity is the altar, the ego is the offering, and the Lord Himself the presiding deity. Such work cannot defile the worker. On the other hand, it liberates him from the bondage of the world.

The Vedas say: 'Do not covet anyone's wealth.' The two great evils of a materialistic society are the clinging to its own possessions and greed for the possessions of others. They breed quarrels, malice, and war. Therefore the injunction of the Vedas is to enjoy through renunciation. One should enjoy life through the renunciation of the ego, the illusory notion of 'I' and 'my'. And this is possible if one sees the spirit of God permeating all things great and small, high and low. Neither by wealth nor by material possessions can one enjoy the peace that passes all understanding, if one is not rid of the ego. Even ethical discipline is not enough.

It is often seriously doubted whether material achievements and spiritual culture can go together. From the study of history we find that the height of material achievement in India was reached precisely when the spiritual culture of the otherworldly Hinduism and Buddhism was at its peak. In the building of Western civilization, the influence of religion has been considerable. The present position of supremacy that the Western races hold in the world is due, in a large measure, to their moral integrity, self-restraint, humanism, and other similar virtues, which are also taught by ethics and religion. It is only during the past fifty years that the achievements of science and engineering have seemed to cast a spell on our minds. But at what cost! The moral life is being undermined; family life, which is the basis of society, is crumbling. We have witnessed the two greatest wars of history, in one generation, and the spectre of a third one haunts our uneasy minds. It is not yet time to judge the enduring value of our materialistic achievements attained at the cost of spirituality. The future will be the best judge. A rocket dazzles our eyes and mocks at the stars; but in a few moments it ends in a handful of cinders.

The Bible gives a grim warning about the fate of the powerful and wealthy whose lives and thoughts are unillumined by spiritual wisdom :

'He hath shewed strength with his arm, He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.'

There are two manifestations of power. A heavy carriage speeds down a hill drawn by fiery and impetuous horses. We admire the power. A man without restraint gives expression to his passion, and a city is destroyed and havoc created. It is a

manifestation of power. An invader marches at the head of his conquering cohorts, leaving behind a trail of suffering and destruction. He gets the applause of the crowd for the display of his power. But a greater and nobler manifestation of power is seen when the horses are restrained by the muscles of the driver in the middle of the steep path, or the anger is controlled when the victim can be easily crushed. Certainly the conqueror shows greater power if, at the moment of his triumph, he can spare the enemy his humiliation and heal the wound of defeat by the soothing balm of love and forgiveness. The world has been taught to admire the power of an Alexander or a Caesar or a Napoleon. But the number of people whose lives have been transformed and uplifted by the power of a Buddha or a Christ is greater than that of those who have even so much as heard the names of those wielders of the sword.

It should be the ideal of education to emphasize contemplation, unselfishness, detachment, and gentleness. Radios and moving pictures are very powerful instruments of modern times in influencing people's minds. They should not depict material achievement or emotional excitement as the crowning of man's efforts on earth; they should stress righteousness, piety, and the good life as worthy ideals. All depends upon education. It is just as easy to stress self-control, nobility of character, and goodness as to stress aggressiveness, ambition, and the desire for domination.

But the thing most needed is the living example of saintliness. In the absence of such an example, doubt is often expressed as to whether a really saintly person can live in our modern society. But people are hungry for peace. They want inner life. They are seeking a spiritual leader who can demonstrate the reality of God and the futility of mere material existence. The usefulness of a religious organization does not exhaust itself by the arrangement of erudite

sermons or by the increasing of social and philanthropic activities. The size of the membership or the loftiness of the edifice is no test of its spiritual strength. All these may be means to an end. The sustained presence of God is felt through prayer and contemplation. Worship is the very soul of religion. Today, a spirit of aggressive evil has thrown a challenge to the world. It cannot be met by the power of money or scholarship or organization. This tide of evil can be stemmed only by aggressive and superhuman forgiveness, love, self-control, and goodness. These virtues are acquired through spiritual experience. There lies a great responsibility with the minister of religion and education.

In the relative universe, which is based

upon multiplicity, the power element will remain and will perhaps always dominate; but let us learn to respect the power that manifests itself through self-control, charity, and forgiveness. Let the children be taught to adore heroes endowed with righteousness and saintliness. Let men and women inspired by the vision of the oneness of humanity, the divinity of the soul, the reality of God, and the harmony of faith, be the source of our strength and inspiration at moments of confusion, danger, and distress. Let them be the monitors of society and the custodians of culture. Let them act as a restraint upon men's passions. A civilization that is illumined by the wisdom of the spirit endures. When the light burns at the tip, the entire lamp is ablaze.

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## SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE VEDIC RELIGION

BY A. C. BOSE, M.A., PH. D.

*(Continued from the October issue)*

### *Rita and Fate*

The ideal of society is to translate the order (Rita) of the cosmos into social order. Like the Greek conception of Fate, Rita does not derive its power from the will of the gods, but lies above divinity. But the Greeks found in Fate a power which even the gods could not withstand, which was arbitrary, and which foreordained the course of mortal life beyond the capacity of anybody to alter it. This led to the typical Greek conception of Tragedy that man was a helpless victim of Fate. In India, however, Rita never became foreordination; it remained Eternal Law and Eternal Justice. As a result, however, of the working of Eternal Justice there could be, no escape from the consequences of our deeds: a man must reap as he sows. So the conception of stern Rita led to the doctrine of

Karma. With the detailed acceptance of the doctrine of rebirth, every soul was believed to be born with the residue of Karma of previous births (praktana) which, remaining unseen (adrishta), guided man's present life to happiness or misery according to Eternal Justice. Thus India too came near the Greek idea of predeterminism. But this was in later ages. In the Vedas there is no predeterminism. There is confident faith in man's capacity to follow the Rita in making order prevail against disorder, cosmos against chaos. The existence of evil is recognized, but it is believed that evil can be fought and fought successfully, within us and without us. Indra's destruction of Vritra, the power of darkness and evil, which is opposed to Rita, is indicative of the final triumph of goodness and law over evil and disorder. Indra is



Vritrahantama, 'Supreme among slayers of Vritra.' Every man has his own Vritra to fight; he can fight successfully only if he is valiant enough. Thus the Vedic outlook is the heroic or epic outlook on life. Life is hard and there is evil in our midst; but victory is ours if only we are brave, and follow goodness resolutely:

The river full of stones flows on  
Move together, my comrades!  
Stand erect and cross it.  
Let us leave here those that are evil  
(asevāh); we shall cross over  
to powers of goodness (shivān)

(*Rg.* X. 53. 8).

The *Yajur Veda* and the *Atharva Veda* reproduce the verse. The *Atharva Veda* substitutes the expression 'stand erect' (uttishthata) by the more emphatic, 'Virayaddhwam'—'Quit you like heroes!'

(f) Satya and Rita—Brahman and Kshatra.

Satya in the metaphysical as well as the moral sense, and Rita in its broad (Brihat) sense, covering the cosmic, ethical, aesthetic, and social law, as well as the ritual, represent the higher interests of life. Satya stands for the religious-philosophical interest, and Rita, in its typical sense, for the moral-political interest. The *Rig Veda* speaks of the three-fold interests of life:

Strengthen the power of knowledge  
(Brahman) and strengthen minds;  
Strengthen the ruling power (Kshatra)  
and strengthen heroes,  
Give strength to the milch-cow and  
strengthen the people  
(*Rg.* VIII. 35. 16-18).

Of these Brahman, corresponding to truth, represents the cultural force, Kshatra, corresponding to Rita, represents the political power, and the milch-cow (pashu or pecus, wealth) represents the economic force of society. Three types of men emerge—the Brahmana, the philosophic man; the Kshatriya, the ruler man; and the Vaishya, the common man. While the last will produce the wealth of the nation, the second will work for order and

security and the first will carry on the intellectual and spiritual enterprise. But while the last group is taken for granted, special effort is to be directed in the encouragement of the first two groups of society. So the *Yajur Veda* insists:

Brahma dringha, kshatram dringha:  
Strengthen the power of knowledge,  
strengthen the ruling power (*Y.* VS. VI. 3).

Thus Brahman and Kshatra would be found to make up between them the religious and political idealism of Vedic times.

Of the major deities, Agni particularly represents the Brahmana ideal (though He has also been spoken of as a King):

Agni is Supreme among those who live the holy life. He is the holy Sage (Vipra), the holy Poet (Kavi) (*Rg.* VIII. 44. 21).

We have spoken of Varuna, Indra and other Deities representing the spirit of Kshatra. Indra is the ideal hero:

He bends not to the strong  
nor to the firm,  
nor to the defying foe, instigated  
by the lawless (Dasyu),  
For Indra the lofty mountains are as plains,  
and in the deeps there is a ford for Him.  
(*Rg.* VI. 24. 8).

He is the model (pratimana) for all the world (*Rg.* II. 12. 29).

Two types of virtues are inculcated in the Vedas: wisdom and valour, corresponding to Brahman and Kshatra. There are prayers, on the one hand, for intellectual power (dhi), wisdom (kratu), efficiency (daksham) spiritual vigour (varchas), higher talent (medha) etc:

Bestow on us the brightest efficiency  
(daksham) (*Rg.* VI. 44. 9).  
Endow me with spiritual vigour (varchas)  
(*Rg.* I. 23. 24).  
Win for us wisdom (medha), win the light  
(*Rg.* IX. 9. 9).  
O God! may my intelligence (dhi) be  
active (*Rg.* X. 42. 3).  
Arouse our intelligence (dhi)  
(*Rg.* III. 62. 10, *Y.* VS. 36. 3, *Sam.* 1462).

O Varuna! sharpen the intelligence  
(dhi), wisdom (kratu)  
and insight (daksham) of him  
who is striving for enlightenment  
(*Rg. VIII. 42. 3*).

O Agni! make us shine brightly like fire  
produced by friction  
(*Rg. VIII. 48. 6*).

Sharpen us like the barber's razor  
(*Rg. VIII. 4. 16*).

On the other hand, there are prayers for  
strength (Śavas), valour (Virya), manliness  
(Nrimna), spiritual power (Ojas), conquering  
power (Sahas), wrath (Manyu), fearlessness  
(Abhaya), vigour (Bala) and other qualities  
of heroism :

O Hero! give manly vigour (Śavas)  
to our men (*Rg. X. 148*).

So Thou Hero! urge us to heroic power  
(Virya) (*Rg. IX. 110. 7*).

O Conqueror! give manliness to our  
bodies, and furious valour  
(*Sam. 231*).

I pray for power (Ojas) which none  
can bend (*Rg. III. 62. 5*).

Give strength (Bala) to our bodies  
(*Rg. III. 53. 1*).

In the friendship of Thee, the valiant,  
we shall neither fear nor tire  
(*Rg. VIII. 4. 7*).

Make us erect in our walk and our life  
(*Rg. I. 16. 18*).

May our bodies be stone (*Rg. II. 75. 12*).  
Thou art Wrath, give us wrath ;

Thou art conquering Power, give us  
conquering power (*Y. VS. 19. 9*).

Go forward, Ye heroes! and conquer  
(*Rg. X. 103. 23*).

May we be slayers when we war  
(*Rg. IX. 61. 24*).

Raise us, O Indra, to sublime renown  
(*Rg. VIII. 70. 9*).

May we subdue the fiends (*Rg. X. 132. 2*).

May the four regions bow before me  
(*Rg. X. 128. 1*).

There is, however, an essential harmony

between the two ideals, as found in the  
following prayers :

Fight, warrior, strong in truth  
(*Rg. X. 112. 10*).

Prayer (Brahman) is my internal coat of  
mail (*Rg. VI. 75. 19*) ; Divine grace (Sharman)  
is my internal coat of mail. (*Sam. 9. 3. 8*).

There is prayer for both the qualities :  
(Gods) made me far-reaching, mighty  
thinker, sovereign lord (*Rg. X. 128*).

In the following prayer the same person  
wants to be the ideal Brahmana, Kshatriya,  
and Vaishya :

Wilt Thou not make me guardian  
of the people,  
make me their King, O impetuous Indra !  
Wilt Thou not make me a sage (Rishi)  
who has drunk of Soma ?  
Wilt thou not make me controller of  
wealth that lasts for ever (*Amrita*)  
(*Rg. III. 43. 5*)

Social organization would be perfect when  
the two powers, Brahman and Kshatra, would  
work in harmony :

Where Brahman and Kshatra both  
move together in concord,  
That world I shall know as one of bliss,  
where Gods with Agni dwell  
(*Yajur. VS. VII. 25*).

### 3. Consecration (Diksha)

The four remaining principles of Dharma,  
consecration, austerity, prayer and ritual,  
come generally under the category of  
Brahman, the philosophical-religious interest.  
The first two of these, consecration and  
austerity, are chiefly directed at the reali-  
zation of Satya, or Ultimate Truth. These  
refer to detailed systems of self-culture for  
spiritual advancement. The following  
progressive stages in spiritual realization are  
indicated in the *Yajur Veda* :

By self-dedication (Vrata), one obtains  
consecration (Diksha) ;

By consecration one obtains grace  
(Dakshina) ;

By grace one obtains reverence (Shraddha)

and by reverence is Truth (Satyam)  
obtained (*Y. VS. XIX. 30*).

Consecration is not merely a formal initiation. There is a deep personal contact between the teacher (Acharya) and the pupil under instruction (Shishya). While giving the initiation, the Acharya, so says the *Atharva Veda*, carries the pupil within him, so to speak, as the mother carries the foetus in her womb and after the three days of the Vrata, the pupil is born a wonder whom the Gods in a body come to see (*Ath. XI. 5. 3*). This initiation, therefore, is the path of transition from darkness to light, from humanity to divinity, from untruth to truth. The prayer of the intending initiate is significant:

Agni, Lord of Vrata! I will  
observe the Vrata:

here I approach truth across untruth  
(*Y. VS. I. 5*).

What is the good of the instruction that the Acharya gives to the disciple? Instruction is like the guidance that a man who knows the land gives to one who is a stranger to it:

One ignorant of the land asks of one  
who knows it;  
he travels forward, instructed by  
the knowing one.

This, indeed, is the blessing of  
instruction (Anusasana),  
one finds the path that leads directly  
forward (*Rg. X. 62. 7*).

Every one by himself could conceivably grope his way to some amount of knowledge, but under instruction one receives guidance and goes directly forward. This not only establishes the necessity of instruction but also states its nature: that it is like the guidance to a traveller who is actuated by a desire to visit and see the land. The initiative, therefore, lies with the pupil. He is not a passive recipient, but an active agent in the acquisition of knowledge.

#### 4. Austerity (Tapas)

The path to higher life is the path of constant and hard striving. One wins intel-

lectual and spiritual enlightenment through the sweat of one's brow. What applies to the performance of the ritual also applies generally to spiritual life:

Na rite srantasya sakhaya devāh: Gods befriend none except those who have been tired (*Rg. IV. 33. 11*).

The sleepless Ones (Atandrah) punish indolence (*Rg. VIII. 2. 18*). Never may sleep or idle talk sway us, goes the prayer (*Rg. VIII. 48. 14*). Tapas is the unflagging, unsparing effort in the achievement of higher things: the infinite pains one has to take to do something really worth while. Tapas lies at the beginning of all great things. Truth and order, it is said, were born at the beginning out of perfect spiritual effort (Tapas). Gods and sages perform noble things through Tapas.

The Tapas par excellence at the beginning of life is the discipline for the student of Vedic learning (Brahman), known as Brahmacharya—the way of obtaining Vedic knowledge primarily, and the way of education and culture in a general sense. The *Atharva Veda* describes the character of the Brahmachari in detail (*Ath. XI. 5*). 'He satisfies the Acharya by *tapas*.' 'The Brahmachari with his sacred wood (Samidh), sacred belt (Mekhalā) and his labour, satisfies the world.' 'He stands high, clad in spiritual light, with his Tapas.' The young boy takes up the intellectual and spiritual career and after some twenty-four years, the mature youth comes back to society in his new garb and his new power. 'The Brahmachari comes perfected by the Samidh (spiritual practices by burning with the sacred wood), clad in the black antelope's skin, consecrated (Dikshita), wearing long beard; he quickly comes (like the sun) from the eastern to the northern sea, and assembling the people he forthwith establishes himself.' The creative energy conserved by him during the long period of continence is used on the spiritual plane: animated by his creative vigour 'the four quarters shine.'

So all who would live worthily must be Brahmacharis. 'The king protects the state (Rashtra) through the Tapas of Brahmacharya. The Acharya desires to have his pupil through Brahmacharya.' 'The maiden obtains a youthful husband through Brahmacharya.' And Brahmacharya lies at the centre of divinity. 'The Shining Ones turned away death by the Tapas of Brahmacharya. Indra, verily, brought light to the Gods through Brahmacharya.' 'The Brahmachari, having bathed (Snatah)<sup>1</sup>, bright and resplendent, shines greatly on the earth.'

Brahmacharya, as suggested above, is the discipline of body and mind, for attaining the fitness for Vedic knowledge. Much stress was laid on the control and sublimation of the sex energy. Physical cleanliness was meticulously attended to. The life in the open outside the common human habitations, in sunlight and fresh air, and bathing in rivers and lakes, plain food, hard work, both physical and intellectual, the performance of the fire ritual, hard bed, early rising, and constant personal supervision of the Acharya contributed to Spartan virtues. But the Brahmachari did not grow like a hermit secluded from society; he took his almost daily round of the neighbouring village begging his up-keep, and usually meeting the mistress of the household with, 'Madam, give me alms.' A filial attitude was cultivated towards women. Again, the Brahmachari was the worshipper of Saraswati, the Divine Mother, at whose breast he prayed to be privileged to feed. As a rule the Acharya was a married man and lived with his family and the Brahmachari was adopted into it.

In the Vedas the ideal of Brahmacharya stood for a preparation for life and not the entire life of man. Just as in the social life the ideal of Brahman was coordinated with that of Kshatra, so in the personal life of individuals the ideal of Brahmacharya was

<sup>1</sup> A 'Snatak' of ancient India corresponds to the modern graduate.

coordinated with that of family life (Garhapatya). As the maiden, as said above, qualified herself through Brahmacharya for a young husband, so did the young man qualify himself for married life and the leadership of a family. It is said of Agastya that 'the powerful sage (Rishir ugrah) practised both classes of obligations (Ubhau varnau puposha),' viz. practice of Brahmacharya as well as Garhapatya, and received true benedictions from the gods (*Rg. I. 179. 6*). The Acharya described in the *Atharva Veda* as practising Brahmacharya must have been a sage like Agastya, practising Garhapatya too in the orderly life regulated according to *Rita*. As Lopamudra, wife of Agastya, says:

The ancient sages who preached the Eternal Law (ritas apa) and conversed of eternal statutes (ritāni) with the gods, begot progeny, and did not thereby arrive at the end (of their life of Tapas) (*Rg. I. 179. 2*).

Just as there were two interests in social life, so there were two ways, one succeeding the other, in individual life. Here is the broad foundation of the original conception of Varnashrama Dharma. (In the passage quoted above the term Varna implies Ashrama). Later on, a return to the forest (Vanaprastha) to resume Brahmacharya was set as the ideal of later life (after fifty), and later still, there was the ideal of complete renunciation (Sanyasa) for the fourth stage of life, though from the earliest times there were men and women who, in their individual way, remained celibates. The practice of the last two ideals, however, must have been on a much more limited scale than Brahmacharya. It was Buddhism that preached the extremist ideal of exclusive Brahmacharya, in preference to Garhapatya and Kshatra.

Lord Buddha, however, rightly insisted that suffering by itself was of no avail. The Veda, it should be noted, places Tapas after Diksha: after initiation into the higher life

all effort becomes constructive effort; there is no mere self-mortification there.

### 5. *Brahman*

In its primary sense Brahman means prayer. Then it means the body of verses in the Vedas meant for prayer. Then the term implies the Vedas as books of prayer and wisdom. There is a Deity, Brahmanaspati, the Lord of Prayer. Brahmacharya means the discipline for the mastery of the Vedas and Vedic knowledge. Then Brahman has stood for the Object of Prayer, the Divinity, especially contemplated as an impersonal Reality.

We have referred above to the term Brahman standing for the activities connected with the search for Reality and Truth the religious-philosophical spirit from which we get the word Brahmana, one engaged in the search of Brahman (jnana-yoga, as we may call it). But the word *Brahman* has also a more specific sense according to the second meaning given above: it means one who knows Brahman or the text of the Veda. It was a marvellous feat in the whole cultural history of the world for the Indians to have preserved the Vedas by oral tradition, taking every care to maintain each syllable of the text unimpaired. It goes to the eternal credit of the Indians that they understood the high value of the documents and did everything humanly possible to preserve them in the face of terrible upheavals, internal and external, that changed the whole structure of society. The men who carried the Vedas in their heads deserved well of society, and a traditional social law gave them a privileged position in that they were immune from capital punishment. For to kill a Brahmana would be perhaps, to obstruct the oral tradition of a Veda carried on by him. The *Shatapatha Brahmana*, while describing the benefits of Vedic studies, speaks of the 'protection against capital punishment (Avadhyata),' as one of them (S. B. II. 5. 7).

Hindu theologians have spoken of the efficacy of the sound of the Vedic hymns (Mantras). Whatever their theological significance, that they are among the most wonderful of rhythmic creations in the whole poetical history of the world cannot be denied. Even in English literature which is so rich in poetry, only the finest passages in Shakespeare and Milton can compare in respect of the power and sweep of rhythm, and sublimity and solemnity of effect, with the best of the Vedic hymns.

In their purity, austerity and power, the Vedic hymns have appeared to me like the fresh, clear streams gushing out of the rocky mountain. But this analogy of mine was anticipated by the Vedic sage himself:

Giri-bhrajō normayo madanto . . .  
Brihaspatim abhyarkā anāvan  
Like merry streamlets bursting from  
the mountain . . .

Our hymns have sounded to Brihaspati  
(*Rg. X. 68. 1*).

That the Vedas could be handed down through oral tradition through the ages is due to some extent to the wonderful memorableness of the verses. If, as some think, memorableness is an essential quality of poetry, then from this criterion alone the Vedic hymns would occupy a very high place in the estimation of the world.

### 6. *Yajna*

Yajna is the Vedic ritual of offering libation or oblation on the sacrificial fire lighted on an altar. Another ritual was the offering of Soma juice. Whatever the names of the deities worshipped, the ritual was the same. The Vedic ritual was picturesque, accompanied by chanting, singing (Sama hymns were musically rendered) and also acting. There was the simple domestic sacrifice (Agnihotra); there were also great seasonal sacrifices held in open spaces and attended by vast numbers of people. Political colouring was given to the ritual by the institutions of Ashwamedha (which

used to be preceded by a challenge to the neighbouring states to a tournament at arms) and Rājasūya (which was utilized by emperors to obtain homage from their vassals).

Being a great public institution the Yajna developed complicated rituals that added to the attractiveness of the ceremonial side of prayer. In course of time, therefore, it needed a class of experts from among Bramanas, the knowers of the Vedas, to carry on the ritual with the appropriate ceremony. This formal part of the worship began to be known as Karmakanda, the 'action part' of the religion. When in later times the Vedic language became obsolete and the meaning could not be understood by the worshipper, the formal character of the Yajna became very much pronounced. And curiously enough the whole of the Vedic texts (Samhitās) came to be regarded as part of the Karmakanda, having no relation to the spiritual or metaphysical questions! In the circumstances the mastery of the four Vedas and the accessory literature was considered to be a sort of practical and material (Aparā) knowledge, as distinguished from the metaphysical approach to the ultimate reality (Para) through thought and experience (*Mundaka Upanishad*, I. 5).

It is natural that in a society with freedom of thought and expression there should be opposition to mere formalism. So the *Mundaka Upanishad*, standing for spiritualism, to the total exclusion of formalism, says:

They are frail rafts in the form of *Yajnas* in them, with the eighteen members, the work is of an inferior type (*Mun.* I. 2. 7).

Again, the attitude of the Bhakti (Devotion) cult (in which Divine grace is the only source of spiritual advancement) is well indicated in the Bhagavad Gita. The direct experience of the Divine cannot be had 'by (memorizing) Vedas, by Yajnas, by (religious) studies, by charity,—not by actions, nor by severe austerities (Tapas).' But this is not a later idea, We find similar

expressions in the Veda. For example:

No one by work (Karma) attains Him who works and strengthens evermore ;  
No, not by Yajnas (na yajnair) (can one attain) Indra,  
praised of all, resistless, valiant,  
bold in might (*Rg.* VIII. 70. 3).

The conception of Yajna was much widened by the adoption of five systems of 'great Yajnas,' in which, in addition to the usual Agnihotra, the study and teaching of Vedas (Brahmayajna), service of the guest (nriyajna), giving food to lower creatures (Bhutayajna), and service of or offering of oblation to fathers (Pitriyajna), were recognized as great Yajnas (Mahayajna). The Bhagavad Gita, in its own remarkable way, distinguishes the spirit of Yajna from its forms. If the spirit is accepted then the material part of Yajna, related to the fire, fuel, and the oblation, may be taken not only literally but also symbolically and figuratively. If so, then the Yajna of the Karmakanda would be material Yajna; but there will also be the Yajna of Tapas (spiritual discipline) in which the fire of restraint is lighted and the senses (or sensual pleasures) are the offering; there will be the Yajna of Yoga in which the vital functions will be the offering into the fire of self-control; and there will be the Yajna of sacred studies (Brahmayajna) and of *jnana* (in which Brahman—the Supreme Reality—is fire, fuel and oblation as well as sacrificer) for men of spiritual discipline and self-dedication. If this wider meaning of Yajna is taken then it must be admitted, in the same wider sense, that (as the followers of the Karmakanda claim) 'the eaters of the ambrosia of the remains of Yajna go to the changeless Eternal.' There should then not only be no opposition to Yajna but Yajna must be accepted as the central thing in the discipline for higher life:

Even this world is not for the man without Yajna, what to speak of any other (*Gita*, Ch, IV, 31),

Even in the Veda we find Yajna taken in the figurative sense. The *Yajur Veda* says that 'life prospers through Yajna (spirit of sacrifice).'

Even the ritual of Yajna—the Karma-kanda—prosper through Yajna (spirit of

sacrifice) :

Yajno yajnena kalpatam : May Yajna (ritual) prosper through Yajna (spirit of sacrifice). (*Yajur*. VS. IX. 21).

(*To be continued*)

## MONASTICISM—ITS PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

BY SWAMI PAVITRANANDA

It is nowadays customary to decry monasticism as a medieval institution. Critics say that it has outlived its utility and therefore the sooner it dies out, the better for society and the world. Various causes have contributed to create feelings against religion in the generality of people all the world over, and monastic institutions are subjected to severe criticism. They say that monasticism is an attempt to go against nature, that monks are a burden to society, and that their cumulative influence upon people is to make them inert, idle, and less keen in their struggle for existence.

Strange to say, in spite of all criticism and even suppression, monasticism as an institution is not completely dead. New institutions have sprung and are springing into being in the East as well as in West. Even during the Reformation period when there was a violent attempt to suppress and abolish the monasteries there throve in Europe a new kind of religious order, called Regular Clerks. The Society of Jesus was founded in 1540, the Thealines in 1524, the Barnabites in 1530, and so on. New religious orders have come into being in the West even in recent times. It is said that no fewer than seventy new orders came into being in Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Now there are a good number of Christian monastic organizations in the United States, Australia, and South Africa. Not that all of them can justify their existence by their actions and life, but the above fact only indicates that

the monastic organization like many other institutions is a human necessity.

If we look to European history, we find that monastic institutions existed there long before the rise of Christianity. Many ancient Greek philosophers taught ascetic principles. The religious brotherhood of Pythagoras, who was born about 580 B. C., suggests monasticism. Some views of Plato 'might seem like broken visions of the future, when we think of the first disciples who had all things in common, and in later days, of the celibate clergy, and the cloistered life of the religious orders.'

'Long before the birth of Christ, Essenes, a Jewish monastic sect, lived in the region of the Dead Sea. They numbered about four thousand at the time of Christ. They were bound by strict vows and professing an extraordinary purity. . . . The strictest discipline was maintained, excommunication following detection in heinous sins. Evidently the standard of character was pure and lofty, since their emphasis on self-mastery did not end in absurd extravagances. Their frugal food, simple habits, and love of cleanliness, combined with a regard for ethical principles, conduced to a high type of life.'

Therapeutae or 'true devotees' were another Jewish sect living a monastic life. They were scattered over many countries, but were found chiefly in Egypt.

After the birth of Christianity many monastic organizations have arisen to fulfil

various needs and purposes—all deriving inspiration from the teachings of Christ. Their life has been chequered. Some of their achievements are a matter of pride to all Christians whereas some of their misdeeds put to shade the glory of Christianity. But in spite of all that can be said against them, monasticism has become a part of Christianity, and persons are not altogether absent—though their number is bound to be small—whose life of sacrifice, purity, and devotion compels love and respect from one and all, irrespective of creed, race, and nationality.

India is decidedly the birthplace of monasticism. Long before the birth of Christ people in India glorified the ideal of giving up everything for God and concentrating one's whole energy to the realization of Truth. Some would take to Sanyasa after passing through the first three stages of life; some would take to it directly after the student life. It was after the advent of Buddha that monks would live a collective life in an organized way. Monastic institutions were advocated and encouraged not only by Hinduism and Buddhism, but also by Jainism. In India also the monastic institutions passed through many reverses—through periods of ups and downs. The greatest impetus to monasticism was given by Buddhists. When Buddhism was declining in India there came Shankaracharya. He himself founded a few important monasteries and following his teachings as many as ten monastic organizations with several branches arose all over the country. Then in the twelfth century was born Ramanuja who founded a large number of monasteries. Then came, one by one, Madhva, Ramananda, Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, and so on. They all gave inspiration to monastic institutions, and many monastic organizations of different types came into being as the direct result of their teachings.

Thus we find that each religious leader in India—with very rare exceptions—took to the life of Sanyasa in his attempt to

realize Truth and though from his teachings were not excluded those who lived the worldly life, he gave a fresh stimulus to the monastic idea. Each time the monastic institutions degenerated—as all human institutions are bound to—there was born a new teacher who could infuse new strength into them. It is thus that monastic institutions have been kept alive even to this day.

In other religions also we find teachings which have inspired people to take to the life of a monk. Though Mohammad himself led the life of a householder, many, professing the faith of Islam, refused to settle down to the worldly life and wanted to live solely for God.

The question is not whether the worldly life does not give sufficient opportunity to one for one's spiritual development. What we find as a matter of fact is that in almost all religions there have been persons who gave up all worldly attractions in their intense longing for God-realization; and there are others who though they did not actually renounce the world were to all intents and purposes dead to it. 'Painting is a jealous mistress who suffers no rival,' said Michael Angelo when there was a proposal for his marriage; and whole life was one of dedication. It is well-known how Newton was so much absorbed with mathematics that he had no time to think of marriage. If art and science require so much undivided attention, why should not religion, the highest pursuit of man's life, demand more? So we find that whenever a man takes to religion seriously, he thinks of freeing himself from all distractions and devoting himself exclusively to spiritual practices.

Some find themselves too weak to carry their ideal into practice, circumstances are too unfavourable for some, whereas there are others who break down all shackles in their quest for the Great Unknown. By so doing, when one realizes God and his religious thirst is satisfied, naturally he draws around him persons whose ideas and aspirations are



of kindred type. The latter class of people may not be so earnest in their desires, but nevertheless they are sincere, and as such seek the inspiration and guidance of a teacher and the help of a favourable environment. It was thus, perhaps, that every monastic institution was born.

But religion is an individual affair and not a matter of institution. An institution can give help but not the guarantee of success in life. Religious life is built up by one's own struggles and labour. So relying too much on the help which a religious institution can offer, when people begin to flock to it in larger and larger numbers, it degenerates. And there comes a time when it outlives its mission; those who join it find more obstacles than help to their religious development. This is the history of the growth, development, and end of all monastic institutions. But as man is incurably religious, new institutions are bound to grow on the ashes of the old ones. When old institutions no longer serve their purpose new ones are bound to grow in consonance with the demand of changing times.

In the early fifth century when monasteries in Europe were full of corruptions, which one shudders to recall, and when saner minds thought that monasticism as an institution was destined to die, there came a man who single-handed formed a centre of spiritual virtue and lit it up 'with a splendour destined to shine over regenerated Europe for ten centuries to come.' Indeed, St Bernard infused new life to the dying or dead monastic body. He introduced the idea of law and order to it and adapted them to the conditions of the then Europe. And Europe has reasons to be grateful to the Benedictine monks for their many services in various fields of life. They encouraged and preserved learning, developed agriculture, reclaimed deserted regions and carried civilization into the forests. Many a monastery became the nucleus of a modern city. And when the Benedictine monasteries fell from

their ideals there arose some reformed orders. Then came the Mendicant Friars, and so on according to the need of the time.

Nowadays when people criticize monasticism, they invariably remember the corrupt institutions of the middle ages—their stinking atmosphere, their moral degradation and inconsistency between faith and practice, and their baneful influence upon the people in general. Now, if an ideal is all right, we should not decry it simply because some people fall short of it. When a society is corrupt we do not think of destroying it, but try to reform it. The same thing is true of any other human institution. We have seen how from time to time both in the East and the West new monastic orders arose when the old ones were found wanting. It was so because the monastic ideal was all present in the mind of the people. They loved and admired the ideal, but deplored the abuse of it from the hands of those who profess it. And it is strange that even those who worked for the destruction of monasteries in Europe did not show better examples in their own cases. When monasteries were suppressed in England, the king got the revenues of the monasteries. But how did he spend them? 'About half the money was expended in coast defences and a new navy; and much of it was lavished upon his courtiers.'

The condition of the monasteries was so rotten that perhaps there was no other go than suppressing them. But as the monasteries and not the monastic ideal was destroyed and as the ideal from time to time, both in the East and the West, takes a visible form in organizations, the problem before all is to see how the ideal can find such expression that the monastic institutions do not decline so easily, and instead of becoming fetters of progress, they become promoters of advancement.

There are some who have no faith in the very ideal of monasticism. They think that the life of renunciation is a life of cowardly

retreat and ignoble flight from the world. They think that it is better to face the world and they want to enjoy the bliss of God in course of their worldly enjoyment. This ideal appeals to many, because it means no sacrifice, involves no struggle. They have simply to baptize their humdrum course of life with dignified and high-sounding words; they have to hide their gross selfishness in talks of lofty ideals, their abject sensuality in the assertion that they are denying no gift of God. Different temperaments like and follow different ideals. But when people criticize the ideals which are not theirs, the criticism follows more often from their hidden consciousness of incapacity to practise than from their ability to appreciate them.

The life of renunciation is a bugbear to many because their hankering for sense pleasures is too strong. They cannot conceive of any people who genuinely feel a repulsion for them in their aspiration for something higher and more permanent, and hence they criticize. Since most people belong to this class, they want to prove, by a majority of votes, that the life of sense enjoyment is higher than that of self-restraint. But the highest ideal comes within the aspiration of only a small number of persons, and though it is achieved only by very few its potency is great. Caesar, Alexander, Napoleon are only historical names, but Christ, Buddha, and others are worshipped for sustenance of life. The kingdoms of the former are no longer in existence, but those of the latter have survived the onslaughts of time.

Many think that the life of celibacy is unnatural and against the will of God. As nobody knows the will of God that question should better be left out. But who will decide whether the life of self-indulgence or that of self-control is better? Almost all people find it difficult to live a life of self-mastery—they are slaves of their senses. As such they think that their own life is the natural life. But the world has seen persons

who had complete mastery over their senses, baser passions were absent in them just as higher ideals are absent in the average people. What is proper should be judged not by the rabble, not by those who can neither cope with their weakness nor are ready to confess it, but by the best of humanity. To consider from that standpoint, the life of complete self-mastery is the ideal before all humanity—as indicated by teachers in many religions. 'That which is night to all beings, to the self-controlled man it is day; that in which all beings find day, the enlightened Muni finds night.'

Marriage is only a concession to human weakness. And even married life does not mean a life of unchartered sense enjoyment. Man must strive for continence. 'Those who scoff at perpetual celibacy as unnatural or impossible,' says a famous French writer, author of *Towards Moral Bankruptcy*, 'do not know really what they are doing. They fail to see that the line of thought which makes them talk as they do must necessarily lead, by strict logic, to prostitution and polygamy. If the demand of nature is irresistible, how can a chaste life be required of married people?' If the married people can live a restricted life it is possible also for persons craving for self-mastery and self-purity to reach their own ideal.

Many persons consider the life of continence as a life of self-repression. But it is not the case. Celibate life is the natural outcome of some higher pursuit in life. When one's life is inspired by some noble object one's cravings of the flesh become gradually less and less persistent. When a certain devotee expressed profound grief to Sri Ramakrishna because he was tormented by the whisper of lust, Sri Ramakrishna said that he need not suppress lust—rather he should increase it and turn that towards God: i. e. if his love for God increased, his attractions for sense objects would naturally decrease.

It is true that even saints are not free

from struggles and very few reach a state of purity behind which there is no fear; but the heroic would choose an ideal not because it is easy but because it is the best. In their attempts to reach an ideal many may fail, but in spite of that others will struggle for it, if it is really covetable. Those who struggle after an ideal do that knowing full well that theirs will not be a rosy path. They willingly choose a different path because the dream of reaching an ideal is too strong in them. Unhappy is the lot of those who have got no noble aspiration and a thousand times more unhappy is the lot of those who have the vision of some higher ideal. Still, in all ages there are persons who try to reach some higher ideal. When Vishwamitra told the supposed Rama that there were two paths leading to his Ashrama—one was short but much infested by demons, the other safe but longer; and when Rama chose the safer path, Vishwamitra at once understood that he was not the real Ramachandra. And when Rama (really) came he took the short route though difficult.

Another charge against the Sanyasis is that they are selfish because they seek their personal salvation. One must possess something before one can think of making any charity. One must develop spirituality before one can do good to others. In every sphere of life a person needs devote, for a period, his concentrated attention for achieving something before he can think of sharing the fruit with others. This is true in the field of religion also. As this simple truth is not always realized we find an abundance of teachers but a deplorable dearth of disciples.

In the modern age everything is judged from an utilitarian standpoint. As the life of many Sanyasis has not any value from a worldly point of view the ideal of Sanyasa is decried by persons of narrow vision. Everything in the world cannot be judged by pound, shilling, and pence. When a scientist pursues his scientific researches he does not know whether his work will bring

money, name, or fame. The discovery of a new planet in the sky will not bring bread to a single mouth. Still the man who says that there should be no attempt to develop astronomy will make a fool of himself. Even to judge from a utilitarian point of view, spiritual researches have got a greater value than any new discovery or invention. The man who realized Truth becomes the source of peace and blessedness to thousands of persons; he settles for ever all doubts whether there is God or not and if He at all exists, whether He can be realized or not.

The history of every country shows some persons who left all worldly pursuits in order that they might more freely pursue their religious ideal and realize God. Such persons will be found even in the future. It is true that nowadays there has come all the world over, a reaction against religion and hence against monasticism, and everything tends more and more towards sense enjoyments. But who knows that there will not come a reaction in future also against the pursuit of sense enjoyment? During the decadent days of Rome social life was so profligate that many men and women of wealthy and respectable families ran, as a reaction, into monasteries in Egypt and Palestine to attain their soul's ideal. If history repeats itself, can it not be foretold that nowadays man's hankering after sense enjoyment is so great that if such a state of things continues, a large number of people may feel tired of social frivolity and lust and luxury. About the condition of America, an American writes: 'Ancient Rome could boast of no more loud theatrical spectacles than New York city at the present time.' Then, should we say that reaction has already begun in some minds?

And when people, tired of social conditions in a degenerate age, will seek refuge in God, they will naturally like to live together in groups for mutual help and inspiration. In this way monasticism may receive a new impetus in future. But in the future, those

who will organize and control and direct monasteries will become wiser because of their knowledge of the history of the past. They will be more careful to keep the atmosphere of monasteries pure and unsullied and useful to the people at large.

In India the love for the monastic ideal is so ingrained in the minds of people that

even those who have no liking for religion start Ashramas, as they say, as nuclei of social and other public works. This only shows that monasticism as an institution is not going to die. Let us hope that future monasticism by its usefulness will be able to justify its existence.

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA \*

BY PROFESSOR EDGAR S. BRIGHTMAN

Swami Akhilananda and Friends: It is indeed a very high honour and privilege for me to be here as the guest of my close and intimate friend and helper Swami Akhilananda from whom indeed I have learned a great deal about the nature of the spiritual experiences. Tonight we are celebrating with festivity and with reverence in Boston the birthday of a man who was born in a very obscure Indian village. The date of his birth, by the way, is not clearly recorded in our American literature. If you want to know the date of the birth of any distinguished man you naturally turn to Webster's Biographical Dictionary. Webster's Biographical Dictionary tells us Sri Ramakrishna was born in the year 1834. This is a mistake of two years which Swami Akhilananda says is due to a mistake some writer in India made long ago and which was copied inaccurately.

He was born not on the exact evening we are celebrating; but on February 18.

Men of religion in general have historically had two names, a secular name and a religious name. There was a prince in India named Prince Siddhartha and then he became a religious man named Gautama Buddha. There was in Palestine a man by the name of Jesus and he acquired the name of Christ,

the Messiah. Another man named Saul acquired the name of Paul among the Jews. There was a baby in India born as Gadadhar Chatterji, and he became Sri Ramakrishna. He became as he grew up, a saint, an avatar, a man whose influence spread all over the world. His whole life was a search for God.

As you all know, most of his life was spent as a temple priest near Calcutta, a profession that does not have very high esteem in India. But he rose above the disesteem in which his profession was held by virtue of his great spiritual insight and devotion. He spent his life in the service and worship of God under the form of the Goddess Kali, the divine mother. All his life he was in love with God. Nothing else mattered in his life except the realization of God, the consciousness and meaning of God in his life. By his devotion he drew to him spiritual souls who indeed were not drawn to him as to a human being merely. They were always drawn to God, to the eternal. He lived a life of devotion to God. Down to the very end, even when he was suffering from a fatal disease and the physician wanted him to desist, he continued his teaching and his joyous devotion and interpretation of the eternal as long as he was able to utter words at all.

He was born in an age of increasing scepticism. In the early part of the century,

\* A speech delivered at the birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna in Boston.

as you know, there was a great development of philosophy in Germany by Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Such men were spreading an interpretation of God which, especially in the case of Hegel and Schelling, was not entirely different from the thought of India itself. Yet after the death of Hegel there was a definite decline in idealistic devotion in Europe with a rise of materialistic science and a lack of faith in philosophy. There was also a lack of interest in religion. There was a growing period of scepticism and of materialism.

It is interesting that Sri Ramakrishna was born only a few years after the death of Hegel and began his work not only in an age of growing scepticism and materialism but an age when there were looming on the horizon the dreadful wars which of course did not begin until long after he died. But it seems as though his coming to the world was peculiarly appropriate to preach to the people the overcoming of the militarism and the materialism which the world was to face. Just as Christ came at a time of supreme need, so did Sri Ramakrishna.

I should like to speak briefly, if I may, of his work under three headings. The first is his world-wide influence. Any real saint must make a world-wide appeal because a saint is not one who is concerned about one race or one country primarily. He is concerned about the universal and the eternal. So the concern of Sri Ramakrishna with the eternal made him a universal soul. God is the source of all good, not the source of some good and particularly not the source of what we call goods. God is not the one to whom we should look for the increase of property but the one to whom we should look for increase of the meaning and the value of life, the Platonic good. Sri Ramakrishna in many of his teachings exhibited his universality. He said all religions are true. It was his teaching in the rules of the order of his followers that nothing should be said against any religious faith. He himself found the

realization of the Lord not merely through the Hindu tradition in which he served as temple priest but through the Mohammedan, the Christian and other faiths. So he tells us that every religion in the world is one of the ways to reach him. The clue, he said, is faith. Peculiarities of sect and creed mean nothing. Now this does not mean that we should emphasize only the matters of agreement. It does not mean that everyone who has been inspired by Sri Ramakrishna or inspired by Christ should insist that we must all agree in all points. Nor does it mean that we must have exactly the same philosophy. You may be a dualist or a non-dualist. I am a dualist, in the Hindu sense, I will admit. My friend Swami Akhilananda is a non-dualist. We agree to disagree in our philosophy. We do not feel it is necessary to agree in order to know God and to come into a realization of Him. That I am sure is one of the very important teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. The agreement is in the love of God.

In seeking God, longing to increase and deepen a knowledge of Him, a comparison used by Sri Ramakrishna is of a locomotive drawing many cars. The avatar carries multitudes of men to the footstool of God. I have never known of a railroad train system that insists that all its passengers be all alike. The train carries them if they are willing to go to its destination. That is all that is required.

This world-wide message was carried abroad by his great disciple, Swami Vivekananda, who may be called the St Paul of the Ramakrishna Mission. But unlike St Paul he was the intimate and personal friend of his master. St Paul did not know Jesus according to the flesh. Swami Vivekananda knew Sri Ramakrishna both according to the flesh and according to the spirit. He came to this country in 1893 for the great Congress of the Religions of the World in Chicago at the World's Fair and interpreted the unanimity of religions in a

most effective and beautiful way.

Now the second aspect of Sri Ramakrishna's life that I should like to mention is his 'deep diving' influence. I mean, as he meant, diving into spiritual depths. Many men live on the surface of life, with surface desires and tastes. Spiritual men seek the depths. One must plunge beneath not merely into what psychologists call the subconscious but must seek to penetrate beneath or above the subconscious, or whatever one wants to call it, to the divine secret of reality. In his deep diving, Sri Ramakrishna was a man of one desire, the desire to know God. Sri Ramakrishna did this one thing, diving after God, as a pearl-diver dives for pearls. When he sits down to meditate he loses himself in a sea of spirituality. A secular person might say, I do not think much of that idea; anybody who loses himself does not amount to much, he becomes indefinite, and vague, and does not arrive anywhere. It is not true of Sri Ramakrishna that he did not arrive. When he lost himself in a sea of spirituality he found something greater than himself which he was able to bring back to this world and with which he was able to inspire those who surrounded him.

So his teaching is: Look within and find God, seek the realization of God by diving deep. Know yourself, he says and you shall know God, as the Greeks said, Know thyself. If we truly know our own inner life, we cannot fail to master the secret of God.

Particularly Sri Ramakrishna wanted his followers to dive deep beneath the material world. This interesting remark about the material world is sound philosophy, I think; although the phenomenal universe exists in God, He is above it and beyond it. The phenomenal universe, this material world, is a very small part of God and to understand it is not to understand God. Hence he was opposed to what we might call bread and butter education, education that is merely behaviouristic. He remembers that the

minds of the so-called men and scholars are attached to the things of the world and hence it is they cannot acquire true knowledge.

In other words, if we are so interested in the details of life that we miss its unity, the mind cannot become in the Hindu phrase, one-pointed. We cannot become entirely concentrated or entirely consecrated if we allow ourselves to be lost in the plurality of life. That is the meaning of his deep-diving.

When I read Webster's Biographical Dictionary I find an extremely worldly-minded, uninspired interpretation of Sri Ramakrishna. It says he is averse to books and Western ideas. I do not believe Sri Ramakrishna thought books were wicked or should be abolished. He did not read very many books, if any. He could not read very well. Many books were read to him and he remembered what he was told. He did not think books were wicked, neither did he think the West was wicked. What he thought was wicked was materialism whether it was Eastern or Western.

As I read all the reports about him, I find nothing that leads me to suppose he would reject the West any more than he would reject the East. The only thing he rejected was a superficial materialism, no matter where it came from. I think we shall have to admit that there is a good deal of such materialism in the West.

He not only taught deep diving, but he taught it systematically in systems of spiritual exercises, not peculiar indeed to him, but cultivated by him to an unusually high degree. These exercises were means of practising what St Paul says the Christian should do, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. This aspect of his work was spread largely through the influence of Swami Brahmananda who was the master and teacher of our friends who are here tonight, and who may be called the St John of the Ramakrishna Vedanta movement.

The third aspect of Sri Ramakrishna's work that I want to mention is the social

effect of his example. The criticism usually raised against a mystic and saint is that he is other-worldly, not concerned with this world at all. Because he criticizes a superficial materialist view of things, some say he has no interest in life in this world and no interest in human beings or in being part of humanity. Men say that his mind is entirely elsewhere and he has no concern at all with what goes on in this world.

Now it is true that Sri Ramakrishna was other-worldly. It is true he did not believe that the visible world is all that there is. Anybody who does believe that, does not find the visible world worth living in. It is only insofar as a person finds motives, sources of power, sources of reality, that are not visible to the eye or sense, that anything we find in the world of sense has any meaning or significance whatever. But though he was other-worldly, it is very wrong to say he was anti-social. His was a religion of love. Because there was the love of God, there was also the love of man. He was deeply moved by social evils.

There are two particular evils in which he symbolized and summarized all the social evils of life, money and lust. The love of money and the love of lust, merely physical enjoyments without respect to spirituality, were great evils. For example, even when he was in a state of Samadhi and unconscious of what was going on in this world, if you touched him with a coin, he revolted. His whole body showed he felt something unclean had touched him. He felt that the love of money was the symbol of evil in this world.

So too, he felt physical lust, as an attitude towards any human being, was an evil thing. I think perhaps he went a little too far in that respect. He did not emphasize quite enough the spiritual significance of physical experience. But his complete conquest of the body and his completely spiritual life was indeed a triumph of soul over body.

A further proof of his social influence is found in what has flowed from his life and work in the establishment of the Ramakrishna Mission. I have had the privilege through the kindness of Swami Akhilananda of reading some of the reports of the Ramakrishna Mission. I must say that, although I have seen the spirit of this man in the spirit of the other Swamis, and I have known and been aware of their social interest and devotion, yet I was surprised at the extent of social manifestations in the work of the Ramakrishna Mission. There is educational work in the Math where Swamis are educated in the spiritual life. There are the hospitals conducted by the Ramakrishna Mission and the relief work of feeding the hungry in times of famine. There is rural work for communities that need help. There are missions all over the world. There are 130 centres, twelve of which are in United States. All those things show an active source of social interest growing out of the religious life.

In a world of selfishness, searching for pleasure, pure Christians can thank God for a man who can show us the ideal not in theory only but as a realized experience.

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‘He who has the spirit of devotion in him receives an awakening in holy places and that spirit becomes intensified, but what will one gain in particular who has not that spirit in him. Even going to live in holy places, his mind will all the same be engaged in worldly thoughts and pursuits.’

# SCIENCE, MYSTICISM, AND REALITY

BY BRAJA LAL GOSWAMI, M.A.

Ours is a sceptical age. We look askance at idealism and distrust philosophy and metaphysics. Of the various factors that lie at the back of this universal sense of futility and nihilism, the two which work in insidious ways are our firm faith in democracy, and our conviction that religion should play second fiddle to science. Democracy has made hero-worship an anachronism and we turn up our superior noses to moral and spiritual excellence and damn it as eccentricity or neurosis. Science sits on the right side of the throne of Demos, and between them they have decided to outlaw mysticism as mental cloudiness. Astronomers, physicists, geologists, and psychologists have all been digging fists into man who was once the 'roof and crown of things,' but who stands today, on this 'burnt-out cinder,' this pinch of stardust called the earth, all stripped and sore—not as the harbinger of light, or the vehicle of eternal values, or the incarnation, the forthshining, of a Divine Principle—but rather like a clever animal, once very vocal about his personality and his destiny, but now listening in wild-eyed amazement to the solemn utterances of science on the soul being nothing but brain, and the vaunted free will of man being nothing but an illusory concept in this universe of cast-iron determinism.

But now that we are face to face with the brood of materialistic propensities multiplying apace in art, sociology, history, politics, and philosophy, it is high time that we studied the credentials of science which has spawned them upon the world. How far is the claim of science to pronounce upon the ultimate objectives of human thought and endeavour valid? How far are we to follow her in her search for Truth? Is science the only beacon blazing the pathway to Reality?

Is mysticism merely a will-O'-the-wisp born of the marshes of clammy superstition and sentimentality, or has it, too, a right to lend the human spirit a helping hand in its quest for eternal verity?

If we take human experience in its totality we see that science mutilates it before dealing with it. It is abstract in the sense that its lips are dumb before the qualitative aspect of things, before the artistry of Nature when with wizard fingers she weaves the rain bow, or kindles the nightingale into serenades to the spring. It is capable of dealing only with those quantitative aspects which admit of measurement and computation. Take a flower. Science can submit a meticulously correct account of it in terms of stamen and anther, pollen and petals. But is that the whole truth about a flower? Why does it make the poet's heart leap out in lyrics dripping with honey? How does it hold him with invisible bonds? Evidently your lynx-eyed scientist is blind to a side of the flower which it will unbare only to the tender and loving gaze of a poet. Science is correct but not true; it informs but does not vivify. It were vain to protest that the lyrical gush is something entirely subjective, for psychologically Shelley's *Ode to a Skylark* is on all fours with Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Reason can no more anathematize a St Teresa a-reel with ecstasy than it can an Archimedes who says to the warrior brandishing a sword over his head: 'Don't disturb this circle of mine.' For in both cases we find the human mind reacting to certain features of the cosmos and achieving a certain result. The features of the universe which evoke the rapturous reactions of the mystic are as integral portions of the existential Reality as those to which the scientist and the mathe-



matician respond.

The conflict between science and mysticism is not, therefore, a conflict between superstition and delirious dementia on the one hand, and truth and knowledge on the other, but between two different types of knowledge each independent of the other and acquired after following a specific procedure laid down by the exponents of both. Each has its own methods of demonstration and verification. We shall wave aside the statements of a layman who dares impugn the truth of the conclusions of a scientist who has established them after laborious experimentation. There is no reason why we should pause to weigh and consider the views of a person of flabby spiritual muscles who stands at the base and has verbal flings at those who are scaling the mystic heights. The laboratory can, similarly, throw stones at the cloister at its own risk for it should mind its glass-panes.

In science the conception of personality is thrown overboard. A vice-sodden rake can perform an experiment in physics as well as the greatest of physicists. This is not so in mysticism which is the purest form of religion for it puts the accent, not on ceremonial and symbology, but on the personal experience of the Supreme. The mystic experience is open only to those who have cleared their hearts of all cant and callousness and who are exemplars and patterns of purity. It is because science pricks personality to pieces, because it cannot contemplate things in their integrity, but must of necessity subject them to analysis and anatomy, that truth slips through its fingers. In science our knowledge is of an indirect kind; we know about things but cannot know them in their innermost core and essence for the scientific method erects impermeable walls between the subject and the object. But in the mystic experience we are translated to a plane of being where the veils that divide the knower from the known are lifted, and a transcendent, unphrasable experience

supervenes in which all duality is erased. The self-realization of the mystic is, therefore, not a frail gossamer spun by wandering minds, but a proven fact, anchored in experience, which no arm-chair criticism can blow away. The objection that man cannot rise above his Self cannot stand serious examination. For what is his Self? It is what cannot be thought away, what asserts itself and holds you by the throat even when you try to deny its existence. Neither the body nor the mind is in this sense the Self of man for both of them are instruments of, or rather impositions on, the Self. The statements 'my body,' 'my mind' are on a par with the statements 'my table,' 'my house.' The body and the mind no more constitute the Self of man than do the table and the house. The true Self is 'I'—complete awareness, pure consciousness, unidentified with the states of the body or the mind, shape or size, colour or smell, which are all objects pitted against it and constitute non-self. This Self is the enduring substratum on which the flux and phantasmagoria of the non-self chase each other in an eternal hide-and-seek. It is the Reality on which all phenomena are bottomed and which the mystic seeks to comprehend and realize.

The dogmatism, the assured thump on the table, with which some scientists hold forth on the ultimate problems of the universe and the nature of reality cannot but amuse those who know how in the course of its career of about three hundred years only science has been making false steps, fumbling and groping and mistaking mere stages on the journey for its destination. When a scientist criticizes religion he invariably puts his finger on its mythological ritualistic and superstitious aspects forgetting that the higher, simply because it is the higher, cannot be explained in terms of the lower. Mysticism which is the highest form of religion can, therefore, no more be explained by animism and totemism than the oak can be by the acorn. Religion is as much

or as little ashamed of mythology as chemistry is of alchemy. It is unscientific to assume that whereas science has been maintaining a steady progress towards truth, religion has remained bogged in primitivism and priestly hocus-pocus. If the cosmological and the astronomical views of our forefathers have become for us merely a pot-pourri of intellectual and philosophical curios, a cabinet of ill-assorted mental *bric-a-brac*—why should their religious views be unburied and their mouldering bones rattled in the face of those who consider Religion and not religions to be the Messiah of the modern world. Mysticism is the peak point reached by the soul of man and all the attacks should be launched against this highest fruition of the religious spirit in man and not against its credal ossifications. The attacks come not from those who are in the van of the marching cohorts of science, but from its little corporals and drum-majors whose sterilized intellects lead them to think that tilting against old and venerable institutions is a right royal feat. But when they seek to over-ride mysticism they forget that they are treading into pulp the cardinal and bed rock theory of modern scientific thought, the theory of Evolution. What mysticism asserts is plainly the capacity of man to raise himself, by his own sustained efforts, to a plane of consciousness where the mind is emancipated from its vassalage to that futilitarian mob of little desires and cravings which inhabits the lower levels of awareness. In man Nature seeks to transcend itself, not blindly, as at the sub-human ranges of being, but consciously by feeling in its veins the quiver and the pull of the purposive on-goings of the cosmic pageant. Thus the evolutionary process turns a corner at the human level but it does not come to a halt. Man is by no means its last utterance. As the ape has evolved into man, man may evolve into superman. And what is a mystic but a superman, one whose integral vision is neither warped nor shadowed by the

vocal multiplicity of things. He is the summation of the historical process, the destiny of the travailing ages. He blazes the trail for us and beckons us all to follow him to the shores of Immensity. Yes, we have all to mark his foot-prints and to follow him. We have all to evolve into superman; there is no sheering off from this destiny. The human species has not achieved the consummation of its powers and faculties. The lunatic and the genius are a standing reproof to the magisterial authority of the ordinary consciousness when it pronounces itself to be the *ne plus ultra* of human development. The former shows that there are lower levels to which it can sink, while the latter testifies to the existence of higher reaches of awareness. The mystic cultivates to perfection a quality which forms the most important strand in the mental texture of all the heroes of human story, of all those men and women who by their example seek to straighten out the mental and moral obliquities of human kind, and who publish to the world that right will always bear down wrong. This quality is the ability to efface oneself for the sake of truth. It is that self-naughting which equates to zero the interests and cravings of the little ego, that complete self-surrender which throws itself into the arms of an idea, saying unto it, 'I am thine.' This dedication to a worldly cause, to a cause which seeks to achieve some public good, is a sort of training for the consecration of the spirit to the Whole, for self-absorption in the All. It is the kindergarten stage of the human soul, the vestibule to the Temple.

If we probe into the matter a little deeper, we shall come to know that science owes its glamour and prestige more to those inventions which have enabled man to throw reins round the neck of nature than to any positive and enduring contribution to the elevation and happiness of man as a moral and spiritual being. But these inventions are mere means; the end which is independent of temporal and spatial considerations is to

uplift human nature, to redeem it from the pressing round of distractions and futilities, and to enable it to glimpse the truth which lies back of the thick-woven veil of phenomena, and lends meaning and purpose to this vanity fair. Science has no doubt made man a giant physically, but if we want to add to our mental and spiritual stature we shall have to follow the mystic. It is time, then, for us to stop treating mysticism cavalierly,

and to acknowledge the truth of its fundamental principle, namely, the perfectibility of human nature, and the ability of man to win free from the tearing discords of the world and to realize his Godhead. Unless this is done the reins will have been flung in vain, the horse careering in whatever direction it will, will tumble the rider into chaos and annihilation.

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## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

Swami Vijnanananda's instructive and interesting observations on spiritual topics will be read with benefit. . . . Swami Nikhilananda points out the drawbacks of the materialistic civilization of the West and shows how Western culture could be transformed into a spiritual culture. . . . Prof. Bose's researches in the Vedic religion are continued in *Some Basic Principles of the Vedic Religion*. . . . The reader will find a reasoned account of *Monasticism* through the ages—the target of bitterest attacks as well as the object of highest devotion. . . . Sri Braj Lal Goswami discusses the respective spheres of *Science and Mysticism* and shows that mysticism gives a clearer and completer understanding of Reality.

### INDIAN RENAISSANCE

'One of the greatest causes of India's misery and downfall,' writes Swami Vivekananda, 'has been that she narrowed herself, went into her shell, as the oyster does and refused to give her jewels and her treasures to the other races of mankind; refused to give the life-giving truths to thirsting nations outside the Aryan fold.'

The truth of the above statement comes home more forcibly and painfully when we

see the fortress of ancient Indian culture pierced by the impact of foreign cultures. The champions of Indian culture, like the Catholic priests of old, holding the key of the temple of knowledge, neither entered themselves nor allowed others to enter, and thus became ignorant and unable to defend their religion the ordinary man who is shut out of it even goes to welcome a foreign culture which he does not understand and assimilate.

Unlike any European nation which can afford to imitate a foreign culture by the simple reason that it has not a culture of its own—India has no need for exotic cultures, her own culture being vast and ancient. Neglecting that century-old civilization which has entered into the blood and muscles of every Indian, trying to imitate foreign culture is to make oneself ridiculous. We are glad in this connection to note the appeal issued by Dr Ananda Coomaraswamy, the celebrated savant in America. Writes the *Hindu Organ* :

The younger generation of gogetters that comes to America to study and that will largely shape the course of India's social and educational policies in the immediate future is, for the most part, as ignorant of India's traditions and cultural values as any European might be and sometimes even more so; and just because of this lack of background, cannot grasp the American and European problems that confront it. Freedom is the opportunity to act in accordance with one's own

nature. But our leaders are already denatured, quite as much as Lord Macaulay could have wished them to be, 'a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.' Because they have yet to 'discover' India they have not realized that the modern world is no longer an integrated culture but 'an organized barbarism and a political pandemonium.' They have no moral courage 'to be themselves without which they can be of little use to themselves or anyone else than had their predecessors on whom a so-called Western education had been more forcibly imposed in missionary colleges or government-controlled universities. It will take many a long year for Indians to recover their spontaneity. For the present most of our 'educated' men are just as much as Americans dominated by current catch-words of 'Equality,' 'Democracy,' 'Progress,' 'Literacy,' and so forth. In the past and still today Indians have earned and deserved much of the contempt of Europeans whom they have flattered so sincerely by imitation of all their habits and ways of thinking. We too are on our way to become a nation of Shudras at the same time industrious and ignorant. Notwithstanding that all the precepts of philosophy refer to life we have learnt from the modern world to despise the lover of wisdom and to leap before we look.

What India wants today is immense faith in the greatness of her culture. We should be strong and hopeful and *unashamed* and remember that with something to take, India has immeasurably more to give than any other people in the world. We must recall the greatness of our ancestors, have faith in that blood that runs through our veins and out of that faith and consciousness, of that greatness we must build a new India yet greater than what she was.

Our problem is, continues Dr Coomaraswamy, not so much one of rebirth of an Indian culture as it is one of preserving what remains of it. This culture is valid for us not so much because it is Indian as because it is culture. At the same-time its special forms are adapted to the specifically India's nature and inheritance and they are appropriate to us in the same way that national costume is appropriate to those who have the right to wear it. We cut a sorry figure in our foreign or hybrid clothes; and only invite the ridicule of foreign musicians by playing the harmonium. . . . Again, throughout the ages, India has been a land of profound religious convictions and of equally generous religious tolerance. Here at least if nowhere else it is still possible for men to think of their own faith as the friend and ally of all others in a common cause. It has been said that in the West religion is fast

becoming an archaic and impossible refuge. But in India it still provides for both the hearts and minds of men, and gives them an inalienable dignity; and because of this, the natural connection of religion with sociology and politics has never been broken. There is no such opposition of sacred to profane as is taken for granted in the West: in our experience culture and religion have been indivisible; and that in our inheritance is what we can least of all afford to abandon.

Indian women at the present day and so far as they have not yet been 'brought up to date' are our best conservators of Indian culture. And let us not forget that in a country like India any judgment of standards of culture in terms of statistics of literacy would be ridiculous; literacy in the modern world of magazines and newspapers, is no guarantee of culture whatever; and 'it is far better not to know how to read than not to know what to read.

While admitting the necessity for building up a strong and powerful nation which can lengthen its arms to every corner to protect the weak and preserve peace, we should remember that political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race. We have more important work to do—to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate into the dynamo all the spiritual energy of the race, to deluge the world with that concentrated energy. That being the special mission of India, we should note that instead of imitating the other nations by creating military or political contacts with foreign nations, we should make a special effort to contact them on cultural basis. Says Dr Ananda :

In the meantime also there is an immediate and desperate need for the establishment of cultural, and not merely economic and political, contacts with the rest of the world. No doubt the West is very largely to be blamed for its own cultural isolation which amounts to a very real provincialism; but blame is also ours, for our students and other representatives abroad are oftener engineers or physicians or politicians than men of culture—where they ought to have been both at once, able to contribute something more than their fees to those from whom they come, to learn the newest techniques. When the culture that we know and propose to restore was alive, learned men of foreign countries came from far away to study in India. The measure of our culture is not that of our ability to learn new tricks but that of what we have to give.

Let us by all means take what is of use to us. Let us learn science and mechanism.

from them. But as Hindus we must subordinate everything else to our national ideals. And in religion and spirituality we are the teachers and not students to sit at others' feet. We should know this; the youth of India should learn to be proud of its culture, learning, its spirituality. Compared with every nation, our culture is equal to, if not greater than, theirs.

'O ye, modern Hindus, dehypnotize yourself. The way to do that is found in your own sacred books. Teach yourself, teach everyone his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, greatness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.' (*Swami Vivekananda*).

#### CALL FOR PIONEERS IN EDUCATION

We all know that the future of India depends on education. We do not, for that matter, underestimate the importance of industry and commerce. Illiterate as our people are, we cannot make much headway on industry and commerce, when new technique is being evolved every day for their improvement. And it is only a matter of time for the educated to develop the national wealth. The grinding poverty of the millions, too, can be easily removed, once they are taught the root cause of it—lack of modern technique, tools, manure, and the nature of progress other nations make in this field. It is a matter of common knowledge that though we have got enough arable land and enough natural resources to develop it, still the yield per acre is the lowest in India. Even the cow which we 'worship' yields on the average only 2 lb. per day whereas she gives 15 lb. in England and 20 lb. in Holland. It is not due to the unfertility of our land or the bad breed of our cows but to our ignorance how to make best use of them.

Thus the most primary need that is to be tackled is education—both technical and

high research, for men as well as for women. And most important of all these—we should have education of the people, compulsory primary education of the masses.

In most Western countries every young man is required to give military service when his education is complete. He goes into the barracks, regimented, and drilled—for three, four, or five years. What India has to do today is to organize an army of education. The Indian tradition has made all social service self-supporting, and self-propagating. After finishing his studies, the student will undertake a sacred duty of teaching his village folks. As the adage goes, 'alms to the teacher, and knowledge to the people'—the village will support the teacher and he in turn impart education to the people. On his completion of three years of service to the village, when his vow of duty is over, he will be replaced by another graduate of the village. Is it an impossible idea that every student, when his own education is over, could devote three or so years to the education of his own village people? On the other hand, it should be considered a sacred duty—as sacred as the wandering monk imparting religious knowledge to the people. 'We have to build up this idea of the sacred duty of giving education to the people as one of the elements of our civilization; already we have the idea of giving alms. The one is only the extension of the other.'

Like the monk who wandering all over the land imparts higher wisdom for a morsel of food, so too let the new graduates of the universities make a vow of service and consecrate a year or two of their lives to impart elementary education to their own villagers. The success of all this depends on the quantity and quality of human life that can be sacrificed to it. Without sacrifice nothing great can ever come out. How many of our graduates will give up comfort and ease, opportunities and ambition for this rejuvenating and reawakening of the masses

of India desperately struggling in the clutches of poverty and ignorance?

This much is the civic duty of every educated man and woman who have turned selfish and betrayed the poor, stamping over whose heads they have climbed up the stairs. But apart from this civic consciousness the State too has its duty to the people. It is the duty of the State to conscribe the educated youths, as they do in Europe for military service, and commandeer them as under military orders to the task of mass education. For, illiteracy is as dangerous as an enemy in war. And we are to declare war against illiteracy, and rest not till it is stamped out. The sincerity of the government is judged by the way they do things. Is the government sincere in eradicating this plague of illiteracy? As we mobilize, in war times, all our available resources and forces, so too an all-out attempt should be made now. The graduate who will not serve will be punished, as an able-bodied man who will not serve the nation in

perils will be punished; the parents who will not send their children will be punished. Then and then alone can we lower down the percentage of illiteracy—as they have done in Russia from 90 p. c. to 10 p. c. within ten years!

Let the ideal of service permeate into the blood and muscles of every Indian. In the words of Swami Vivekananda :

Oh India! . . . Forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for self-pleasure—are not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the *Mother's* altar; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian and proudly proclaim—'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother'. Say—'The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, is my brother.' Thou too clad with but a rag round thy loins proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice—'The Indian is my brother; the Indian is my life; India's gods and goddesses are my God; India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heaven of my old age! Say brother—'The soul of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good.'

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

CLIVE TO KEYNES. BY J. C. KUMARAPPA. Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad. Pp. 42. Price Annas 12.

It is as the author himself says, 'a survey of the history of our public debts and credits,' during the British connection in India from Lord Clive to Lord Keynes, in which full advantage has been taken of all dishonest methods to exploit Indian capital for selfish interests.

By various nefarious means as 'hold up', 'embezzlement', 'falsification of accounts', Great Britain has extracted large sums of money from India. As the writer says, 'If a proper account were made of all financial transactions which were capable of being challenged, the aggregate of such items would exceed the public debt figures of one thousand crores (of rupees). Whatever may be the amounts, the only deduction possible is that such amounts should be taken out from Indian accounts and charged to the proper parties' A sum of about 109 million pounds in the period of East India Co. for expeditions beyond the

borders of India and for which wars India had no interest at all, was charged on the British Exchequer, but dishonestly dedicated to Indian Revenues, in spite of protests. Another sum of 397 crores of rupees incurred for imperial designs was similarly placed on Indian Revenues, during the Crown period. Again the Sterling Credit obtained through the suffering and starvation (about 3 million died in Bengal) of our villagers, has been reduced to Rs 1600 crores by debiting Rs 1700 crores for the European wars, and Rs 400 crores for the so-called 'public debts.' And even this sum is grumbled and attempts are being made to scale down or even to spread the payment over a long period of years.

With quotations from authorities, Sri Kumarappa rightly pleads for honest dealings to repay the enormous debt accumulated by the sweat of the starving millions. Famine during the war has taken a heavy toll of lives; famine even now stares in the face; people are suffering and nation-building schemes are to be accelerated; and all our credit has been locked up with Great Britain.

The book is a passionate and courageous pleading for fair deal, showing at the same time dirty tricks employed by Great Britain to build up her own position at the ruination of India.

**PERPLEXITIES AND PARADOXES.** BY MIGNEL UNAMUNO. *Published by the Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th St., New York 16, N. Y. Pp. 165. Price \$2.50.*

The book is a collection of some of the most interesting essays by a learned Spanish philosopher. On the whole they make delightful reading with their sparkling wit and the homely yet lucid style. Many of the essays show the author to be a profound and wise student of human nature, critical of its follies and yet loving and sympathetic, with the desire of helping men and women to rise to greater moral and spiritual heights. We in India especially are sure to feel a bond of spiritual kinship with the Spanish people whose inner preoccupation with the spiritual life is so faithfully portrayed by the author.

**WHITHER CIVILIZATION.** BY T. M. P. MAHADEVAN. *Published by Ananda Book Depot, 2-10 Post Office St., G. T., Madras. Pp. 112, Price Rs 2,*

This is a collection of broadcast talks by Dr Mahadevan. Though he discusses a variety of topics still there is a thread running through—the culture and civilization of mankind. The author hopes that the 'future civilization will be founded on intellectual co-operation, internal understanding, and economic sharing and wedded to the realization of the eternal values. . . .

In all these talks we find clear thinking and lucid expressing. We hope this will be appreciated by all lovers of culture, in all climes.

**INDIA STEPS FORWARD.** BY JAG PARVESH CHANDER. *Published by the Indian Printing Works Kacheri Road, Lahore. Pp. 277. Price Rs 6-8.*

The historical events of the Cabinet Mission in India have been narrated chronologically and exhaustively. Beginning with the announcement of Lord Pethick Lawrence in the Commons, the narrative

ends with Congress-League 'cabinet' in the Centre. As a pure historical literature it is most interesting; but we cannot say it is critical too, since we find little original thinking in it. It is more or less reproduction of the statements already appeared in the Press. But it will serve as a document of interest to future historians.

**THE GITA ACCORDING TO GANDHI.** BY MAHADEV DESAI. *Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad. Pp. 382. Price Rs. 4.*

This is perhaps one of the happiest of all commentaries attempted on the Gita. As Gandhiji says, every page is evidence of his scholarship and exhaustive study. The value of the book is enhanced by the masterly preface called 'My submission.' We are sure this scholarly study will be widely appreciated and prove to be a great success.

### BENGALI

**DADU.** BY KSHITIMOHAN SEN. *Published by Viswabharati Granthalaya, 210 Cornwallis Street, Calcutta. Pp. 661. Price Rs 4.*

We do not know of any other person who has studied the lives and teachings of the medieval saints of Northern India so thoroughly as the author of the present book. He has taken infinite pains, covering a period of many years to collect the sayings of these saints. Some years back Professor Sen published the sayings of Kabir, now he has brought out the sayings of Dadu. This large volume containing several hundreds of sayings, classified and systematically arranged, is an authoritative book on Dadu. Bengali version of the sayings is given with helpful notes and comments. The book is a valuable contribution to Bengali literature. We cannot sufficiently praise the author for this unique production. In this connection our silent homage goes to that many-sided genius—Poet Tagore—under whose inspiration, guidance, and encouragement, the author worked. We wish the author be able to bring out the sayings of the other mystics as well.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### SWAMI ASESHANANDA SAILS

#### FOR AMERICA

Swami Areshananda sailed for the United States of America from Colombo on the 23rd October 1947 by the S. S. *Zeeland*. He is proceeding to New York in order to assist Swami Nikhilananda of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, New York.

### REFUGEE RELIEF WORK

The Ramakrishna Mission has started Refugee Relief work at Kurukshetra with a milk canteen, to

which medical work is being added. These will soon be followed by a free kitchen. A few able volunteers and adequate help in cash and kind are *urgently* needed for this work.

### THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

#### REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1946

The 38th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at the Belur Math premises on the 5th October, 1947. The following is a brief

report of the work done by the Mission during the year 1946.

*Centres:* There were altogether 65 Mission centres and 8 sub-centres, which served all without distinction of caste, creed or colour and preached non-sectarian-religious principles.

*Relief Work:* During the year under review, Riot Relief work was conducted in Tippera and Noakhali Districts. The Mission distributed up to the end of December, 1,736 blankets, 6,060 pieces of cloth, 2,278 sweaters and banians, 4,669 utensils, 325 mds. 25 srs. of rice and 203 lbs. of powdered milk; besides rosaries, vermilion packets and conch-bracelets were largely distributed. The Outdoor Dispensary at Himechar treated 1,746 patients. The evacuee Relief Camp at Sylhet fed 221 persons twice a day and distributed 18½ mds. of rice to 317 refugees. The Sargachhi Ashrama distributed some woollen blankets and chaddars among the refugees. Up to the end of December last, receipts under this head were Rs. 2,49,272-11-3 and disbursements Rs. 86,053-3-9. The work is still continuing.

For the riot-affected people in Bihar, Relief work was conducted on a small scale. Flood Relief work was conducted in the Districts of Cachar, Chittagong and Sylhet.

*Medical Work:* The Mission conducted 6 general and 2 maternity Hospitals, with a total of 514 beds. The total number of indoor cases was 11,977, and that of surgical cases, including those of the Eye Hospital at Brindaban, was 3,073. The 41 outdoor

Dispensaries, including the T. B. Clinic at Delhi and the Eye Clinic at Karachi, treated in all 5,00,744 cases during the year.

*Educational Work:* Work under this head included two Colleges, 4 Residential High Schools, 12 Secondary Schools and 11 M. E. Schools, with a total of 4,080 boys and 1,922 girls; 49 Primary Schools with 2,886 boys and 2,725 girls; 13 Night Schools with 416 students, 4 Industrial Schools with 367 students, and two centres for technicians having 130 mechanics and electricians under training. The Mission had 35 Student's Homes, which accommodated 1,582 students. The Orphanage at Rahara, in 24-Paraganas, had 180 boys on its rolls.

*Work for Women:* Under this head the Mission conducted the Women's Department of the Benares Home of Service, the Maternity Hospitals at Calcutta and Taki, the Widows' Home at Puri, the Women Invalids' Home at Benares, the Sarada Vidyalaya at Madras, the Sister Nivedita Girls' School at Calcutta, etc.

*Work outside India:* In Mauritius, Singapore, Burma and Ceylon the Mission carried on its educational and cultural activities.

*Finance:* The total receipts of the Mission in India in 1946 were Rs. 32,10,699-9-5 and the total disbursements Rs. 31,53,513-4-0.

Belur Math (Howrah)  
7 October 1947

SWAMI MADHAVANANDA  
General Secretary,  
Ramakrishna Mission

## CHITTAGONG FLOOD RELIEF

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION'S APPEAL

The Ramakrishna Mission has started Flood Relief work in the Chittagong District, and the first distribution of foodstuffs took place on the 14th September last. Since then it has been giving weekly doles of foodstuffs through two centres—one at Mahira and another at Anwara, covering about 10 villages. Every week 340 recipients are being helped with rice and some 660 persons with Chira, biscuits and milk. We have sent about 400 mds. of biscuits to make up for the shortage of rice, which is hard to procure even at Rs. 38/- per maund. As the standing crops were destroyed, we have distributed seedlings to the cultivators so that the next crop may not fail in the area. We have also opened an outdoor Dispensary, which gives medical relief to the people. Fortunately there is no epidemic of any kind. Hut construction has to be provided for, since winter is approaching, and there is need for clothing also. We appeal to our generous countrymen to supply us with funds. Contributions will be thankfully received and acknowledged at the following addresses: (1) The General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, P. O. Belur Math, Dt. Howrah; (2) The Manager, Advaita Ashrama, 4 Wellington Lane, Calcutta—13; (3) The Manager, Ramakrishna Math, 1 Edbodhan Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta—3.

Belur Math (Howrah)  
18 October 1947

SWAMI MADHAVANANDA  
General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission