

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

VOL. LVIII

FEBRUARY 1953

No. 2



“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

## A VISION

*Trīṇi rājānā vidathe purūṇi pari viśvāni bhūṣathah sadāmsi,  
Apaśyam-atra manasā jagannvān-vrate gandharvān-āpi vāyukeśān.*

O my shining Kings,  
The Twin Rays traversing the Dark Unknown,  
Your aureole of Grace  
Now twines around three Seats of Gods  
That mark the Lightning-Path  
Of my questing Soul.

Fluttering my Spirit's wings,  
I have soared and soared . . . .  
And I have seen e'en here  
In Being's silent core  
Sun-rayed Angel-forms—  
Austere guards o'er immortal Bliss—  
Their tresses blown by winds.

—*Gāthino Viśvāmitrah, (Rg-Veda, III. 38. 6)*  
(Translated by Anirvan)

## LETTERS OF SWAMI TURIYANANDA\*

Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama,  
(Banaras),  
3. 1. 1917

Dear B— Babu,

. . . Though the working out of the Prārabdha-Karma (fruits of works in past lives, which have caused the present life) on the part of fully liberated (but still embodied) souls appears to be real from the point of view of the common man, the liberated persons themselves do not admit it (as real). For, the admissibility of the validity of the Prārabdha is entirely due to the identification of the Atman with the body.

'*Dehātma-bhāvo naiveṣṭah, prārabdham tyajyatām-atah*'<sup>1</sup> 'The identification of the Atman with the body is not accepted by us. Therefore, give up all thought of Prārabdha'. This is the final position. The Bhaktas, devoted to God, completely rely on His will, and so they do not use the word 'Prarabdha'. Those who follow the path of Karma generally use the word 'Prarabdha'. . . .

SRI TURIYANANDA

\* \* \*

Sasiniketan,  
Puri,  
21. 7. 1917

Dear D—,

I am glad to receive your letter . . . I am specially glad to find in it clear and bright evidence of the fact that the Lord is inspiring you with good thoughts and that your mind is getting purer and purer. May He be yet more gracious to you—this is my sincere prayer to Him. . . .

It is indeed not easy to give up all desires. But desires cannot become very powerful if the mind is given to discrimination. Sage Vasishtha tells Ramachandra, '*Ekam vivekam, . . . ādāya viharanneva saṅkateṣu na muhyati*' 'Taking only one companion, viz. Viveka (discrimination), one does not become deluded even in great distress'. It is true that delusion cannot overpower a person if the sense of discrimination can be kept steady. If one always remembers that all these are impermanent, what can desire do? There is no fear from little desires. That desire which makes one forget Him is alone productive of the greatest evil. Desire cannot lead one into wrong ways if one lives in the world constantly remembering Him. Go on calling on Him and make known to Him your heart's desire; He will set everything right.

There is a story about renunciation in the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*. A certain Brahmachari, who regarded himself as a great *tyāgi* (man of renunciation), gave up everything external, keeping only a short piece of cloth, a seat, and a water-pot. In order to break his self-delusion, his Guru said to him, 'What have you renounced? You have renounced nothing'. The Brahmachari thought, 'I have practically nothing left except a piece of cloth for wearing, a seat, and a water-pot. Is the Gurudeva thinking of these?' Having thought so, the Brahmachari decided to renounce these things also. Lighting a fire before him, he con-

\* Translated from the original Bengali.

<sup>1</sup> *Vivekacūḍamanī* (of Shankaracharya), 462.



signed, one by one, the remaining three things into the fire, and said, 'Now I have given up everything'. The Guru, however, said, 'What is it that you have renounced? Cloth?—it is only made of cotton! Similarly the seat and the water-pot are made of other materials. Having given these up, what is it that you have really renounced?' Then the Brahmachari thought, 'What more do I have? Of course, there is my body. Well, let me sacrifice the body in the fire'. Having decided thus when the Brahmachari was getting ready to sacrifice his body in the fire in front of him, his Guru said to him, 'Wait! Consider what you are going to do. What is that in this body which is yours? It has originated from your parents and its growth and nourishment are due to food. What have you got to do with it?' Then the eyes of the Brahmachari were opened. Thanks to the Guru, the Brahmachari could then understand that egoism is the root of all evil. Real renunciation is achieved as soon as this egoism is given up. Otherwise, by renouncing external things, even including the body itself, nothing is renounced.

Therefore, taking or giving up—all these are mere illusions. The essential thing is taking refuge in Him. One-pointed devotion to His feet, love of His devotees, and relish for His name—these are the real things to pray for.

SRI TURIYANANDA

---

## ANCIENT IDEALS AND MODERN LIFE

BY THE EDITOR

Probably not many are to be met with who can, with any appreciable amount of certainty or confidence, distinguish between and designate what is 'ancient' and what is 'modern'. But even from the most ancient times, these terms have been in use. In every age and in every land there have always been some ideas and ideals that were considered 'ancient' and some others that were considered 'modern'. Broadly, though often mistakenly, a distinction of a sort is made and accepted between these ideas and ideals. It is not uncommon to find that those who hold and propagate new and hitherto unknown ideas and principles are looked upon as 'modern' by the majority of their contemporaries, while those who set store by the ideals and practices of the past and emphasize the inherent value of the age-old traditions are looked up as 'ancient'. Sadly enough, the latter are looked down upon as unprogressive, old-fashioned, and stagnating. It is the tragedy of human

life that those who consider themselves modern most often fail, notwithstanding their obvious advantages over their predecessors, to acquire an intelligent grasp of events past or present. The lessons of history are as unmistakable as the evidence in support of man's gross heedlessness is overwhelming.

What is more than obvious on the surface is the phenomenal advance of science and civilization, which clearly differentiates the modern age from the ancient. If it is assumed that man has existed for roughly a million years, it could be said that modern science has existed for about three hundred years. And in this brief period the powerful impact of science on modern life has been of an incredibly revolutionary character. The civilization of the West in particular is a typical product of the age of science and technology. The successful application of the scientific method to the problems of man and the universe has dispelled or transformed



many traditional beliefs and conceptions in politics, religion, economics, and human behaviour. The immense acquisition of power over nature has led to an attitude of mind which impels the moderner to adore a materialistic and militant culture, while despising psychic life and spiritual values. This non-spiritual view, which enjoys not a little respectability in the secular parlours of pseudo-moderns, rests upon the assumption that man is a biological phenomenon, more or less representing and conforming to this particular type of behaviour or that and therefore progress may be achieved by regulating this 'economic' or 'libidinal' man through environmental control alone. Needless to say that the world today is reaping the rich harvest of such a sensate philosophy.

Rapidly surveying the course of world events and the history of human achievement through the centuries, one cannot but be struck by the greatness of man himself. He is far from the merely finite, limited personality, entirely subject to instinctual and hereditary dispositions, that the modern psychological and psycho-analytical view makes him out to be. The so-called scientific attitude, sacrificing the vastness of man's spiritual being to the exactness of quantitative and experimental data, levels itself down to stereotyped standards, at the expense of higher metaphysical verities. 'The modern man has lost all the metaphysical certainties of his medieval brother,' writes Dr. Jung, 'and set up in their place the ideals of material security, general welfare, and humaneness. But it takes more than an ordinary dose of optimism to make it appear that these ideals are still unshaken. Material security, even, has gone by the board, for the modern man begins to see that every step in material "progress" adds just so much force to the threat of a more stupendous catastrophe'. The complexities and contradictions of modern life are too well known to need enumeration. But because of these, none would be so crass as to wish for the return of the dark ages of the distant past.

Taking the gilt off the gingerbread, one

would very much like to know what exactly ails modern life and what really stands in the way of achievement of peace and plenty for all. Why is life today more insecure and more full of hazards than a hundred or even a thousand years ago? And what may be the cause of the increase in tensions and divergences that divide and have always divided the human race? To these questions there could not be different answers in different countries. The modern social distemper is not certainly due to lack of a world government or to excess of population. The problem is more fundamental and psychologically deeper than it is ordinarily believed to be. It is, in fact, the spiritual inadequacy of modern man to respond rightly to the challenge of aggressive evil. And, as Toynbee says, the character of our response determines the chances of survival. Not physical or technical hindrances, then, but blind passions and irrational and terrifying manifestations of power that are at the root of the present-day failure to achieve the kind of progress we want either for the individual or for the community.

In this context of modern life, it does appear difficult to understand the need for and relevancy of the venerable and potent ancient ideals of mankind. By ancient ideals are meant the eternal and changeless truths of life that have come down to us from the earliest times, and not the periodically changing host of ideas and beliefs, varying from place to place. The importance of the universal spiritual values of the world's most cherished religious systems to the stable reconstruction of social order need hardly be over-emphasized. The right sort of inspiration and strength that every nation needs for its progressive march towards its goal are almost always supplied by the ancient wisdom and past experience that form its rich national heritage. When the life-giving potentialities of the spiritual ideals for which a nation stands are lacking, the characteristic symptoms of general decay of civilizations and cultures, following the schism in the soul of man, become evident. Life then tends to grow purposeless and mechanical, and



before long, the vacuum thus created within is easily filled by unhealthy substitutes. Thus it is often seen that in spite of technology and science, crude and superstitious notions of man and his place in the universe are holding the field even where the 'old-fashioned' ancient ideals have been kept away at a safe distance, if not altogether disregarded.

While the ancient moral and spiritual ideals of man have nothing in them that seeks to obstruct the progress of humanity or the advancement of the natural and other sciences, it is somewhat intriguing to find that the moderns deprecate these ideals, unreasonably though. Nowhere have these ideals advocated the total illusory nature of the world, nor have they extolled the need for cultivating an absence of the will to live. They have shown, notably in the case of Hinduism, amazing flexibility of forms to meet the demands of changing conditions. 'When we read with attention the poetical and philosophical movements of the East,' wrote a great European philosopher, 'especially those of India, which are beginning to spread in Europe, we discern there so many truths, and truths so profound and standing in so strong a contrast with those mean results which, in later days, have satisfied European genius that we are tempted to bow the knee before the genius of the East, and see in that cradle of mankind the true home of philosophy'. Thus there is no inherent incompatibility between ancient ideals and modern life, the former being of positive value in purging the latter of its false and artificial aspects and in enabling the individual seek the right way of dealing with the forces of the inner life.

Advocates of the modern hedonistic pleasure-principle conveniently forget to ask themselves if they, by renouncing God and spirituality and everything that relates to religion, have at last succeeded in getting hold of the hen that lays the golden egg. It is true that deplorable conditions exist all around and that it is very urgent that conditions should be vastly bettered. Life is becoming more exciting and enjoyable, and to the average man life is now not worth living without the mate-

rial advantages and benefits conferred by science. But what is deplorable is that their so-called scientific spirit, over which the moderns take pride, is frustrated and falsified by their unscientific attitude of neglect of a vast field of human experience, viz. the spiritual and mystical, which is by its very nature more subjective than objective. A response of a different character, and on a level higher and more enduring than the merely physical is needed to overcome the forces of aggression that constantly assail man from within and without.

What do the ancient ideals of every land tell us of? They speak of the ultimate purpose of life, of the one Truth which prophets and sages realize and designate variously, of the Supreme Principle—of which man is an essential part; they tell us of charity, renunciation, and service. They proclaim that the goal of human life is the attainment of Eternal Freedom, through the realization of the identity (or oneness) of the soul of man with the Supreme Self, and that true happiness comes from the limitless Infinite, and not from finite, sense-bound objects of enjoyment. The one plausible argument that attempts to justify the unimportance of ancient ideals for modern life is that the latter do not contribute to the creation of favourable conditions for happiness. Rather, the ancient 'pessimistic, world-negating' philosophy of life is said to act as an obstacle or a damper. But happiness derived through the senses is always conditioned by the individual's temperament and need, except of course, the supreme bliss of Brahman, which transcends the senses. And happiness obtained through sensuous and supra-sensuous experience is of three kinds, according as the individual concerned is predominantly Sāttvic, Rājasic, or Tāmasic by nature.

'That in which a man comes to rejoice by practice and in which he reaches the end of pain, and that which is like poison at first but like nectar in the end—that *happiness* born of the clear knowledge of the Self, is said to be of the nature of *Sattva*.

'That which arises from the contact of the



senses with their objects and which is like nectar at first but like poison in the end—that *happiness* is said to be of the nature of *Rajas*.

'But that which deludes the soul at the beginning and even after its termination, and which springs from sleep, sloth, and error—that *happiness* is declared to be of the nature of *Tamas*'. (*Gita*).

The spiritual teachers of India urged that men should strive after the happiness that is of the nature of *Sattva*. The source of this happiness is not in external things, but within every man. Notwithstanding serious drawbacks, the modern man feverishly seeks happiness of the nature of *Rajas* and *Tamas* and repeatedly suffers for it.

If material values have well-nigh overshadowed eternal values, the fault does not lie with the latter but with those who feel they can do without them. However, there can be no doubt that they do so—if at all they can—at grave peril. Those who have not realized the wonderful potency of ancient ideals for uplifting and ennobling modern life naturally decry the ideals, and, due to sheer spiritual inanity, seek substitute, but hardly adequate, satisfaction in the body and the senses, exclaiming 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!' This mood of frustration (nothing but that, for it is certainly not scientific rationalism!), born of a desperate and losing battle for pelf and power, deprives conscious life of its deeper meaning and purpose and provokes the skin-deep animal instincts and impulses to break out in all their grossness. These poor victims of neurosis, whose number is not inconsiderable in present-day civilization, are at

war not only with themselves but also with others.

The need of society today is a well co-ordinated scheme of the four cardinal ends (*Vargas*) of a complete life—viz. *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma*, and *Moksha*. It is amusing to be told by the modern self-styled well-wishers of the masses that the ancient social ideal of India is other-worldly, designed to keep the poorer classes in continued poverty. *Artha* (wealth) and *Kama* (desire for enjoyment and for good living standards) are two of the four main ends of life, to the complete attainment of which each and every individual is urged to devote himself. These were judiciously placed between *Dharma* (spiritual values) at the beginning and *Moksha* (liberation) at the end, to ensure a healthy integration of personality and obviate the possibility of any morbid or incomplete development of the individual.

Ironically enough, modern life tends to confine itself to the two secular ends only, leaving out the two spiritual ends as being of no consequence. Today *Artha* and *Kama* alone constitute the goal of life's struggle. *Moksha* is more or less uncommon and *Dharma* is too weak to exert any appreciable influence. The consequences of such a secular and partial view of life and the world are gradually manifesting themselves everywhere, to our great dismay. The crux of the problem before man is simple enough to know and its solution too is equally simple. But the simplest things known are often the most difficult to practise.

A synthesis of ancient ideals and modern achievements can ensure the highest type of life for every individual.

---

'What good is it to talk of the strength of your muscles, of the superiority of your Western institutions, if you cannot make Truth square with your society, if you cannot build up a society into which the highest Truth will fit? What is the good of this boastful talk about your grandeur and greatness, if you stand up and say, "This courage is not practical". Is nothing practical but pounds, shillings, and pence? If so, why boast of your society? *That society is the greatest, where the highest truths become practical.* That is my opinion, and if society is not fit for the highest truths, make it so, and the sooner, the better. Stand up, men and women, in this spirit, dare to believe in the Truth, dare to practise the Truth.'

Swami Vivekananda



# RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA

BY GIUSEPPE TUCCI

When speaking of time, Ramakrishna is near to us and yet he already belongs to the world of legend. It is thus often difficult to distinguish the historical fact from the imaginary one, the concrete reality of his daily life from the ideal reality which he now represents for his followers. This is the fate of all the founders of new religions. Their personality becomes the personality of thousands of others, prompts new energies, and transfers itself in new spiritual attitudes. He lives and spreads his spiritual superiority among the people who in turn will keep the initial impulse going, will feel his fascination and at the same time will identify with him their own inspirations, ideals, and hopes.

Ramakrishna was born in Bengal at the time when the first contacts with the Western world brought about a new orientation among the cultured classes and a new basis was laid for those religious and social movements which aimed at reforming the entire life of India. At the same time, traditional prejudices had to be overcome, chiefly because they had limited individual aspirations. It was therefore a social and religious renovation, inasmuch as in India the religious motive has been the lymph which permeates, spreads, and determines all thoughts and actions.

Around him gathered an anonymous and simple crowd, the slave of a thousand social and religious scruples, a political serf, economically disinherited, by nature longing for an ardent spiritual life.

Ramakrishna is, no doubt, one of the greatest religious characters of modern India. He certainly had many forerunners. From the dawn of centuries, from the banks of her rivers or at the foot of her towering mountains which reach the sky, she can count a large number of ascetics and saints who preceded him and have followed the same principles.

But there is something new in him. Even after he has given up everything and his life is ebbing away, he still remains among the people who suffer and long for a word of sympathy. There is in him a spontaneous devotion for all divine manifestations, under whatever shape or symbol they may appear; an unlimited respect for every heart that is sincerely praying God, whatever the name He may have. He distinguishes himself for his great desire to look for what the different religions have in common; he does not insist on the characteristics which distinguish one religion from the other.

He was the descendant of an orthodox Brahmanic family. He lost his father when still a child and after joining his brother at Calcutta, he followed, unwillingly, the traditional course of his school: grammar, rhetorics, theology.

From the time he was a boy, he rebelled against two things: tradition and science. Unconsciously he followed the way of the Siddha, i.e. the perfect man, the man who is the supreme ideal of Indian mysticism. The Siddha is not a saint, nor has he any particular ethical aims, but he is the person who has fully attained his true divine essence. The majority of humanity most certainly does not follow this way, nor does man obey the interior voice of his conscience nor allow the universal soul within him to act instinctively and with nearly unconscious strength: that soul which brings all things to light and which reabsorbs them in itself through the great drama of cosmic evolution.

Humanity accepts, elaborates, and transmits to future generations a number of laws, principles, and precepts which constitute a collective consciousness which alone dominates and inspires the events, thus creating history. But the Siddha is beyond this flux



of conventions. All around him, uniformity and mediocrity are in turmoil: he is outside it all and to be outside means to estrange oneself or often to seal with a sacrifice this chosen life. Ramakrishna also feels this irreconcilable dualism. From the time he follows his brother as priest to the temple of Kāli, he does not respect the rules of liturgy. His life is already such that people accustomed to follow the same ancient traditions begin to whisper and criticize. The way is already marked: he will not be one among the others, he will no longer obey the laws of men but God's voice. People believe he is mad and they act as people generally do when confronted with certain anomalies of the spirit, which they are unable to understand and to explain. Man is afraid of all that is different from himself. He does not like to come face to face with those few who disregard traditional values.

They send for doctors, they tell him to take a rest, they want him to marry. But all is of no avail. Ramakrishna leaves the temple and seeks refuge in a solitary wood, on the banks of the Ganges, and there he invokes the Great Mother so that She may reveal herself to him. He wants that the statue of the Goddess—to whom he addresses his daily prayers—should come to life and appear in all Her glory before his worshipping eyes. They heard him calling out the name of the Goddess and weep and cry: 'Mother! Mother!'. Many will be surprised in learning that the 'mother', whom he called with all the bitterness of a forsaken child, is that very same Kāli whom tradition represents under terrifying aspects: black as a cloud before a storm, with her tongue stained with blood and a wreath of skulls, marking the time of her terrible dance on the body of Shiva.

But we must not forget that this Kāli is a symbol. A symbol of that divine will and cosmic energy whereby all that was in the supreme mind spreads out in the infinite variety of the world. She is the one who shapes all things and annuls all forms through that perennial rhythm of life and death which,

besides making things appear and disappear, flows inexhaustible like the alternate breathing of God.

And at last the vision appeared. It appeared unexpectedly, like a sudden revelation of eternity which consecrated the palinogenesis of the saint by a spiritual baptism. He never forgot the sublime and, at the same time, terrible moment of the first vision he had. More than once he spoke about it to his followers but, as generally happens for the most intense moments of a mystical life, he was not capable of describing the details. At the contact of the divine, the human spirit is as if wrapped up in a mist and loses itself in a supreme light which blinds and absorbs it. But let us see how he spoke of his vision:

'I was suffering terribly because I had never been granted the privilege of seeing the Great Mother. I felt as if my heart were wrung like a wet cloth. I was restless, doubting that my fate might be never to see Her in this life.

'But I could not reconcile myself to the idea of staying away from Her and I thought there was no reason for me to live. Suddenly my eyes caught sight of a sword that was in the temple: I ran like a madman to grasp it and thus end my life, when all at once the Mother appeared and I fell unconscious to the ground.

'For a few days I did not know what was going on around me; I only knew that I was happy as I had never been before. . . . Everything around me had disappeared. I was in the midst of a boundless ocean full of light and wherever I turned, my eyes saw only thundering waves advancing towards me with a terrific noise to engulf me. All at once they were on me and I disappeared with them. I felt I was drowning. I was dragged into the storm and fainted away'.

Those who know the life of mystics, whether they be of the West or of the East, know also that these facts, however they may be understood and explained, are such a vivid reality that once they have been experienced, they close one period of life to open another. The division is so complete between the first and the second, that religious initiations compare these moments to death, i.e. death of contingent life and rebirth on the eternal plane.

Also Ramakrishna had become another



man: the appearance of the Great Mother had given him a new vision of things. Besides the mirage of vain things, he had had glimpses of eternity, following which all human conventions dissolve like morning mists under the first rays of the rising sun. The Brahmanic cord which marked the privilege of caste does not exist any longer; he eats together with a dog and sweeps the house of an untouchable.

Visions repeat themselves with such frequency and violence that the body is exhausted: he can hardly sleep and his whole body burns as if with fever. His only relief is to bathe in cool waters. The ecstasy of mystic contemplation can only be attained through the martyrdom of the flesh, just as if the body could not stand the weight of this unknown strength which spiritual ascension arouses in him or which comes to him through mysterious ways.

Many think that without masters it is impossible to open the doors of Heaven. Without a sacrament or an initiation, man remains only with the weight of his own flesh, the sin of his birth and the darkness of his mistakes. They are wrong. Also Ramakrishna has had his masters, but merely to learn their particular system of meditation and prayer and certainly not to enter in touch with God.

He had been initiated by the revelation which had enflamed his spirit. No master had ever taught him how man can approach God. He had received a great blessing from the Great Mother who had not remained deaf to his invocations. Like Chaitanya, he believes that the Divine cannot remain insensible to the prayers of the person who addresses Him with all the devotion and enthusiasm of his faith.

Of an emotive temperament, he had followed the way of devotion, searching for something, without any guidance. It is useless to speak of God: theology is like a blind man talking of colours; no description in the world can ever give us the glory of an autumn sunset; Ramakrishna reaches God through his heart and not through his brain.

'An almanac,' he once said to one of his

disciples, 'foretells rain, but no matter how much you squeeze the book, not one drop of water will ever come out of it. The scriptures are full of beautiful words, but it is not enough to read them to be a religious person. The vulture soars high in the immense heights of space, but its eyes are always turned towards the ground looking for a putrid carcass. In the same way, the mind of the theologian clings to the things of this world'.

But Ramakrishna was not yet satisfied. He knew that the road to wisdom was long and difficult. He knew that once descended into the abyss of our spirit, a new world opens before us, perhaps wider than the sidereal spaces. One vision calls another one, a discovery also a second one, a conquest paves the way to a greater one.

Through the revelation of Kāli he had acquired the capability of attaining a state of ecstasy which Indian religious psychology calls Savikalpa-Samādhi, i.e. a contact with a symbolic manifestation of the being.

As compared with it, a still higher contact, absolute in its transparency, was the Nirvikalpa-Samādhi, i.e. the experience of the indiscriminate. It is generally said that, with very few exceptions, whoever has reached such spiritual exaltation cannot live: the worn-out body dissolves itself.

Ramakrishna, who until then had experienced a life of devotion and religious ecstasy (or what Indian mysticism calls Madhura-rasa, i.e. loving submission), was not satisfied. It was necessary to tear the veil of Māyā, overcome the symbol, and have glimpses of the Absolute. The doors of the supreme mystery were opened for him by a Sādhu, one of those ascetics who wander through India without any worldly attachments and with no desires, who are indifferent to all things. They live in the open, both when the sun is scorching and when monsoons overflow the earth with their angry cataracts. His name was Totāpuri. He arrived by chance at Dakshineswar and saw Ramakrishna. He immediately understood his great religious personality and began initiating him to the Nirvikalpa-Samādhi. It



had taken Totāpuri forty years of hard exercises, macerations, and renunciations, to conquer his goal. It took Ramakrishna only one night and one day, but it was one of the hardest efforts he ever accomplished in his life.

It was practically impossible for him to overcome the psychological plane of the symbol. Everything faded away before his concentration: but the image and vision of the Great Mother remained there immovable. Totāpuri lost his patience. Looking around him, he found a piece of glass and he crushed it angrily on Ramakrishna's forehead, between the eyes, and commanded him to concentrate his mind on that point.

'Then', he used to tell his pupils, when describing this unforgettable moment, 'using all my iron will I began to meditate again and as soon as the image of the Great Mother appeared, I used my discrimination like a sword and severed it in two. All obstacles disappeared and, overcoming the relative plane, I lost myself in Samādhi'. And he remained unconscious for three days and three nights, watched over by the master.

Having reached this point, a follower of the pure Vedanta would have thought that there was nothing more to be done: after receiving the revelation of the supreme Ātman, the world disappears like a mirage or a vain image. One must only continue to concentrate in meditation and that is all. But Tāntric experience was very much alive in Ramakrishna. It taught him that Māyā is not an inconsistent illusion, but the operating force of the supreme Being, the energy which prompts eternal ideas and creates the cosmic process and, at the same time, the infinite reflexes of the Absolute and the resonances which it awakens in the human soul.

And now we come to one of the most important points of Ramakrishna's mysticism. Religious experience is divided in two planes: the plane of the absolute and shapeless, to which one can arrive through the Nirvikalpa-Samādhi, and the other plane which concerns the different relative manifestations which are

the consequence of this experience, though still remaining in a world of reality.

'We cannot', he said, 'know God fully. He is shapeless and at the same time has a shape. To the devotee he appears as a personal God; for those who have experienced the unsubstantiality of the world, he is shapeless. He thinks of the impersonal as if it were a vast ocean without shores, an infinite extension of water without land on any side; only here and there appear blocks of ice created by the intense cold of devotion. That is to say, it manifests itself like a person to the devotee, but when the sun of knowledge appears, ice melts and one cannot say that God is a person: nobody can see his shape. Words cannot express what He is. Who could do it? He who could, viz. the individual self, has then ceased to exist'.

The individuality of the believer is therefore not extraneous to the evocation. He does not contemplate passively the divine shape imposed on him, outside conscient co-operation, but, in a certain sense, he himself, through the contribution of his personality, fashions and forms the aspects of his divinity.

Therefore the latter is a true refraction of the eternal existing in him, but at the same time a refraction which is a re-creation of the devotee, his special way of conceiving, feeling, and seeing it and—what is more important—of re-experiencing it.

But all these different refractions of the supreme Being have only one source and this is their unity:

'A dyer used to dye dresses in a special manner. He used to ask his customers: How would you like me to dye your dress? If the customer answered, "red", the dyer dipped the dress in a vat and then took it out, saying: "Here is your dress dyed red". Another one wanted it yellow. The dyer dipped it in the same vat and took it out and lo!, the cloth was yellow. Also for other colours, he used the same vat, always obtaining the same results. A customer who had noticed all this, told the dyer: "My friend, I have no preference for any particular colour. I would like to know which are your tastes and have my dress dyed as you would prefer. I like the colour you have used for your own". The Lord shows Himself



now in one shape, now with no shape, always according to the needs of the devotee. The manifest vision is true, relatively to the different creatures which are, firstly, limited and conditioned creatures and, secondly, placed in the midst of different things and situations. Only the divine dyer knows in what colour he himself is dyed'.

God, as an absolute, and God as a personal god, are one and the same thing:

'Faith in the one implies faith in the other. Thus one cannot think of fire apart from its capability to burn: neither can the latter be considered separate from fire. Thus one cannot conceive the rays of the sun without the sun, neither the sun without its rays. And so God, as an absolute, cannot be thought of as separate from the idea of God with attributes, and *vice versa*'.

Therefore, like sparks of the absolute and symbols by means of which He attracts religious souls, the infinite shapes under which God has shown himself to man, are equally real, inasmuch as all that changes into spiritual values is real. No religion can claim to be above another one, because all of them are equally true inasmuch as they preach a symbolic shape, particular and personal, of the eternal; whereas from an absolute point of view, the experiences prepared by them, disappear in a supreme, indiscriminate blending with the germinal essence of all things.

This supreme 'cause' of all things, which we shall never know rationally, but in which we may flow and with which we may blend in the supreme instants of mystical ecstasy, is not universally perceptible by means of the same symbol or with the same intensity or in the identical shape. Men (and here Ramakrishna re-echoed a principle of Mahāyānic Buddhism) are different from one another in tendencies, aptitude, intelligence, moral inclinations, Karmic heredity, and therefore they cannot conceive reality in the same manner. Those religions which want to impose their own truths and proclaim as false all that is outside their own experiences, commit a great psychological mistake, inasmuch as they admit implicitly an identity of all creatures; and this is belied by facts.

There are no elects on the one side and the rejected on the other, but all religions,

sincerely lived and deeply felt, are refractions and reflexes of the same light and are, therefore, on the same plane. Any spot consecrated by the divine presence, under whatsoever shape it may appear, in all climates and under all skies, is worthy of our reverence. 'Kneel where others kneel,' was one of his precepts, 'because God is present where many have prayed'.

Instead, religions quarrel, insult, and offend each other like hucksters in a bazaar, who try to make an account of the goods sold by their neighbour, and pass their time speaking ill of him.

'Different religions,' he said one day to a disciple, 'are as many roads leading to God. The means to reach this temple of Kāli are different. Some come by boat, some on carts, and some on foot. In the same way, different people reach God through different faiths. A mother loves all her children in the same manner, but she prepares their food so that each one may receive what is good for him.

'Also the Lord has inspired different forms of cult, according to the different capabilities and phases of spiritual development of man'. There may be different degrees in the manifestations of the eternal; they must not be spoken of by those who—as followers—would be at the same time part and judges of them but only by those who having overcome them, identify themselves with the inexhaustible source from which they all originate.

Faithful to this principle, he experimented three religions: the one in which he was born, the Muslim, and the Christian. By following all three, he had visions, ecstasies, and spiritual raptures. After having divested religions of their doctrinal and dogmatic structures, and cleared them of schemes which were a fatal adaptation to those historical and social events in which they had developed, he discovers a common element that permeates them all: man's irrational abandonment to the hope that death may not be the irrevocable end of all things, his anxiety to flow towards the eternal, that vague sense of



mystery which, under all skies, makes us bend our knees and bow our heads.

He insists on this state of irrational foreboding which seems to be part of man's nature, and not on the systematic formulas of religions. Starting from the diversity of material shapes, he went back to the unity of inspiration which underlies them and found in it the fundamental identity of souls. While religious beliefs have had the unhappy privilege of dividing man, Ramakrishna, going back to their principle, welcomed them all as a means of understanding and fraternization.

But contrary to what some of his contemporaries have done in India, Ramakrishna has not sponsored a sort of syncretism in which the different experiences are destroyed, losing their individuality, strength, and character in a bleak synthesis.

He wants that each religion may develop its possibilities to the utmost, inasmuch as each one represents—as I have already pointed out—one side of the eternal and satisfies the spiritual exigencies of certain classes of human beings. The sincerity with which one lives in one's faith is important. The truth of every religion is equal, in a certain sense, to the intensity with which it is felt in the follower's heart.

And so Ramakrishna, through these principal phases of his interior life, had also become a Siddha, a perfect man, on account of the natural development of his personality and of an intrinsic and nearly inevitable necessity that had brought him, step by step, to the highest peaks of contemplative life. But having once had the revelation of truth, having once been beatified by supreme grace, should he not come out from Kâli's temple and from his cell, in order to preach his doctrine of salvation to the world?

Ramakrishna has not been a preacher; he has never ascended the pulpit to dictate the law on spiritual conquests. To those who came to him to be comforted or to reason of the things of God, he answered with the simplicity of a man who knows by experience and not

through doctrine, and with that crystalline clearness which filled with astonishment men of letters, thinkers, and reformers.

He did not build up systems on his experiences. Dialectics could not express the depth and sweetness of ecstasy, but he gave glimpses of it, by means of innumerable examples, nearly all new and original even for a country like India where allegory has always been the favourite expression, when hinting at the inexpressible.

After all, preaching is, in a sense, dangerous: the danger of falling into the snares of the assertion of 'self', which is part of our nature and is ever in ambush. If the ascetic begins to preach, he runs the risk of being misled by the mania of becoming a master, of considering himself a divine messenger and delighting in praise and glory: two things which the sage must avoid as two terrible temptations which ensnare purity so hardly won.

'It is difficult to preach; often it causes great harm to the preacher. As soon as he perceives that people honour him, he gives himself airs and says: "Men, listen to what I tell you". This way of reasoning is dangerous. All his progress stops here—a little glory, that is all the reward he gets. At the most, people may say: "How well and easily so-and-so speaks! He must be truly a cultured man". Never think that it's you who speak. I tell my Mother: "Mother! I am an instrument, you are the hand. I do what you wish, I say what you inspire me with".'

Indians have no faith in apostolates. Other people—including the unwilling—must not be compelled to listen to the things of the spirit. The road of illumination is the road of choice and, in a certain sense, of grace. The Indian Master has never gone in search of disciples, but waits for them to come to him. When one is inflamed with a sincere vocation and has strong faith, let him act, question, ask, and he will end by finding his master and his guide.

'When fire burns,' said Ramakrishna, 'butterflies come, wherefrom nobody knows, fall into it, and die: the teaching of the perfect one is the same. He does not move about, inviting others; on the contrary, hundreds of people go to him, coming from unknown



places, of their own initiative, in order to be taught by him'.

At the foot of a sacred mountain of Tibet, a Sadhu said once to me:

'In the same way as a scientific truth is useful to humanity, so the perfection reached by us does not remain circumscribed and limited within ourselves, but flows invisibly and spreads and maintains, unsuspected, the equilibrium of the world'.

From the temple of Dakshineswar, where he spent his life at the foot of Kālī's statue, Ramakrishna spread his silent teaching, like the Himalaya which, from its adamant peaks, feeds the rivers, perennial revivers of the parched lands in the distant and sunny plain. Nothing extraordinary, nothing tragical or pathetic in his life so soon ended; just as there was nearly always nothing new or unusual in the lives of Indian Sadhus. They do not attempt to reconcile good and evil, rational and irrational, matter and spirit—the source of tragedy and martyrdom when these elements fight one another. The Indian Sadhu follows what is called by them the quick way. It is necessary to jump with one pull from the world of opposite things to the world of the one thing, from becoming to being, from Maya to God. This revulsion is difficult, but once accomplished, man rises again to another plane which transcends all dualism.

A century after his birth, Ramakrishna is still—nay, today more than when he was alive—a living and operating force in the moral conscience of India. He has taught the great value of the strength of character and, with the example of his own life, has shown that coherence between thinking and acting is worth much more than any preaching.

While India, after her first contacts with the West, began to fashion for herself a political consciousness and foresaw, though vaguely, the struggle of the morrow, he repeats in a loud voice that no compromises or arrangements exist for the strong; man must be, above all, his true self and fully accept the responsibility of his actions, both in religious life and in the social one. There is nothing worse than allowing one's self to be guided by traditional schemes, by those pseudo-morals

which are pure convention and may be employed in order not to take up any position whatever and avoid all bother with the excuse of respecting a rule.

'A gentleman who had received a modern education, was once discussing with the Master the character of those heads of families who do not want to be soiled by the things of this world. "I know very well", the Master told him, "what these pure heads of the present day are. If a poor Brahman knocks at his door to beg for alms, he—being the pure head of the family—not caring about money matters which are looked after by his wife, will ask the Brahman beggar: "My dear man, I never touch money. Why do you waste your time asking me for some?" Not being able to stand his insistence, your pure head of the family thinks that he must give a rupee and tells the beggar: "All right, come tomorrow and I'll see what I can do for you". Re-entering the house, this typical head of the family says to his wife: "Look here, my dear, a poor Brahman is in great need, let us give him a rupee". As soon as she hears the word rupee, the wife loses her patience and exclaims sarcastically: "Oh! how generous you have become! Do you think that rupees are like leaves and stones to be thrown carelessly away?" "All right, my dear," answered the husband apologetically, "the Brahman is very poor and we cannot give him less". "No," the wife answers back, "I can't afford it. Here are two annas, give them to him if you wish". As this gentleman is a family man, unsullied by the things of the world, he takes what his wife gives him, and so the next day the poor Brahman receives only two annas. So, you see, your unsullied heads of families aren't their own masters. For the very reason that they don't worry about family affairs they believe that they are saintly men, while they are, in fact, weak husbands, entirely under their wives' thumb and therefore very poor specimens of ordinary humanity'.

In a country where people had thought too much and loved discussions too much, he brings the spirit back to an independence of judgment, to a simplicity and immediateness of feeling, in which there is only the strength of man. And while the number of systems and theories grows, he points out that dogmas separate us and only the sincerity of life draws us together.

It makes no difference if our ideas are not the same—and how could it be so if each one



of us is an element which cannot be reduced to another? What truly matters and can draw us together and make us love each other and feel like brothers, is an interior coherence, a

total devotion to our ideas and to our faith whatever it may be; the same anxiety, lived, felt, and suffered, to draw nearer to what we believe is the eternal or a reflex of it.

---

## SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PURANAS

BY DR. C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR

Several books have been published during the last few years by Western scholars which display great erudition and conscientious research dealing with the main source-books of Eastern Scriptures (more especially the Buddhist and early Hindu texts). Some of our Indian scholars have also essayed a similar task departing in many respects from the orthodox methods of the Pandit and relying upon comparative studies of several civilizations and literatures. Unfortunately, however, many of the volumes published within the last decade have been vitiated by *a priori* theories and preconceived notions, the authors basing themselves upon some one or more fixed ideas, which they regard as basic to an epoch or to a literature.

Theories like those relating to the solar myth, the phallic cult, the fertility cult, totem worship, the deification of ancestors, the actual or notional consumption of the flesh and blood of selected animals or human victims and other ideologies may be instanced not only from such books as Frazer's *Golden Bough* but also Alan Llewelyn Powys' *Pathetic Fallacy*, Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God* and innumerable other treatises.

Similarly, some of our scholars have stretched particular ideas to the breaking point. For example, some authors have concentrated upon the contrast between the so-called Brahminical and ritualistic preoccupations supposed to have been exemplified in the *Rg* and *Yajur* Vedas and the allegedly primitive pre-Aryan beliefs supposed to be typified

in the *Atharva-Veda* and characteristic of a different race and culture.

So far has this process gone that such a learned and scrupulous writer as Zimmer has practically bisected the Indian scriptural heritage and drawn an amazing distinction between the Aryan contribution, i.e. *Rg-Veda* and the early Upanishads, and the so-called pre-Aryan doctrines of Yoga, Bhakti, and the Krishna cults, supposed to have been founded on essentially different approaches to life.

It is time that Indian literature and thought should begin to be studied anew intrinsically, rather than extrinsically, and that conclusions should be arrived at by a perusal of the original documents and contemporaneous literature and tradition uninfluenced by any preconceptions. Especially is such a mode of approach needed in the case of the Purāṇas, which are too often dismissed as unhistorical and exaggerated narrations of improbable myths and legends and as designed to strengthen the unthinkingly idolatrous tendencies of the Indian mind.

While on this subject, it may be instructive to remember that in no civilization and in no culture are abstract ideas easily realized or pictured. Idols, it may be emphasized, need not be only representations in stone or marble or fresco or on canvas and there may be idols in the shape of mental images or figments or they may even be merely conceptual.

It may be useful in this connection to remember Bacon's *Novum Organum*, wherein it is laid down that the human mind is almost



invariably subject to one or other of the following tendencies, which too often hinder the application of the processes of induction and deduction of which Bacon was the champion. Bacon describes four types of idols: (a) Idols of the Tribe, having their origin in human nature itself, e.g. the tendency to observe instances favourable to a pre-conceived opinion; (b) Idols of the Cave originating in the constitution and circumstances of the individual; (c) Idols of the Market-place, being verbal fictions and confusions arising from men's association with each other; and (d) Idols of the Theatre, received into the mind from philosophical and other systems, which like stage plays represent worlds of their own creation often in an unreal and scenic fashion. In a very wise sentence Bacon concludes that 'forms constitute the alphabet of nature'.

It is in this spirit that it is stated in one of our philosophic poems: '*Ajñānām bhāvanārthāya pratimā parikalpitā*'—'Images have been fashioned for the purpose of aiding the thought of the uninstructed'. A very great Indian poet and philosopher, Appaya Dikshita, has, in a stanza<sup>1</sup> full of suggestive profundity, asked forgiveness for three cardinal sins committed by him daily, those sins being: (1) the attribution of form to the formless and the worship of that form; (2) prayers and praises offered to the indescribable; and (3) the resort to temples and other places of pilgrimage in the quest of what is All-pervasive.

If these aspects are borne in mind, the true objectives of the Puranas will be adequately perceived and the truth appreciated of the maxim that our Dharma is 'Śruti, Smṛti, Purāṇokta Dharma', including the Tantras in the Puranas. The Śrutis are described as Prabhu Samhitā, laid down by a lord or master, and the Puranas as Suḥṛt

Samhitā, declared by a friend. In other words, the former partake of the nature of commandments, the latter of conversation and advice, supported by stories and allegories, and designed for the purpose of instruction through example rather than precept.

When the early British scholars, led by Sir William Jones and Colebrook, performed their invaluable service in the matter of publishing and popularizing specimens of our sacred and secular literature, they unfortunately discounted the value of the Puranas, and persons like Macaulay spoke of their 'wild chronology and weird stories'. But, it is noteworthy that later writers have discovered that the Puranas, in the main, cannot be discounted even as historical material and a great controversy has been waged on this point between two learned antagonists—Barriedale Keith and Pargiter.

Be this as it may, one may plead for the inauguration of an intellectual palingenesis in this matter so that we may study and analyse our Puranas from an essential and intrinsic rather than a superficial or extrovert point of view. Without the need for elaborate discussion, it may be granted that the Puranas and Upa-puranas, as their very names signify, embody pristine racial traditions and thoughts and they, taken in conjunction with the *Rāmāyaṇa* (or *Ādi Kāvya*) and the *Mahābhārata*, were brought into existence as instruments of popular education and enlightenment and as is well known, many of the Puranas include among their contents treatises on political economy, the art of government, law, medicine, archery, music and dance, and so forth. Indeed, many of them may be regarded as compendious anthologies including cosmogony, ancient legends, nature lore, and theological, astronomical, and other handbooks.

The Śrutis, including the Vedas and Upanishads, were carefully memorized from the beginning by the adoption of such devices as Gaṇa and Jaṭā, whereas the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the Puranas were chanted at various gatherings, during sacrifices or in assemblies convened in hermitages and

<sup>1</sup> *Rūpam rūpa-vivarjitasya bhavato dhyānena  
yathkalpitam,  
Stutyā' nirvacaniyatā' khila-guro dūrikṛtā  
yanmayā,  
Vyāpītvam-ca nirākṛtam bhagavato yat-tīrtha-  
yātrādinā.  
Kṣantar yam jagadīśa tadvikalatā-doṣatrayam  
matkṛtam.*



towns and were not memorized with absolute textual fidelity and, therefore, underwent additions and translations and interpolations.

The Puranas, as they exist at present, are not wholly 'Purāṇa' or ancient, but are a combination of the very old and what is not so old. Viewed in this manner the Puranas may rightly be described as the embodiments of the ideas and the growing traditions of the race. Some scholars, having proceeded so far, have attempted to push the enquiry to curious lengths. For instance, one writer has asserted that all stories and theories of transmigration, the ideas of Hiraṇyagarbha, of the Avatāras of Krishna and Rama, the stories of Naga, the Matsyagandhi episode, the exploits of Hanuman and Ganesha are pre-Dravidian in origin and that the Rama story is a blend of three distinct legends, whereas the *Mahābhārata* is more purely Aryan. Others have sought to introduce the rivalry between the Brahmin and Kshatriya into such narratives as those dealing with the Sūta as the witness of the Bhārata war and with the Suta Ugrashravas who made his recitals in the Naimisha forest.

Putting aside such analyses and viewing the Puranas as literature, we shall do well to concentrate our attention on their being illustrative of national life and character and exemplifying national achievements and national shortcomings leading to varying results in the life of the nation and of individuals emblematic of the nation.

So perceived, the following root-ideas may be deduced from a survey of the Puranas as a whole:

The gradual though chequered development of tolerance and reconciliation as governing factors as well as the steady growth of what Max Müller called 'Henotheism', by which he meant the attribution of absolute supremacy to each manifestation of Godhead that is contemplated for the time being, the idea being as old as the Vedas.

एकं सत्, विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति ।

'The supreme Being is one; learned men call it by different names'.

So we find that Rama becomes a devotee of Shiva and the pilgrim-centre Rameswaram marks the spot where Rama invoked Shiva before proceeding to fight Ravana. Moreover, Rama, for the purpose of facilitating the victory, is advised to worship Sūrya (or Āditya), the source of energy, and the *Āditya-hṛdayam* was recited by him. In this connection it may be recollected that Rama himself was almost a complete personification of the Divine Essence. So likewise Arjuna devotes his penance to Shiva to acquire the Pāshupata Astra.

Shiva himself, who is often described as Āshutosha ('speedily satisfied'), grants boons to several Asuras, who misuse the powers granted to them and Shiva and the other gods appeal to Vishnu to incarnate himself from time to time to set things right. The *Vāyu-purāṇa* sums up this position and declares, 'He who affirms the superiority of Shiva over Vishnu or of Vishnu over Shiva or of one Avatara over another, is a sinner'. From this point of view the Buddhist Jātaka stories may well be regarded as a part of the Puranic lore and Buddha himself came to be described as one of the incarnations of Vishnu.

The next point to be remembered is that Puranas observe truth to ideas rather than to chronology, chronology and history being regarded and treated as illustrations and examples. Perhaps, the Puranas may best be appreciated when we recollect that most of them were brought into existence at a period subsequent to the Upanishads and as a reaction to what was regarded as the deleterious influence of that quietism and passivity which were associated though mistakenly with Lord Buddha's doctrines.

The development of the Sāṅkhya doctrine and the reconciliation between Purusha and Prakṛti, which culminated in the magnificent affirmations of the *Gita*, were practically exemplified in the Puranic stories, which were designed to place the doctrines of Karma and Samsāra in proper perspective and proclaimed



the consistency of a life of activity with the quest of the Supreme by stories illustrative of the value of the Varnas and Ashramas rightly understood and of the significance of the several stages of life and their respective obligations.

Although the division of occupational functions and of stages of life were emphasized, it must be remembered that these distinctions were neither stereo-typed nor rigid and the ideas underlying the following passage are illustrated in several puranic episodes: 'The great sage Vasishtha was born of a courtesan. By his austerities and penance he became a Brahmin and his spiritual perfection was the cause of the transformation. Vyasa by birth was a fisherman, Parāshara's parent was a dog-eater, and many like these have acquired Brahminhood by their attainments although they were non-Brahmins'.

The Ekalavya story in the *Mahābhārata*, narrating how a person of the depressed classes, by his devotion to Drona, acquired a greater skill in archery than Arjuna himself, and indeed the old Vrātya-stomā chronicle recited in the *Sāma-Veda* and dealing with the conversion of the non-Aryan population into the Brahmin fold are illustrative of the comprehensive tolerance, which, alas, was lost sight of during the darker periods of our history.

One of the greatest lessons that the Epics and the Puranas teach us is the composite character of human nature. They bring to us the fundamental thought that man is composed of good and evil elements and that not even the greatest is exempt from this alloy. Sita is tempted by the golden deer and thereafter is filled with uncharitable thoughts regarding Lakshmana, when he does not obey her hasty commands. On the other hand, Sita herself exhorts Rama on one occasion to banish vindictiveness from his mind and cultivate what Valmiki describes as '*vinā vairaṅca raudrata*'. Rama's fear of gossip is described by Sita as approximating to the conduct of a

Prākṛta (an ordinary man) and her unforgettable reproach is thus couched:

मम भक्तिश्च शीलञ्च सर्वं ते पृष्ठतः कृतम् ।

'My loyalty and purity have been put on one side by you'.

The Mahāprasthāna of Yudhishtira and the inevitable suffering that even the most righteous of men had to undergo for uttering a solitary but conspicuous untruth in life is a penetrating analysis of human nature and its inscrutable moods and variations. On the other hand when Hanuman visits Lanka in his attempt to rescue Sita, what strikes him is thus described:

Aho rūpam-aho dhairyam-aho sattvam-aho  
dyutih,

Aho rākṣasarājasya sarva-lakṣaṇa-yuktatā.

'What beauty and what courage, what strength and what diligence, what a combination of great qualities in Ravana, this king of the demons!' In other words, whether in the story of Ravana or Bali Chakravarti or in innumerable other instances, the Itihāsas and Puranas over and over again stress that all animate beings are endowed with great potentialities for good and evil and it depends on them to discipline themselves and to develop their possibilities aright.

When Chitrasena captures Duryodhana, who seeks to put Yudhishtira in the wrong during his incognito period, and when he brings the captive before Yudhishtira, he is asked to release Duryodhana, for it is said that 'We may have quarrels in our family, but we shall not suffer the humiliation of any member of the family by a third party'. This strong feeling for the family tie is a basic characteristic of the Indian life and is illustrated in all its aspects—good and evil—in the Puranas.

The mystery of existence and the way in which men and women live their lives in apparent oblivion of their end is also a frequent theme of the Puranas. Yudhishtira, in his answer to the Yaksha, when asked the question, 'What is the most marvellous thing in this world?' says: 'Day after day an un-



ending series of living beings repair to the abode of Death. Those that remain behind behave as if they were eternal. What is more marvellous than this!'<sup>2</sup>

The subtle intimacies of comradeship are nowhere better exemplified than in the anecdotes of Krishna and Kuchela. But what is most marvellous in the story is the reflection of Kuchela when he mistakenly thought that Krishna had forgotten his need for help in his miserable condition of poverty. He exclaims, to himself, 'This poor man, if rewarded with gifts, may turn arrogant and may forget his duties. Hence Krishna thinks that it is well to make him remain in poverty'. It is only after he returned to his domicile that Kuchela found that innumerable gifts had been showered on him by the grace of Sri Krishna during his absence from his home.

The value and the might of personality are indicated in the choices made by Arjuna and Duryodhana. Both of them visit Sri Krishna and both ask for his help during the Kurukshetra war. Krishna declines to fight on behalf of either party but offers to the parties the choice either of his entire armies or himself as charioteer and adviser. Duryodhana, true to his materialistic attitude, chooses Krishna's armies, while Arjuna chooses Krishna himself, with results that are well known.

The rules of chivalry in battle, the limits of the true doctrine of Ahimsa, the limitations on a ruler in the matter of punishment of crime, and the futility of wars of conquest are described in many Puranas and dealt with philosophically in the Bhishma Parva, Shānti Parva, and Anushāsana Parva of the *Mahābhārata*. 'Those who have withdrawn from the fight; those who are fighting with another; those who are overcome by fright and are turning aside; those who have lost their weapons and their armour, should never be attacked'. But, perhaps, the most wonderful exemplification of chivalry was the permission

asked by Yudhishtira of Bhishma, his ancestral chief, before starting the *Mahābhārata* battle in which Bhishma commanded the opposing army. Bhishma says that he had to fight against Yudhishtira on behalf of Duryodhana but utters this marvellous saying:

प्रीतोऽहं पुत्र, युध्यस्व जयमाप्नुहि पाण्डव ।

'I am pleased with you, my son. Please do fight and obtain victory over us'.

The episode of Shikhandi is an illustration of the temptations that overcome even great souls.

Nowhere in the world's literature are the temptations of absolute power so fully and vividly described and exposed as in the stories of Hiraṇya, Bali, and Vishvāmitra.

The inviolability of the spoken word, sometimes even carried to quixotic lengths, is stressed right through our literature, beginning with the dialogue between Yama and Nachiketas in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* and culminating with the life-stories of Dasharatha and Kaikeyi, Rama and Bharata, and Harishchandra and Vishvamitra.

The Puranas are also not slow to demonstrate the evil effects of certain infirmities even in the great ones of the earth. The gluttony of Bhima, the drinking habits of Balarama, the addiction to dice of Nala and Yudhishtira are instances in point.

In truth the Purana stories are intended to be a summation of national character and national life. The personages of the Puranas are thus woven into the fabric of our national life and the days associated with such heroes and incarnations are celebrated even today, e.g. Rāmanavami, Naraka-Chaturdashi, Krishna Janmāshṭami or Jayanti, Ganesha-Chaturthi, Shivarātri, Dasara, Skanda-Shashṭi, and so on.

Through a narration of the difficulties and triumphs, the struggles and the victories of divine incarnations and by means of the life-histories of men and women in the stations of life, the Puranas serve the purpose of elevating ordinary existence and giving it a higher purpose. Strong passions, greed, jealousy,

<sup>2</sup> *Ahanyahani bhūtāni gacchantiha yamālayam,  
Seṣāh sphāvaram-icchanti kim-āścaryam-atah  
param.*



sensuality, drinking, and gambling are described. The discipline of suffering is delineated with great detail as in the stories of Sāvitrī and Satyavān, Nala and Damayanti, Sita and Draupadi.

The results of the politics of power are mercilessly analysed and criticized. This truth is never forgotten: 'Being defeated, our enemies are really conquerors. Having conquered, we are really defeated'.<sup>3</sup>

This is a startling fact which the recent world wars have amply proved.

What could be more profound as a tenderly bitter appraisal of human attributes than the story of the Dvārapālakas, who, when they were cursed by a Rishi and doomed to forfeit their heavenly status and to be born on earth and when they asked forgiveness of Vishnu, were given two alternatives by their Lord! They were, that either they may be seven times incarnated as Vishnu's devotees before they came back to Heaven or thrice incarnated as His enemies. Puzzled by this statement, the Dvarapalakas requested for an explanation. It was that a devotee too often thinks of the Godhead only in spare moments, while an enemy is constantly brooding over his opponent.

Over and over again, with a wonderful knowledge of human nature, it is proved that the State and its governance are not ends in themselves but that Government is a partnership of Dharma. Excesses are condemned in every direction and even in spiritual quest: '*Na pramādāt paramāṇnoti kaścit*', 'No one attains greatness or bliss by excess'.

As already summarized, all the Puranas seek to portray the Indian genius in its nobility and greatness as well as in its inefficiency and weakness. Over subtlety and

<sup>3</sup> *Jīyamānā jayantyanye, jayamānā vāyam jītāh.*

slavery to ideas, as in the case of the many curious and self-destroying boons demanded by the Asuras; the inability to say 'no' which is termed Dākshīnya; the evils of undiscerning partiality to relations; the tendency to exaggeration of conduct as in the case of Shibi and Nahusha; the resort to verbal quibbling as a salve to one's conscience as in the case of Ashvatthāma and Shikhandi; the evil effects of internecine quarrels and the rivalry of kinsmen which ultimately reduced India to a cougeries of warring states and the unreflecting war mentality resulting in the destruction of the Kshatriyas by Parashurama; these are indeed vivid object-lessons and warnings.

In the great story of the churning of the ocean at the time of the Kūrma Avatara, we are told, that from the same process were generated nectar and many supremely good things of life as well as an all-destroying poison. The Puranas are mindful of the inextricable mixture of good and evil in the universe and they seek by example, story, and allegory to trace the origins and the development of our qualities and expound the methods, secular and religious, by which a good life may be lived and evil tendencies uprooted and the potentialities of humanity realized. Directly and incidentally they preach the lesson, which was embodied in the immortal sermon of Sri Krishna, that for this life and the life beyond what matters is not the end but the means and the discipline to be followed is the implementation of the means in a spirit of dedication and detachment.

So viewed, and quite apart from every other consideration, the Puranas are an invaluable help towards the good life and they are also at the same time an epitome of the Indian genius, its possibilities and its shortcomings and triumphs—actual and possible.

'The object of the Puranas was the education of mankind, and the sages who constructed them contrived to find some historical personages and to superimpose upon them all the best or worst qualities just as they wanted to, and laid down the rules of morals for the conduct of mankind. . . they form a great authority for us in respect of the highest truth which they inculcate.'



# A PILGRIMAGE THROUGH THE HIMALAYAS

BY SWAMI APURVANANDA

(Continued from the January issue)

The path was narrow and serpentine and full of stones and rough boulders. When we had done a mile, our path was obstructed by a brooklet. Owing to the previous night's heavy rain it was in flood. Mahatma observed gravely, 'We can't cross it now. Let us go back'. But our Pahādi companions were more resourceful. They suggested that we should walk along the river bank till we came to a convenient spot for easily crossing the river. After half-an-hour's walking along the side of the river, we came to a spot where the water was shallow and the bed was strewn with big boulders. We crossed over and were once again on our main path. Now started the 'knee-breaking' ascent. It was not known to us how difficult this ascent would prove to be and where it would end. It became almost impossible for us to climb this steep ascent. So we began to crawl on all fours, at the same time grumblingly asking ourselves why Kedarnath had chosen His celestial abode in such an inaccessible region of the Himalayas. Well, there is an end to everything in this fleeting world. So this suffering of ours, too, must have an end somewhere sometime. Thus dragging ourselves upward, sometimes literally at a snail's pace, we reached the top.

For a while the vast horizon was clear of clouds. From this point we had a marvellous view of the panoramic expanse of hills and valleys. *On all sides mighty peaks*, covered with fresh and glittering snow, greeted our eyes. Far down below lay the endless ever-green forests. Here and there in these forests could be seen patches of fleecy white clouds floating or hanging between trees. The glorious sight of the sunlit icy summits brought fresh hope and joy into our hearts. Such variegated beauty and contrast of colours can

be seen in the Himalayas alone. However, we could not tarry long. We had to go, so moved on, and after walking for about twenty minutes down the hill, we reached a solitary shop at a place called Belak. From the ruins of many broken and deserted shops and houses around, we could guess that during the pilgrimage season this fairly big Chati would become crowded with a large number of pilgrims. When we went to the shop to take some refreshments, the shopkeeper insisted on our halting there for the night. To dissuade us from proceeding further that evening, he mentioned the fact that the road ahead, down the steep descent, was in a bad condition, portions of it damaged and insecure owing to heavy landslips.

We proceeded all the same. The next five miles, to a place called Pangarana, were easily covered. Though the road was strewn with debris of all kinds there was no difficult ascent or descent. Pangarana was a big place, no doubt, with about twelve spacious Chatis sufficient to accommodate over five hundred pilgrims. Not far away was the village of the same name, inhabited by some fifty families and having a primary school. A big party of pilgrims, nearly a hundred strong, belonging mostly to U. P., was already there. When we arrived we heard them singing devotional songs in chorus. We too joined in the Bhajan for a time, as it seemed appropriate to the occasion. They sang with deep fervour *of devotion and* the atmosphere was surcharged with spiritual emotion. As the Bhajan continued, some among the party began to dance,—a rural dance it was, probably. The entire party was moving together for the journey, halting whenever the weather became inclement. Though we felt tempted to stay on at the



place, we decided to leave as there was still daylight enough to cover another four to five miles, which we knew was all easy descent.

#### PROVIDENTIAL ESCAPE

For a mile after leaving Pangarana, the road, though slushy and slippery, was almost level. But at places our path was completely blocked by landslips, and we had to make our way through the forest on one or the other side. We had to move cautiously, with measured steps, and so our progress was rather slow. At one place the road was broken so badly by a big landslip that it was awe-inspiring. Debris were rolling down the slopes constantly. After mutual consultations, our Pahāḍi companions led the way and we started to climb to the top of the landslip area, with a view to negotiating this risky part of the road by a detour. But, as ill luck would have it, as soon as one of the Pahāḍi companions, who was in front, placed his foot on a big boulder, it rolled over,—the earth below having given way,—throwing him down. It all happened so suddenly that none could help him. The remaining three of us were shocked at this serious accident to our companion, and became very anxious for his safety when we saw him rolling down, as it were, along with the boulder, towards the steep ravine far below. In utter confusion and fear that the man might lose his life, we cried out. Luckily, he displayed great presence of mind, and after having slipped down some fifteen feet or so he was able to find a footing and save himself. When we reached him at considerable risk, to our surprise we found him still holding fast to that very same boulder which had caused his fall and which had also rolled down along with him. He felt stunned and was just clinging to the spot, absolutely motionless. His whole body was badly bruised, especially the back. He was lifted up and brought to a place of safety for first aid.

Our immediate destination was Jhala, which was to be our halting place for that night. But we had no idea how far we had

to go in order to reach it. We were eager to find some shelter as soon as possible, especially in the interest of our injured companion, whom we now had to carry on our shoulders. Soon we met a cowherd who told us that Jhala was only a few furlongs off. It had become quite dark when we reached the Jhala Chati. Here were three shops only. The soft, murmuring sound of the mountain-stream Bala-ganga, on whose bank Jhala is situated, had not the least charm for us in the depressed state of mind in which we then were. Throughout the night we attended on our injured Pahāḍi companion and repeatedly thanked God that nothing worse befell him or us.

#### BUDA KEDAR

Next morning our injured companion felt a little better. Hence it was decided that we should go further on and reach the bigger pilgrim-centre of Buḍā Kedār ('Aged Kedar'), which was only four miles away and which would undoubtedly be a place of greater safety and comfort for the injured person. As the road running alongside of the river was good enough, our wounded companion started walking slowly, resting his hands on the shoulders of two of us. We were delighted at the sight of the smiling, green corn-fields, along the way, promising a bumper harvest. Pahāḍi men and women, in picturesque costumes, were busy in their fields. We were passing through the beautiful valley of Buḍā Kedār, surrounded by lofty hills. Even from a distance of a mile or so, the white flag fluttering on the temple tower could be seen. We were nearing Buḍā Kedār, which was like a small town in this interior region of Garhwal district.

Hardly had we arrived at the outskirts of Buḍā Kedār Chati when a group of Pandas (or priest-guides of pilgrims) surrounded us and unceremoniously began to assail us with volleys of questions of every sort, such as, what were our names, our caste denominations, the names of our fathers and forefathers as far back as fifteen generations, our native places, etc. There was no other way out but to choose and fix up a Panda for our party.



We selected a young Panda out of the group and appointed him as our priest and guide for the duration of our stay at Buḍā Kedār. Even then we saw that our young Panda had to do a lot of arguing with the others and fight his way out of the group that still surrounded us. Finally when they left us we heaved a sigh of relief.

As we entered the Chati proper, we saw on both sides of the road rows of big shops and spacious respectable-looking, two-storied houses. A number of houses, about a hundred or so, were stone-built and belonged to the Pandas. We found that a large number of pilgrims—a few hundreds—had assembled at Buḍā Kedār. Led by our Panda, we went up and occupied the first floor of a Chati-house, situated on the bank of the Balaganga, and made arrangements for our injured companion to rest comfortably.

Beautifully situated at the confluence of the Balaganga and the Dharmaganga, Buḍā Kedār is also known as Dharmaprayag. Here pilgrims perform religious rites in commemoration of departed ancestors. The two rivers—which, we were informed, originated from the Kedarnath glacier—surrounded Buḍā Kedār on three sides and mingled with each other with such rhythm and charm that the confluence presented a most pleasing sight to the eyes. Guided by our young priest, we went to the confluence for taking a dip in the holy waters. Many Pandas were chanting verses from the scriptures and pilgrims were seen performing religious rites. On the other side of the confluence were several villages. The entire place is called Buḍā Kedār.

(To be continued)

---

## THE TANTRIC CULTS

### II. GĀṆAPATYA AND SAURA TANTRAS

BY DR. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN

Gāṇapatya is the cult of the elephant-faced God, Gaṇapati, whose familiar figure is to be found in almost every temple in India, as also at cross-roads and river crossings, on tank-bunds and underneath holy trees, and, in fact, in all sorts of odd corners and difficult places. His name is invoked and form worshipped at the commencement of every undertaking, secular or sacred; his symbols are marked at the head of literary productions and even of ordinary letters. At his temples, devotees make gestures expressing penitence for wrongs done, and break cocoanuts as thanksgiving for successes achieved. One of the important festive days in the Hindu Calendar, which falls in August-September, commemorates the birth

of Gaṇeśa. It is celebrated all over India, and on a grand scale especially in Mahārāṣṭra.

Some scholars believe that Gaṇeśa was originally a non-Aryan harvest-god, later received into the Hindu pantheon. Others hold that the origins of this god may be traced in the *Ṛg-Veda*, in the descriptions given there of deities such as the Maruts, Rudra, Bṛhaspati, and Indra. Popular Hinduism looks upon Gaṇeśa as the son of Śiva and Pārvatī, and elder brother of Skanda. In the Purāṇas there are various legends about the birth of Gaṇeśa. According to some of them, he was begotten by Śiva alone, according to some others, by the Devī alone, and according to still others, by both. The *Varāha-*



*purāṇa* makes Gaṇeśa spring out of Śiva's forehead. The *Skanda*-and *Matsya-purāṇas* say that this god was created by Pārvatī out of the oil and ointments used in her bath, mixed with the impurities of her body. According to the *Supra-bhedāgama*, Gaṇeśa was born of Śiva and Pārvatī who had assumed the form of an elephant-pair. Some accounts describe the god's elephant-head as a congenital peculiarity; others attribute it to accident. The *Siva-purāṇa* seeks to reconcile the several versions of the birth of Gaṇeśa by saying that his origin is different in different aeons of creation.

The names and epithets of Gaṇeśa are descriptive of his form and function. He is called Gaṇeśa and Gaṇapati because he is the lord and leader of Śiva's attendants. He is Gajānana—He of the Elephant-face, Vakra-tuṇḍa—He of the Twisted Trunk, Eka-danta—He of the One Tusk, Lambodara—He of the Full Belly. He rides a rat; hence the name Ākhuratha. He interposes obstacles and also removes them; so he is Vighneśvara, Vighnarāja, Vināyaka. He is Bestower of Success (Siddhi-dātā), Protector (Heramba). It is as the god of obstacles that Gaṇeśa has gained enormous popularity. Devotees propitiate him for their own success and for the defeat of their opponents. In one of the *Purāṇas*, Śiva addresses his elephant-faced son as follows: 'Thy name shall be Gaṇeśa, Vināyaka, Vighnarāja, the son of Śiva. Success and disappointment shall proceed from thee. Thou shalt be worshipped and invoked before the other gods on all occasions, or otherwise the object and prayer of him who omits to do so shall fail'.

According to the old orthodox tradition, Gaṇeśa was a *Brahmacārin*, a bachelor god. But, with the passage of time, legend assigned to him two consorts, Buddhi and Siddhi, personifications of Wisdom and Success. In the most ancient representations he was figured without a female companion. But, with the coming into existence of the Gāṇapatya sect, probably sometime in the sixth century A.D., he was imaged with a *devī*

seated beside him. For this sect, Gaṇapati is the highest God, higher than even Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. The *Gaṇapati Upaniṣad* opens with this prayer:

'Om! obeisance to Gaṇapati! Thou alone art the visible Truth. Thou art the Creator, Preserver, Destroyer. Thou art all this, Brahman. Thou art, verily, the eternal Self. All this universe is born from thee. All this universe subsists in thee. All this universe gains resolution in thee . . . Thou art Brahmā, thou art Viṣṇu, thou art Rudra. . . .'

Influenced by the Śākta philosophy, the followers of the Gaṇapati-cult evolved the conception of Śakti-Gaṇapati with five esoteric forms. The five Śakti-Gaṇapatis are: Ucchiṣṭa-Gaṇapati, Mahā-Gaṇapati, Ūrdhva-Gaṇapati, Piṅgala-Gaṇapati, and Lakshmī-Gaṇapati. Ānandagiri refers, in his *Śaṅkara-digvijaya*, to six varieties of the Gāṇapatya sect. Though, according to all of them, Gaṇapati is the supreme God, each worships him under a different name, and in a somewhat variant form, making use of different Mantras. The first group of Gāṇapatyas mentioned by Ānandagiri consists of worshippers of Mahā-Gaṇapati, who is to be meditated upon as being red of colour, with ten arms, and with his Śakti beside him. He is to be adored as the Creator of all gods, the supreme Self. The second group worships Haridrā-Gaṇapati, yellow of colour, with four arms, and possessed of a third eye. He is to be conceived as Leader of all the gods. His devotee should have his both arms branded with the elephant-face of the God having only one tusk. The third group consists of those who propitiate Ucchiṣṭa-Gaṇapati, adopting *vāmācāra*. He is to be meditated upon as having four arms and as being in company with his Śakti. The *pañcattattvas* should be offered to him. His devotee should have a red mark on his forehead. All castes are to be admitted to his worship. The followers of the other three Gaṇapatis, Navanīta, Svarṇa, and Santāna, claim that they are adherents of the Veda-mārga. But they too are Gāṇapatyas since their chief God



is Gaṇapati, the other gods being but parts of him.

The adoration of Gaṇapati was not confined to the Hindus; it was adopted by the Buddhists also who claimed that a mystic Mantra in praise of Gaṇeśa, called the *Gaṇapati-hṛdaya*, was revealed by the Buddha himself to his favourite disciple Ānanda at Rājagṛha. Emigrants and travellers from India took with them to distant lands the image and cult of Gaṇeśa, the Remover of Obstacles. The Buddhist monks who crossed the seas and went to China introduced in that country the Tantric texts and practices. One of the Mahāyāna doctrines which became popular there was that of the *maṇḍalas* of the Two Parts known as the *Vajra-dhātu* and the *Garbha-dhātu*. These are mystic diagrams wherein Vināyaka has his allotted place. In China and Japan, Gaṇeśa was known under two aspects: Vināyaka with the single form, and Kwan-shi-t'ien (Kangi-ten) which is Vināyaka with the double form. The double form is peculiar to these countries, and was represented by two elephant-faced deities standing opposite each other, interlaced. The sectaries who worshipped this form adopted modes of secret ritual, not very different from the Tantric technique.

It is quite in keeping with the tradition of Indian thought that a god who was first conceived as one of the gods should in course of time gather round him a group of followers who would promote him to the highest place of honour. But whoever be the god that is thus promoted, one discerns the same philosophy at work—namely, the philosophy of unity which is expressed in the early Ṛg-Vedic text: *Ekam sad-viprā bahudhā vadanti*, 'Reality is one; sages call it by different names'. This central philosophical conception is applied to Gaṇeśa by his followers. The following verses of the *Sāradātīlaka* express the inner significance and purpose of Gaṇeśa worship:

*Padam stutīnām apadam śrutīnām,  
līlāvatāram param aṣṭamūteḥ,*

*Nāgātmako vā puruṣātmako vety-  
abhedyam ādyam bhaja vighnarājam.*

*Vedānta-gītam puruṣam bhaje'ham  
ātmānam ānandaghanam hṛdistham,  
Gajānanam yan-mahasā janānām  
mahāndhakāro vilayam prayāti.*

\* 'Pray to Vighnarāja who is the object of all praise, but whom not even the Vedas can attain, who is the playful incarnation of Śiva with eight forms, and about whose shape it is not possible to say whether it is elephantine or human, and who is primeval'.

'To the elephant-faced God do I pray, the Puruṣa who is praised in the Vedāntas, the Self which is a mass of bliss, seated in the heart, and by whose greatness the great darkness of ignorance enveloping people rolls away'.

Saura or Saurya is the name of the Tantric Sun-cult. According to some scholars Gaṇapati himself was in his origin a solar deity. Several solar deities are mentioned in the *Ṛg-Veda*. These constitute a group called Ādityas. Originally this name was applied to all the gods who were regarded as sons of Aditi. But later on it came to mean only the solar deities. Of these sun-gods, the most important are Sūrya and Savitr. Sūrya is the most concrete of the solar deities, since the name designates the orb of the sun as well as the god. Sometimes, Sūrya is described as the eye of the gods. He is far-seeing, all-seeing, the spy of the entire world. He beholds all beings, and stands as the witness of the good and bad deeds of mortals. He arouses men from sleep and impels them to activity. He is the soul of all that moves or is stationary. He is pre-eminently the god of light. Savitr is the god who stimulates and enlivens all beings. He is not only the sun that rises, but also the sun that sets. He is a golden deity, being golden-eyed, golden-handed, and golden-tongued. In the celebrated *gāyatrī* Mantra he is besought to stimulate the thoughts of worshippers who desire to meditate on the glory of god Savitr.

It is nothing strange that a cult should



arise, centred round the sun, which is the brightest of the luminaries. Ānandagiri speaks of six formal divisions of sun worshippers. One of the sub-sects worshipped the rising sun, another the setting sun, a third the noon-day sun. Yet another division worshipped all the three as a *tri-mūrti*. There was a fifth sub-sect which assigned to the sun an anthropomorphic form, while the last of these sects bore burnt marks of the sun's orb on their bodies. All of them paint on their foreheads a distinctive mark of red sandal and wear round their necks a garland of red flowers. And they repeat the same Mantra of eight syllables. According to them, Sūrya is Brahman, the source of all beings.

Some of the finest old temples in India were dedicated to the sun-god. While in the South, images of the sun do not bear any marks of foreign influence, in the North they clearly reveal the impact of the sun-cult of Iran. As described by Varāhamihira, in his *Brhatsamhitā*, and as actually observed in the Northern sun-temples, the image of the god has the feet and legs covered up to the knees, and there is a girdle round the waist with one end hanging downwards—features which were probably borrowed from ancient Iran. A

legend in the *Bhaviṣya-purāna* says that the sun-cult was brought to India from Śākadvīpa. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang gives a glowing description of a sun temple at Multan, which was probably the first of its kind constructed in India about the time of Kanīṣka, the Kuṣana king.

Apart from the sectarian worship of the sun-god, one finds in the general scheme of Hindu religious practice an important place assigned to this deity. Saṅkrānti, known in the South as *Pongal*, is the festival in honour of the sun. He is prayed to by all for the destruction of sin, bestowal of fortune and for ultimate release. The devotee, as in all Tantra, seeks through the worship of the sun to attain final identity of all being in the supreme Spirit. A Mantra of the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* reads thus: '*pūṣannekarṣe yama sūrya prajāpatya vyūha raśmīn samūha, tejo yat te rūpam kalyāṇatamam tat te paśyāmi yo'sāvasau puruṣaḥ so'hamasmi*', 'O Nourisher (*pūṣan*), the sole Seer (*ekarṣi*), O Controller (*yama*), O Sun (*sūrya*), offspring of Prajāpati, spread forth thy rays! Gather thy brilliance (*tejas*)! What is thy fairest form—that of thee I see. He who is yonder, yonder Person (*puruṣa*)—I myself am he!'

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE COMMENTARIES ON THE BRAHMA-SUTRAS

BY SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

(Continued from the January issue)

### BRAHMAN—ITS NATURE AND CAUSALITY

Shankara holds that Brahman is the ultimate reality, and as such It is not an effect but eternal, being birthless (*Brh. Up.*, IV. iv. 25). It is mere existence (*Sat*) without any distinction, existence in general, and as such It cannot be the effect of any particular

thing; for we see in the world that only particular things are produced from the general, as, for example, pots from clay, and never *vice versa* (II. iii. 9). This Brahman, which is the object of the enquiry (I. i. 1), is defined as the 'origin, etc. of the world' (I. i. 2). The Śruti text referred to



is *Taitt. Up.*, III. 1. It seems from this definition that Brahman is differentiated and has attributes (Saguna). But Shankara says that this definition aims at a non-differentiated, attributeless Brahman (Nirguna). It defines Brahman *per accidens*, even as, when we say that which is the snake is the rope, the snake indicates the rope owing to the illusory connection between the two. Shankara says that the sense of this passage, viz. *Taitt. Up.*, III. 1, is to be determined from *Taitt. Up.*, III. 6, where Bliss is said to be the origin, etc. of the world (I. i. 2). This Bliss, which admits of no difference is the Infinite (*Ch. Up.*, VII. xxiii. 1 and VII. xxiv. 1), the Brahman defined in Its pure essence as 'Existence, Knowledge, Infinity is Brahman' (*Taitt. Up.*, II. 1), and it is from this Brahman that the world is produced, so understood Vārūṇi. These three words, Existence, etc., though they have different meanings in ordinary parlance, yet refer to one indivisible Brahman, even as the words, father, son, husband, etc. refer to one and the same person according to his relationship with different individuals.

But the Scriptures describe Brahman as being both qualified and unqualified, differentiated and non-differentiated (Saguna and Nirguna). So both must be true according as It is or is not connected with Upādhis (adjuncts). Shankara refutes this and says that such contradictory descriptions of one and the same entity cannot be true, nor can Its nature be changed by connection with another; for such a change would mean its destruction. Brahman is without attributes, for the Scriptures throughout describe It as such, to the exclusion of Its other aspects (III. ii. 11). They do not inculcate the connection of Brahman with forms, for wherever they describe a form of Brahman, the Scriptures explain at every instance that the form is not true and that behind the Upādhis there is one formless principle (*Bṛh. Up.*, II. v. 1) (12). Scriptures condemn those who see difference in *Kātha Up.*, II. iv. 11 (13). Brahman is only formless; forms are due to Upādhis and are meant for Upāsana (medita-

tion), and are not intended to establish It (14-15). Brahman is pure intelligence, homogeneous, and formless; the various forms are like reflections of the one sun in water, and as such are not real (III. ii. 11-18). In *Bṛh. Up.*, II. iii. 6 the words 'Not this, not this' deny the two forms of Brahman given in *Bṛh. Up.*, II. iii. 1. Brahman can be described only as 'Not this, not this', i.e., It is something different from all this manifested world that we experience. It is 'the Truth of truth', the only reality that exists behind this world, which is illusory. But this negation does not launch us into a nonentity (Sūnya), denying even Brahman Itself, for without It we could not comprehend even this nonentity. Though unmanifest, It exists, for It is realized in perfect meditation (Samādhi) when the self attains identity with It, the Infinity (III. ii. 22-24, 26).

Brahman is the origin and also the place of dissolution of the world (I. i. 2), and so It is both the efficient and the material cause of the world. It is the efficient cause, because besides It there was nothing else at the beginning of the creation (*Ch. Up.*, VI. ii. 1). It is also the material cause, for in that case only can the enunciation that by the knowledge of the One (Brahman) everything else is known hold true, even as by the knowledge of one lump of clay all things made of clay are known (*Ch. Up.*, VI. i. 3-4). Moreover, the Scriptures, in texts like *Taitt. Up.*, II. 7, say that It created Itself by undergoing modifications (I. iv. 23, 26). Though Brahman and the world are of different natures, yet they can be related as cause and effect; for, to establish such a relation, they need not be similar in all respects, in which case they would be identical and not subjects of different designations. What is necessary is that some of the qualities of the cause must be found in the effect also, and we do find two qualities of Brahman, viz. existence and intelligence in the world also, for everything exists and is lighted by intelligence (II. i. 4-6). At the time of cosmic absorption or dissolution Brahman is not affected by the defects of the world; for ab-



sorption means that all the qualities of the effect do not continue to exist, even as when a pot is absorbed in its cause, the clay, its shape does not continue to exist. It is the effect that is of the nature of the cause and not *vice versa* (II. i. 9). This non-difference of the cause and the effect, of Brahman and the world, does not obliterate the difference between the experiencer and things experienced; for such difference in non-different things is possible owing to name and form. For example, though waves and foam are non-different as sea-water, yet, as waves and foam they are different from each other (13). Thus far Shankara thinks the author of the Sūtras accepts the Parināmavāda (the doctrine of actual modification) of the Sāṅkhyas as a workable basis, but refutes their theory of Pradhāna, an independent entity, as the cause of the world, and establishes Brahman as the First Cause. But in II. i. 14 the author establishes the true nature of this causality according to his own view.

The difference due to name and form referred to in Sūtra 13 is not possible in a non-dual Brahman. Difference and non-difference, being contradictory, cannot exist in one and the same thing. The ultimate reality is only non-duality, and Sūtras 14-20 declare the true significance of this non-difference of cause and effect. Non-difference does not mean identity, for that is not possible between Brahman and the world. It only means that there is no essential difference between them, i.e. the effect, the world, has no existence apart from Brahman, the cause; in other words, it is not real. The denial of identity does not establish difference between the two but establishes the apparent identity or the illusory nature of the world. The modification, pot, is only a name arising out of speech, but the truth is all is clay (*Ch. Up.*, VI. i. 4). The pot, etc. are not different from clay, but are mere modifications or different conditions of the clay (14). They are not experienced without clay and so are unreal (15). But clay is realized even apart from name and form and is therefore real. Hence Brahman is non-dual. Brahman to-

gether with Māyā is the cause of this world; the former through Vivarta (apparent modification), the latter through Parināma (actual modification) and the qualities of both are found in the world. There are five elements in the make-up of everything in this world, viz. *asti* (existence), *bhāti* (intelligence), *priya* (bliss), *nāma* (name), and *rūpa* (form): the first three have Brahman for their material cause corresponding to Its three factors, Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss and the last two are due to Māyā and are unreal. The effect exists in the cause as one with it and is only manifested at creation. Otherwise everything could have been produced from all things (18). It is like a piece of cloth folded and spread out (19). The five Prāṇas (vital forces) when controlled get merged in the chief vital force in the mouth, and are manifested again when the control is released which shows the effect is non-different from the cause. Hence the world is non-different from Brahman and the above-mentioned enunciation holds good (20). Brahman though without extraneous aids yet creates this world, even as milk turns into curd (24). Through Its infinite inherent power It produces the world even as gods create through mere volition (25). Thus Brahman, though immutable, yet undergoes change and produces this diverse universe, for the Scriptures say this and therefore it has to be accepted, since they are the only authority with respect to It. Nor is this against reason, for in the dream state we do find in the soul diverse creation, which exists without marring its indivisibility. So also the world springs from Brahman which yet remains unchanged, and therefore like the dream world this world is also unreal from the transcendental standpoint (26-28).

*Bhāskara* interprets Sūtra II. iii. 9 differently from Shankara. Brahman is eternal and never created, for the Scriptures declare it in texts like *Śvet. Up.*, VI. 9. Therefore a doubt as to whether Brahman is created or not cannot arise. So he finds a different topic in this Sūtra, viz. whether the qualities of the elements which are created are also created



or not and concludes that when it is declared that the elements are created, it is taken for granted that their qualities are also created. In Sūtras III. ii. 11-21 Bhāskara does not deal with the question whether Brahman is differentiated or non-differentiated; for Brahman is both, as is known from the Scriptures, though the latter aspect is Its true nature and the former is only a manifestation and therefore adventitious which is again absorbed in Its true essence. The question therefore is which aspect is to be meditated upon and he says that it is only the non-differentiated, formless Brahman in the causal state which is mere Existence and Pure Consciousness that is to be meditated upon. Thus though he interprets these Sūtras like Shankara, it is with reference to the above topic and not to show that Brahman is attributeless only, and that Its other aspect is unreal or illusory (11-14). Brahman is mere Existence and Pure Consciousness. Even as a piece of salt is salty through and through, so is Brahman nothing but consciousness (16). This Brahman, which is one, appears different in different bodies owing to Upādhis, as the one sun reflected in different sheets of water appears to be many (18).

Sūtras 22-30, according to him, do not deny the world of forms as unreal and establish that Brahman alone is real. According to him the first 'Not this' of *Bṛh. Up.*, II. iii. 6 denies the gross and subtle forms of Brahman declared in II. iii. 1, and the second 'Not this' denies the subtle body of the soul consisting of the impressions (Vāsanās) of objects. Thus by the double denial the self is cleansed of all material form, the non-self, and its pure nature as identical with Brahman is taught by the Scriptures. Sūtra 22, therefore, teaches the pure nature of Brahman, which is Existence, Knowledge, and Infinity. These are qualities of Brahman and so do not refer to different entities, for a thing does not become different on account of its qualities. Being qualities they are non-different from Brahman, and neither can exist without the other (22). The rest of the Sūtras he interprets like

Shankara, but as connected with the above topic.

Bhāskara agrees with Shankara in so far as he says that Brahman is both the efficient and the material cause of the world and the effect, the world, is non-different from its cause, Brahman: but he differs from Shankara when he says that the world for that reason is unreal. He interprets *Ch. Up.*, VI. i. 4 differently as follows: Speech is based on two things, the object (form) and name, which serve our practical purposes, as when we say 'Bring water in the pot'. But if the effect is meant to serve a practical purpose, then the cause and effect, the clay and the pot, would be different. That is why the Śruti says, 'The clay alone is real'. The cause alone exists as the effect, the pot, which is also seen to be made of clay. At all times the effect is dependent on the cause and is never experienced as different from it. It is only a state of the cause—both different and non-different from it, and as it comes and goes, it is said to be transient and not true, while the cause is permanent and remains the same, the basis of all modifications; therefore it is said, 'The clay alone is real'. When the effect is seen from the standpoint of the cause, it is not experienced as anything different, for it gets merged in it. But effects, for this reason, are not unreal (Mithyā) or illusory, for the Śruti affirms their reality in *Bṛh. Up.*, II. iii. 6. 'There is no difference whatsoever here (in Brahman)' (*Kaṭha Up.*, II. iv. 11) denies difference in the cause, and not that the effects are unreal (Mithyā). The world is a state or mode of Brahman and is also real (II. i. 14). Brahman, which is omniscient and omnipotent, of Its own will transforms Itself into this world of diversity through Its powers (Śakti) which are numerous, just as milk turns into curd. The fact of having parts is not an essential cause of the modifications; for in that case water, too, could be turned into curd, but this is not possible. So the modification of the milk into curd depends on its inherent power and not on its having parts. So also Brahman, which is without parts,



transforms Itself at will into the world through Its various inherent powers (*Śvet. Up.*, VI. 8), and at the same time remains unchanged in Its essence (II. i. 24 and I. iv. 26). By one of these powers It becomes the world of enjoyables and by another It becomes the enjoyer. As the sun sends out its rays and again withdraws them, so also Brahman through Its

powers manifests this world of diversity and again absorbs it (II. i. 27). It is nothing to be wondered at that a thing without parts should be modified into effects without losing its essential nature: for in the dream state there appears diversity in the indivisible soul (II. i. 28).

(To be continued)

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

Prof. Giuseppe Tucci, Director of the Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East (*Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente*), whose learned article on *Ramakrishna Paramahansa* appears in this issue, is a deep scholar of renowned merit, who has undertaken many expeditions in quest of valuable ancient Tibetan and other manuscripts and whose vast and commendable research work has yielded an imposing collection of rare historical and scientific material. The article is reproduced from the *East and West*—the Quarterly Review of the Institute. In his 'Message of good wishes' to the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Parliament of Religions (held in March 1937), Prof. Tucci observed: 'I can assure you that the message of Sri Ramakrishna is widely known and appreciated by the cultural circle in Italy'. . . .

In his thought-provoking contribution, *Some Thoughts on the Purānas*, Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar points out the intrinsic worth of Pauranic literature—which is not all 'fable and myth'—and calls for a deeper and more earnestly serious approach to the study of the great Puranas. . . .

*Gāṇapatya and Saura Tantras*, by Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan, M.A., Ph.D., Head of the Department of Philosophy, University of Madras, is the second of the series of four radio talks on *Tāntric Cults*, broadcast by him

from the Madras Station of the All-India Radio—by whose kind permission this script is being published. The script of the first talk of the series appeared in our previous issue. The remaining two talks will be published in the following issues.

### A HISTORIAN LOOKS INTO THE FUTURE

To hundreds of millions of human beings, who are looking forward to a brighter and better world, a picture of the shape of things to come holds a fascinating appeal. What would living conditions on earth be like fifty years from now? Perhaps one could expect an enormous increase in the wealth and happiness of mankind. Speaking at a philosophical society at Edinburgh University, Prof. Arnold J. Toynbee, renowned historian and author, took a long look into the future and shared with his hearers what he guessed human activities throughout the world might be in the year 2002 A.D. Briefly reporting Prof. Toynbee's observations, the American weekly newsmagazine *Time* writes:

"Within half a century," he predicted, "... the whole face of the planet will have been unified politically through the concentration of irresistible military power in some single set of hands". Whether this unification will come through a world war or without it, he would not say. . . .

"If a modern westernizing world were to



be unified peacefully," Toynbee said, "one could imagine, in 2002, a political map not unlike that of the Graeco-Roman world in A.D. 102, in which everything between Britain and India inclusive was gathered up in three empires—the empire in India and Central Asia, the Parthian in Iran and Iraq, the Roman world round the Mediterranean. In form these three powers were all mutually independent, . . ."

"No community in the world will be able to afford to admit that it is not democratic; but even in . . . Western countries that have had a long experience of working parliamentary institutions, the real control of the electorate over the government will have become less effective than it was in the nineteenth century, because the rise in the standard of education will not have kept pace either with the dilution of the electorate or with the increasing complicatedness and technicality of public business". In less experienced states, Toynbee suggests, an even greater gulf will grow "between democratic form and bureaucratic fact".

"Democracy will have receded in the current Western usage of the term, as meaning self-government. It may, though, have advanced in the current Russian usage, as meaning social equality in contrast to hierarchy of classes. The loss of freedom on the material plane will have been the price of abolition of violence and injustice on the material plane. 'Government is the penalty for original sin'. Given the imperfection of human

nature, the only way to abolish strife and injustice on a material plane is to restrict freedom there. In a powerful, healthy, overpopulated world, even the proletarian's freedom to beget children will no longer be his private affair, but will be regulated by the state".

'But man, believes Toynbee, cannot live without freedom any more than he can live without religion. "And if freedom is suppressed on the material plane, it will break out on the spiritual plane. . . . The nineteenth century movement in the Western world, which replaced religion by technology as the centre of interest, will be reversed in the twenty-first century by a counter-movement in which mankind will turn back from technology to religion".

"There will be no more Fords and Napoleons", Professor Toynbee predicts, "but there may still be St. Francis and John Wesleys".

'Where may the new religious movement flower first? "It might not start in America or in any European or Western country", said Toynbee, "but in India. Conquered India will take her matter-of-fact American conqueror captive. . . . The centre of power in the world will ebb back from the shores of the Atlantic to the Middle East, where the earliest civilizations arose 5,000 or 6,000 years ago".'

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

HUMANISTIC ETHICS. BY GARDNER WILLIAMS.  
*Published by Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York 16, N.Y., U.S.A. Pages 235. Price \$3.75.*

We have witnessed, in recent times, the sorry spectacle of Philosophy being forcibly severed from its moorings in spiritual values, and drifting about and crashing finally on the treacherous rock of materialism. Western Idealism, shorn of its spirituality, paved the way for Pragmatism and Humanism, which in their turn ushered in Logical Positivism, resulting finally in the birth of the abortive monstrosity known as 'Dialectical Materialism'. This parasitic development of unphilosophical creeds within philosophy has spread like an infection into logic, ethics, and aesthetics. Desperate attempts have been made to evolve an ethic without metaphysics. 'Why seek for the

touchstone of human conduct in supra-mundane realms? This world is all that there is, and is enough for us! Man as he is is good as he is. It is vain to speak of man as he *ought* to be!' Such is the trend of thought that has brought 'Humanistic Ethics' into existence. It is an ethic bereft of all spiritual values and deprecatory of spiritual standards.

The author begins by laying down five fundamental tenets of his ethical system:

- (1) All conscious life is in one sense absolutely selfish.
- (2) The basic teaching of egoistic hedonism is true.
- (3) Individual ethical relativism is true.
- (4) The will to power is often good.
- (5) It is sometimes one's duty to do what is evil to other people. (P. 3).



This takes away one's breath by its ethical boldness. If alongside of these 'fundamentals of the new ethics' we place the 'errors' of traditional ethics, as listed by the author, we shall then see clearly whither we are heading.

Here are a few of the *errors* (according to the author):

(1) Ethics is impossible without cosmic teleology or supernaturalism. . . .

(5) Puritanism and asceticism are the highest morality.

(6) Brotherly love is the only ultimate ethical imperative.

(7) Purity of heart is essential to the degree that a mere desire to do evil, not acted on, is just as bad as acting on it. (pp. 8-9).

The author demolishes, with one blast of his 'humanistic' bomb, both Christian ethics and Vedantic ethics! In an age which has produced Nazism, Fascism, and many similar isms, one has to be prepared to meet ethical monstrosities. After all these are merely epicureanism and lucretianism in masks suited to modern times. And, in fact, our author admits that his 'humanistic ethics agrees in a number of ways with the theories of ancient egoistic hedonism' (p. 121), but it departs from it in that it deprecates the kind of personal life led by Epicurus!

On such a foundation the author builds up a well-knit and consistent system. In sixteen closely reasoned out chapters, he deals with the application of his ethical principles to society, art, politics, and religion. He goes down to the psychological foundations of human behaviour and grapples with the baffling problems of human personality, holding fast all the time to his fundamental thesis that 'Feeling-tone or affect . . . is the axiological absolute' (p. 23). To be sure, the very language of the Upanishads is pressed into service, when he writes, 'Men's preferences and choices determine in very large measure their long range happiness. In every person's life two alluring and incompatible alternatives are at times presented, one of which would lead to ultimate disaster and the other to genuine spiritual triumph. At such moments it is supremely important that the person in question shall be free to choose, in accordance with reason and foresight, that course which will lead on to creative achievement and long range freedom, in preference to the delusive lures of the disastrous alternative' (pp. 148-149). And he even builds up a 'Humanistic Theism' (p. 213) on his principles. And the whole edifice has striking unity and consistency. But it is the unity and consistency of

*Alice in Wonderland!* Grant the fantastic premisses, and the conclusions follow with logical rigour.

'Humanistic Ethics' is a symptom of the times; it is the outward expression of the deeper malady that is threatening to infect the mental life of cultured people. It should be studied carefully by all serious students of ethics, just as every doctor should be on the look-out for yet newer types of epidemics that are likely to affect his clientele.

P. S. NAIDU

#### BENGALI

BHARAT-PURUSH SRI AUROBINDO. By UPENDRA CHANDRA BHATTACHARYA. *To be had of Modern Book Agency, 10, Bankim Chatterjee Street, Calcutta 12. Pages 208. Price Rs. 2-8.*

Sri Aurobindo's life is an inspiring subject for a great biography. Here in the life of an individual can be found the form and pressure of an age, the volcanic rise of a youth in righteous revolt, and the deep contemplative ecstasy of a Yogi. An anglicized father, an ailing mother, a destined and unassuming wife, and himself—an astonishing scholar in England, an educationist and a royal favourite in Baroda, a revolutionary in Bengal, a sincere seeker after Truth in a British prison cell, and a Yogi in Pondichery, illumined with the vision of a better world, these are some of the *dramatis personae* of a divine masterpiece of which he is the protagonist. In sheer eventfulness and dramatic exuberance such a life is comparable to that of a Dostoevski or a Balzac for there are arrest and acquittal, threat and escape, daring courage and philosophic serenity, struggle for freedom on the surface and in the depth of the mind a greater struggle for synthesis. Hence in spite of Sri Aurobindo's warning that nobody could write about his life because it has not been on the surface for man to see, there is justification for a detailed biography of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri U. C. Bhattacharya has, within a limited compass, made a laudable attempt in this direction. His intimacy with Sri Aurobindo and admiration for him have given the book a special flavour which an artistically objective biography cannot always give. The author writes a simple, lucid, and vigorous style and supports his views with a wealth of detailed but discriminate evidence.

The prophet of Pondichery, who has now become a world figure and who radiates a beacon-light of hope to benighted humanity, deserves to be known by all for their own benefit. The book, with its significant title 'Bhārat-Purush Sri Aurobindo', will certainly bring Sri Aurobindo's life-work and philosophy to a close understanding of the Bengali-reading public.

DR. AMARESH DATTA



## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SISTER NIVEDITA GIRLS' SCHOOL GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS, CALCUTTA

Indian women must be ideal women. This was Sister Nivedita's consuming passion when she started, over fifty years ago, in the face of innumerable odds, a Girls' School in Calcutta, whose semi-centenary was celebrated with great eclat and due solemnity for a week, commencing from the 11th December 1952.

As a true disciple of Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita could enter into the real spirit of Vedanta, and though coming from the West, she could rightly understand and interpret the ideals, institutions, and achievements of India. Thus she laid the foundation of a unique type of national education for Indian women that would gradually enable them to bring their life into harmony with higher ideals. Her deep reverence for the ideals of Indian womanhood, her high intellectual calibre, the rich background of her experience in education in England, and above all, her life of dedicated service, made the institution truly representative of what ideal education for women should be. When the School was formally inaugurated by the Holy Mother in November 1898, on the auspicious Kāli Puja day, in the presence of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Brahmananda, the Sister wrote, 'I cannot imagine a grander omen than her blessing spoken over the educated Hindu womanhood of the future'. Indeed, the Holy Mother's blessing has stood as a tower of strength to the institution throughout its half-a-century of service in the cause of women's education. The School was affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission in 1918. The Golden Jubilee Celebrations were a memorable occasion not only for legitimately proud satisfaction on the part of those dedicated workers who had silently but steadily carried on the work that was so dear to Swami Vivekananda, but also for paying our homage and rendering our heartfelt gratitude to the great founder—the illustrious Sister Nivedita, whose contribution to the cause of India's welfare and the struggle for the country's political freedom was immense.

The celebrations were crowded with multifarious programmes. In addition to holding public meetings and an Industrial Exhibition befitting the occasion, the Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee also organized an Essay Competition on the life and work

of Sister Nivedita among girls' schools of West Bengal, and sports and dramatic performances by the students of the School. The publication of an authentic and detailed biography of Sister Nivedita in English and Bengali, of a brief history of the School, and of a historical review of the education of women in ancient India, also formed part of the programme. The Golden Jubilee furnished an opportunity for the reunion of the old students of the School; some of them who had studied under Sister Nivedita herself were present and spoke on the occasion.

The preliminaries to the celebrations started on the 10th December, when, in keeping with the solemnity of the historic occasion, special Puja and Homā were performed at the Sarada Mandir attached to the School. The same day afternoon uniforms were distributed free to the students of the Primary School and Class V of the Secondary School by Saralabala Devi and others, all of whom were students of Sister Nivedita. On the morning of the 11th December, the day of inauguration of the Golden Jubilee functions, about six hundred students and the teachers of the School took out a procession through the streets adjoining the School with Sister Nivedita's decorated portrait. The Golden Jubilee celebrations were inaugurated the same day by Swami Vishuddhanandaji, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, at the School premises.

In the presence of a vast gathering, composed of distinguished men and women of Calcutta and including Swami Madhavananda, the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and many other senior Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order, Swami Vishuddhanandaji unveiled a portrait of Sister Nivedita. Swami Vishuddhanandaji first read a message from Swami Sankaranandaji, President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, conveying his blessings to the celebrations, and then addressed the gathering. He said, 'It gives me great pleasure to inaugurate the Golden Jubilee of this Institution that bears the name of Sister Nivedita and to see around me so many of you gathered here for the occasion. Swamiji would certainly have been glad had he been present in his mortal frame to see all of you here, participating in the celebration. It





\*THE PROCESSION OF THE STUDENTS AND STAFF  
ON THE 11TH MORNING

was his earnest desire to see our girls grow into real specimens of Indian womanhood and take their share with the sons of India in the emancipation

of our mother country'. Paying a glowing tribute to the life and work of Sister Nivedita and expressing his desire that the daughters of the country would follow in her footsteps, Swami Vishuddhanda said: 'Sister Nivedita fully appreciated the deep significance of this ideal for women enunciated by Swami Vivekananda, and gladly dedicated her life to the purpose of fulfilling Swamiji's desire by enabling Indian women realize the ideal set before them. Sister Nivedita had been deeply influenced by the culture and civilization of India. She boldly and enthusiastically undertook the arduous task of our women's education by ably effecting a happy and healthy synthesis between the best ideals and achievements of the East and those of the West. This School is the veritable fruit of her unremitting effort, in the cause of the development of which she sacrificed her life'.

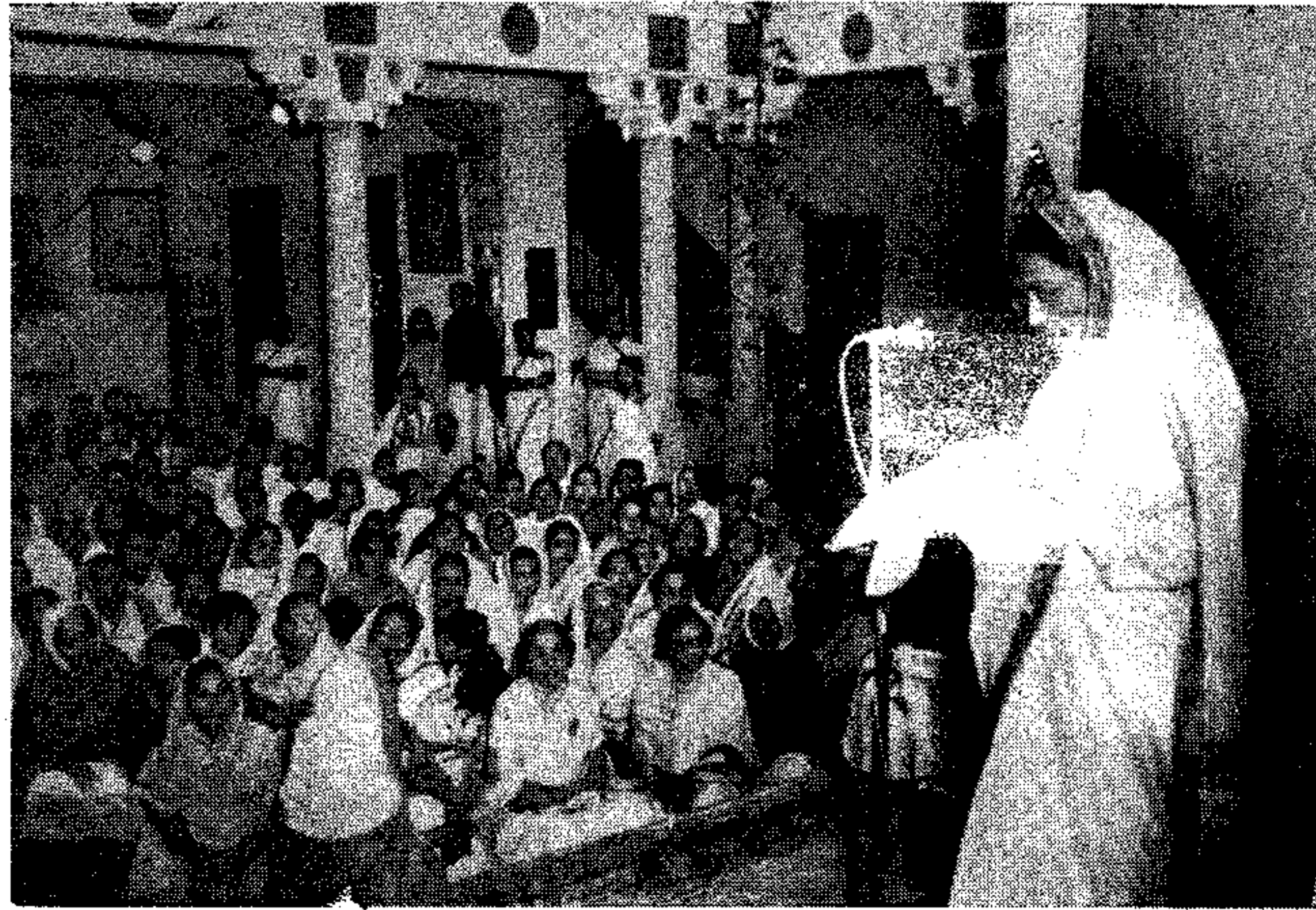
'Those who are desirous of leading the life of a good householder, animated by the ideals of lofty motherhood, will have to set a glowing example, through precept and practice, before their own children so that the latter may imbibe those ideals and proudly feel that theirs is the duty and responsibility of earning for the motherland a place of supreme honour among the nations of the world. For, it is the children of today who will be the future inheritors of India's great and ancient cultural heritage. And this cultural heritage alone can usher in a new era of peace in the world'.

In concluding his speech, Swami Vishuddhanda said, 'May the blessing of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swamiji be showered on you all in abundance, the workers, promoters, and students of this Institution! May you fulfil their great mission wherever you may be placed! May they crown the functions of this Golden Jubilee with complete success!'

After an appropriate song by Juthika Roy, the famous artiste and a former student of the School, the Secretary of the Institution read a short history of the progress of the School during the last fifty years, in the course of which she said that inspired by the great ideals preached by Swami Vivekananda his disciple Sister Nivedita founded this School. Sister Christine, another of Swamiji's well-known Western disciples, joined Sister Nivedita in 1903 and took up the responsibility of conducting the School. The students of the School derived there the benefits of a freer and fuller life by coming together outside the narrow walls of the home. The School was open to all women—young girls, widows, married women, and mothers with children. While teaching her pupils, it was Sister Nivedita's constant endeavour to portray in brilliant colours the salient features of the greatness of India's

\* This and the following three pictures of the Calcutta Celebrations we owe to the kind courtesy of the Manager, *The Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta.





MRS. BANGABALA MUKHERJI ADDRESSING THE AUDIENCE BEFORE OPENING THE INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITION

eternal culture. In 1922 the School was shifted to its present permanent building. In 1943 the total number of students on the rolls was 335. Now it is over 600.

On the 12th December, the second day of the celebrations, the School sports were held. The same afternoon, Mrs. Bangabala Mukherji, wife of the Governor of West Bengal, performed the opening of the Industrial Exhibition, organized by the Jubilee Celebration Committee, at the School premises. The Exhibition displayed a remarkable variety of handiworks of the students of the Industrial Section of the School. Mrs. Mukherji, in her

speech, expressed appreciation of the valuable work of the School in imparting the right type of education to girls. She laid special stress on the School aiming at the all-round development of character and imparting industrial training to women so that they may be economically independent. This, she emphasized was a very useful training, specially in these days of extreme hardships.

Mrs. Renuka Roy, Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation, Government of West Bengal, who was present as the Chief Guest at the function, paid high tributes to Sister Nivedita, the founder of the



MRS. BANGABALA MUKHERJI AND OTHERS INSPECTING THE EXHIBITS

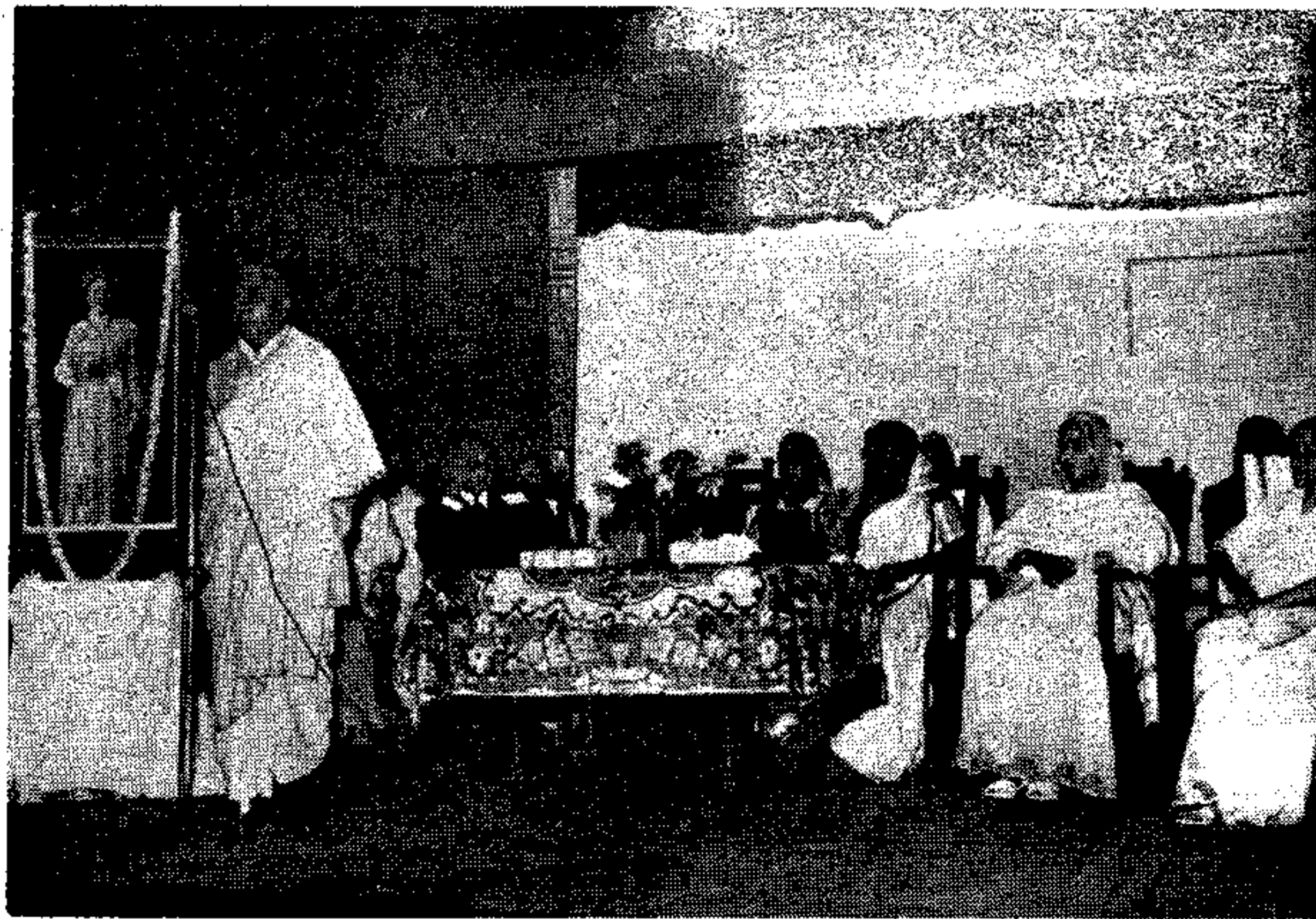


School. In the course of her speech, Mrs. Roy pointed out that Sister Nivedita, though belonging to far off England, had identified herself heart and soul with the cause of Indian womanhood. She also observed: She (Sister Nivedita) had her inspiration and training from Swami Vivekananda and she was anxious to give it to other women through education and service. That led her to start this School and her system of education was based on Indian culture and tradition. Since then the School had been doing remarkably good work. What was necessary was that such education should spread even in villages so that our women would have the opportunities to grow to their full stature and play their part in making our nation great and strong.

At the ladies' meeting held the same evening, under the presidentship of Anurupa Devi, the celebrated writer, portraits of the Holy Mother and

Bengali before each scene. Other items were—'Gāndhāri's Āvedan', the recitation of 'Shiva-Mahimna-Stotra', accompanied by dance expressing the ideas through 'Mudras', and a humorous scene from 'Kamalākānta's Daphtar'.

The largely attended public meeting at the University Institute Hall, Calcutta, on the 14th December, under the presidentship of Dr. H. C. Mukherji, Governor of West Bengal, was truly the high light of the celebrations. The speakers included Saralabala Sarkar, an associate of Sister Nivedita, Swami Yatiswarananda, N. C. Ghosh, President, Managing Committee of the School, and Subhadra Haksar. After the opening song, Dr. H. C. Mukherji garlanded Sister Nivedita's portrait. N. C. Ghosh then delivered his welcome address and read the messages of good wishes from Swami Sankaranandaji, President. Ramakrishna



DR. H. C. MUKHERJI, GOVERNOR OF WEST BENGAL, DELIVERING HIS PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT THE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE HALL.

Sister Nivedita were unveiled by the President. Following this, an article on Sister Nivedita was read and speeches were delivered by eminent speakers who dwelt on the role and status of women in society and their education in India from the Vedic to the modern times.

On the 13th December, the third day of the celebrations, the students of the Sister Nivedita Girls' School gave a dramatic performance for the invited guests. The entertainment began with a dance by the students of the Primary Section. Then followed the Bengali drama 'Megha Mallara'. The most interesting part of the entertainment was the enactment of four scenes from the *Kena Upaniṣad*. The dialogue throughout these four scenes was in Sanskrit, while the interpretation of it was given in

Math and Mission, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Indian Republic, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Vice-President of the Indian Republic, the Central Ministers—Dr. K. N. Katju, C. C. Biswas, and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, from Dr. B. C. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal, C. Rajagopalachari, Chief Minister of Madras, S. N. Banerji, Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, and Dr. Kalidas Nag. N. C. Ghosh, in his welcome address, said that there would be a new awakening in India when thousands of women would be inspired by the ideal of service and sacrifice of the teachers of the Institution. He appealed for financial help for founding a 'Nivedita Chair' in the Calcutta University and for the expansion of the industrial department of the Nivedita Girls' School.



In his presidential speech, Dr. H. C. Mukherji said that inspired by the ideal of Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita had, through the medium of the School founded by her, not only helped the growth of mental faculties of girls but also tried to inspire them with high spiritual thoughts. So far as their political life was concerned they were deeply indebted to Ireland. Sister Nivedita's grandfather was one of the fighters for freedom in Ireland. From her ancestors Sister Nivedita had inherited freedom of thought in the fields of religion and politics. 'With a view to making the students self-supporting in life, this School imparts industrial and vocational training also. Man cannot remain satisfied with expansion of the intellect alone. Both Hitler and Napoleon had developed their mental faculties to the maximum possible extent. But Indians cannot be content with it. They query: What becomes of man after death?' He was glad to find that the Institution was not only imparting education to develop the intellect but also giving training for spiritual improvement of the pupils. He wished God's blessing to be showered on the teachers and the taught of the Institution.

Saralabala Sarkar, the next speaker, was an old associate of Sister Nivedita. She happily recalled the days of her work with Sister Nivedita who inspired patriotism in all who came in contact with her. She said that Sister Nivedita was an embodiment of service and sacrifice. Fifty years ago she began to teach girls in Bosepara Lane. She had very cordial relations with all women belonging to different classes in the locality. While teaching Indian history she was at times so much carried away by her thoughts that she became oblivious of her environment. Sister Nivedita had

felt a thrill of ecstatic joy on seeing a woman perform the 'Sūrya Namaskāra' near Alakananda at Badrinath. She always cherished an immense liking for the 'white lotus' and even when she happened to see it in a picture she would experience spiritual ecstasy. She founded the School on the Kāli Puja day so that the girls might be inspired with the doctrine of Shakti. She exhibited an earnest desire to inculcate a spirit of patriotism in her pupils. Leaving everything behind her Sister Nivedita had come to this country and begun chanting the name of Bharatavarsha as that of the Mother. Her endeavour could not be in vain. Men like Acharya Jagadish Chandra and Acharya Jadunath Sarkar were her close associates.

Swami Yatiswarananda of the Ramakrishna Order said that to them Sister Nivedita was the choicest flower who had been brought by Swami Vivekananda and offered at the feet of Mother India. She was an ideal for Indian womanhood. She was the first lady to be initiated into Brahmacharya. And the Swami expressed his sincere desire that now Indian girls will take up the burden of the work left by her.

Subhadra Haksar, speaking in Hindi, paid a tribute to the life and work of Sister Nivedita.

Sister Nivedita's unbounded love for India and her contribution towards the emancipation of Indian womanhood were gratefully recalled by Sarala Devi and Nirjharini Sarkar, speaking at a gathering of the old students of Nivedita Girls' School, held on the 15th December at the School premises. Sarala Devi presided over the function and Nirjharini Sarkar was the Chief Guest. Both of them were ex-students of the Institution.

Recounting her student days and her memorable association with Sister Nivedita, Sarala Devi



SWAMI GHANANANDA READING THE SPEECH OF H. E. MR. B. G. KHER AT THE SISTER NIVEDITA COMMEMORATION MEETING IN LONDON



observed that Sister Nivedita's love for the women of Bengal knew no bounds. Though born in Ireland she had been inspired by the Indian ideal of renunciation after coming into touch with Swami Vivekananda and had spent the rest of her life for India and her people. In those days there had been very few schools for girls in Calcutta and, therefore, the middle class Bengali girls had little scope for receiving education. Sister Nivedita felt this want very much and started this School with a view to imparting education to the girls on the lines advocated by her Master, Swami Vivekananda. She had great regard for the women who had figured prominently in India's history and asked the students of the Institution to get inspiration from their noble lives.

Continuing she said: 'Though not born in Bengal, Sister Nivedita was in every way a Bengali and lived exactly like a Bengali. She appeared to be always blissfully cheerful. She had received such divine illumination from Swami Vivekananda that she could remain ever immersed in an ocean of rare bliss. Sister Nivedita deeply loved India and had heartily imbibed the essence of Indian thought. She used to teach her pupils generally through the orai method as well as in and through their games. She would ask the girls, "Tell me, who is the Queen of India?" Naturally the girls would answer, "Queen Victoria". Hearing this Sister Nivedita would say, "I am very sorry to find that you girls do not know this at all. India's Queen is Sita and Sita alone". She would ask all the pupils to repeat again and again the name of Sita. She used to relate to the girls often the story of Savitri. It was her desire that all women should emulate the noble character of Savitri, the ideal wife. Sister Nivedita deeply loved the Holy Mother. In the presence of the Holy Mother, she would behave like a little girl'.

Nirjharini Sarkar, said that about forty years back she was a student of the Institution, and had the good fortune of receiving education from Sister Nivedita and Sister Christine. The Institution had been started by Sister Nivedita according to the wishes of her Master, Swami Vivekananda, for imparting education to the girls so that they might reach the goal of ideal womanhood as conceived by Swamiji. The students of this Institution, therefore, did not receive the modern stereotyped education but something nobler and greater. Referring to her association with Sister Nivedita, Nirjharini Sarkar said that the Sister was the embodiment of love and that they used to feel supremely blessed having come in contact with that Great Lady.

'When I joined the School as a student, both Sister Nivedita and Sister Christine were there,

and I had the privilege of studying under them. In spite of our young age and immature intellect at that time, we could occasionally feel within us the distinct urge of a great spiritual awakening. I have no doubt that this was possible only because of the influence of the Sister's extraordinary personality and presence. Apart from this, we students used to take part in discussions and discourses among ourselves on the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother. As a result of all these, it became possible for us to visualize spontaneously the higher values of life'.

Continuing she said that, among the students of the Institution in those days, many had been widows and, inspired by the life of the Sister, some of them had become teachers of the Institution subsequently. In those days the School had been in a dilapidated small house in Bosepara Lane, North Calcutta, but there they had received the greatest joy and that had been probably the best part of their life.

'Then there were in the School only about a dozen elderly pupils of my age. But there was a large number of younger pupils, for whom classes were held separately. We, the elderly pupils, used to take classes, by turns, for the younger pupils and this way we gained some experience in the art of teaching. At that time there was only one outside teacher in the School. Sister Christine used to teach us English. All of us liked her immensely. We were not at all afraid of her. If we committed errors, she would only smile and then correct us with great sympathy'.

'Sister Nivedita generally used to teach us history and arithmetic. Occasionally she would give us preliminary instruction in drawing and painting, with the help of brush and colours'.

The Sister herself often used to coach them and instead of teaching with the help of books she would tell them stories which had created a permanent impression in their mind, enabling them to build up their character and develop their faculties of head and heart.

'We followed no particular text-book on history. Sister Nivedita would herself recount to us, in story fashion, the famous anecdotes of history and we would simply listen in amazement. She never put any questions to us, nor did she hold any examination, for us. She used to talk to us, with perfect ease, about many historical persons and subjects such as Ashoka and the Buddhistic period and Chandragupta and the Maurya dynasty, as if she were relating a fascinating tale. She would enable us to acquire a clear knowledge of the culture, traditions, social customs and manners, etc. of the different periods of ancient India. She en-



deavoured to present before our mind's eye and impress on us the glory and pride of India's past so that we might be able fully to recognize and understand the worth of our great motherland. Occasionally she would tell us of the pomp and splendour of the grand Moguls. Further, she would speak to us in inspiring terms about the great women of the Epics—*Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*. Again she would lose herself completely in the overwhelming joy of relating the saga of heroism and self-immolation of Rajput women of the Middle Ages'.

'Sister Nivedita's expression of love, compassion, and friendliness was unparalleled. Attracted by her amiable nature, many women of the locality would often go and meet her. She would specially strive for the revival of the distinctly indigenous arts and crafts of our country. She repeatedly reminded us about the great women of India and their remarkable spirit of renunciation and service, devotion and discipline, simplicity and generosity, lest we should lose sight of these virtues in our own lives. It was from Sister Nivedita that I heard vividly how many of our maternal ancestors, though living in the midst of big families and engaged in multifarious household duties, had attained to such an appreciably high spiritual status that cannot ordinarily be obtained even through Tapasya'.

'The Holy Mother once paid a visit to our School during the time I was a student there. She was accompanied by Jogin Ma and Golap Ma. There was great rejoicing in the School that day'.

In conclusion, Nirjharini Sarkar said that the feelings the Sister had for the girls of the Institution could not be described in words,—it could only be perceived.

After the close of the function, the variety entertainment programme, as on the 13th, was repeated for the students and their guardians.

The programme for the 16th December, the penultimate day of the week-long celebrations, consisted of a learned Symposium in English on 'Social Service through Religion', held at the University Ashutosh Hall. Sujata Roy presided over the Symposium and the speakers were Dr. Rama Chaudhuri, Rev. John Kellas, N. U. Sitaram, Dr. Makhanlal Chaudhuri, and Swami Ranganathananda. The great world religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam—were dealt with by the different speakers. It was a function aptly expressive of the great synthesis of the message of Swami Vivekananda and of the life-work of his illustrious disciple Sister Nivedita.

Dr. Rama Chaudhuri, opening the discussion,

gave an illuminating discourse on the noble age-old ideal of social service through religion from the point of view of Hinduism. She pointed out that right from the Vedic times religion in India had always been a concrete religion of humanity and social service had always been regarded as the very beginning as well as the end of religion. Hence the performance of Nishkāma-Karma has been emphasized in all the systems of Indian philosophy as the *sine qua non* of religious life. She made a survey, supported by original quotations, of this integral relation between religion and social service in India from the Vedic down to the Epic and Pauranic age. She made a special reference to the contribution of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, according to whom love and worship of God essentially imply love and service of humanity.

Rev. John Kellas, who spoke next, from the standpoint of Christianity, said that the Bible was not a text-book on economics and it did not provide a blue-print of the ideal society. The Gospel is directed to persons, and as a person is a member of society, there are inevitably social implications of the Gospel. The Christian experience is always of a personal encounter between God and man, and man and man. The sacredness of personality and the solidarity of humanity are the standards of judgment of all programmes and plans. The biblical doctrine of man lends support to a responsible society.

N. U. Sitaram then expounded the Buddhist approach to this outstanding problem of the day. Buddhism, he said, was a part and parcel of ancient Sanatana Dharma and its greatest fulfilment was in Gautama the Buddha and the galaxy that succeeded him down the ages. Buddha's achievement and his ministry of more than forty years by personal precept, preaching, and organizing the Sangha stands as an ideal of social service.

Dr. Makhanlal Chaudhuri explained the conception of service and charity in Islam. In Islam there is no idea of self-negation or withdrawal from worldly affairs in the name of service to society. Every Muslim is a missionary, his mission being to preach the message of Allah as revealed in the Koran.

Swami Ranganathananda, Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission, Delhi Branch, struck an original note when he pointed out that outside religion social service became mechanical, divorced from the social situations which were essentially human situations. Religion views the individual as indebted to society and tradition. Social service on the part of the citizen becomes therefore a mere discharging of this debt. Every man



and woman is a servant of society. Social service through religion achieves the double purpose of inner enrichment and outer development. Swami Vivekananda's message—*Ātmano mokṣārtham jagād-dhitāya ca*'—is a clear exposition of this conception and is supported by the Shastras like the *Gita* and the *Bhāgavata*.

The President, Sujata Roy, summed up by explaining the comprehensive ideal of the Hindu conception of Dharma.

On the last day of the celebrations, the 17th December, a musical entertainment programme was held in the School premises for ladies, in which Juthika Roy and others took part. The function concluded happily with the distribution of medals and prizes to the students for good acting and school sports, etc. by Lady Pratima Mitra, the Chairman of the Reception Committee.

Thus ended the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Ramakrishna Mission Sister Nivedita Girls' School, Calcutta. The strenuous but varied programme of the entire celebrations went off with perfect orderlines and precision.

Half a century of progress is no small achievement in the history of this Institution. The School looks forward into the future with hope and courage, for many more years of useful service to the children of the motherland. The Nivedita Girls' School, with its strikingly original system of education, would undoubtedly make its mark not only by its distinguished record of service but also by the inspiration it would impart to the process of the cultural and spiritual renaissance in Independent India. Let us, therefore, remind ourselves of Swami Vivekananda's inspiring message: 'A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the down-trodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising-up—the gospel of Equality.'

#### COMMEMORATION MEETING IN LONDON

Indians and Europeans thronged the Caxton Hall in London on Monday the 12th January in response to the invitation issued by the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre and did honour to the memory of Sister Nivedita.

The meeting was presided over by Swami Ghanananda, the President of the Centre, and was addressed by a group of distinguished speakers including Sir John Stewart-Wallace, Mr. H. S. L. Polak, and Mr. Fenner Brockway. His Excellency Mr. B. G. Kher, the High Commissioner for India in U.K., who was to have spoken first, regretted

his absence due to indisposition and his written speech was read out by the Swami.

The Swami commenced the meeting with a short prayer in Sanskrit which he translated into English.

Messages were received from Her Majesty the Queen, His Holiness Swami Sankaranandaji Maharaj (Head of the Ramakrishna Order), Admiral Earl Mountbatten of Burma, Dr. B. C. Roy (Premier of West Bengal), Sri Morarji Desai (Premier of Bombay), Earl of Sandwich, Rev. Reginald Sorensen, M.P., and others. In the course of a gracious message the Queen asked Swami Ghanananda to convey to the members of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, London, her Majesty's sincere thanks for the kind message of greetings sent on their behalf on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble) Girls' School in Calcutta and of the Sister Nivedita Commemoration Meeting in London. The Head of the Ramakrishna Order cabled from Madras: 'Delighted to learn that many distinguished citizens will meet at Caxton Hall in appreciation of the noble ideals of renunciation and service lived by Nivedita for the good of India. Blessings'. Earl Mountbatten wrote: 'I am glad that the memory of Miss Margaret Noble is to be honoured in this way, since it has been given to few people to do so much to further the friendship of our two countries'. Dr. B. C. Roy cabled: 'Sister Nivedita represented to us the best of womanhood. She lived and died for the country which she claimed her own'. Sri Morarji Desai cabled: 'I wish every success to the meeting being held in commemoration of Sister Nivedita's service to humanity'. The Earl of Sandwich in a letter mentioned an incident which brought out Nivedita's deep love of India which amounted to a passion. And Rev. Reginald Sorensen, wrote: 'I trust you have an inspiring evening in testimony of a great soul. I am sure that for Indians and British alike the gathering will greatly nourish those qualities so deeply needed by both our countries and the whole world'.

Swami Ghanananda, the Chairman, in the course of his speech said: 'Sister Nivedita lived with and served the people of India which she claimed as her own. This was why Indians deeply loved and respected her. Probably no European before or since has aroused such deep and loving, respect among Indians of all classes as Sister Nivedita. In the thirteen years of her life in India, her work extended far beyond the domain of education alone. She was engaged in arousing the whole Indian people to an awareness of its own social, cultural, and religious greatness as revealed in its history and tradition. Writing, lecturing, encouraging,



teaching, nursing, organizing famine and disaster relief work, leading the austere life of a Hindu nun, and withal maintaining a life of unflagging spiritual exertion, she inspired, and evoked unstinted admiration from, the leading Indians of her time. . . . It is a matter for rejoicing that the School which Nivedita started over fifty years ago and of which she was the Principal and which has coached up thousands of students, celebrated its Golden Jubilee in Calcutta four weeks ago. This school called the Nivedita Girls' School, Calcutta, after her death, is today a well established one; but in the beginning of its career it tottered for want of adequate financial support. It was then that she wrote some of her finest books such as *The Web of Indian Life*, *The Master As I saw Him*, *Cradle Tales of Hinduism*, and *Studies from an Eastern Home*, and sold their copyrights for the benefit of the School'.

The speech of His Excellency Mr. B. G. Kher, the High Commissioner for India, which was read by the Chairman, in his unavoidable absence due to indisposition, mentioned among other things: 'The highest form of devotion, according to Hindu scriptures, is *ātma-nivedana* or self-dedication. Nivedita was the name appropriately given to Miss Margaret Noble after she became the disciple of Swami Vivekananda and dedicated herself to the service of God and humanity and India. . . . Having faith and sympathy she was able to observe the vital truth about Indian life, and was able to interpret it to the West. This was one of the greatest services she has rendered to the East and the West for, like her Guru, she realized that the time had come when nations should exchange ideas as they were already exchanging commodities. She felt no doubt about their capacity to absorb the contribution of the West and transmute it; and the way to this she saw through an exchange of organic ideals between the East and the West. . . . Dedicated lives like those of Sister Nivedita bring home to us how frail are the barriers of colour, race, and creed that divide humanity, and at the first touch of one genuine spark of divinity all these walls crumble down. There is perfect understanding established; there is

no East and no West; only the glorious Divine Light which illumines the path of every true seeker who dedicates himself'.

Sir John Stewart-Wallace, Mr. Fenner Brockway, and Mr. H. S. L. Polak then addressed the gathering paying highly appreciative tributes to the memory of Sister Nivedita in their speeches.

(The speeches of Mr. Stewart-Wallace and Mr. Polak will be reproduced *in extenso* in our next.)

#### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIDYALAYA, PERIANAIKENPALAYAM, COIMBATORE DT.

##### CONSECRATION OF NEW TEMPLE

The Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya at Perianai-kenpalayam, Coimbatore Dt., is mainly an educational institution. It has within it a residential High School, a Teachers' Training College, a Basic Training School, a School of Engineering, a Rural Service Centre, and other institutions. A new shrine and prayer hall, to accommodate all the various sections of the Vidyalaya, have been built, and the consecration ceremony was held on the 10th December 1952. On that day, the Pratishṭha of a picture of Sri Ramakrishna in the new shrine was done by Swami Yatiswarananda. A special feature of the occasion was the Akhanda Puja, or continuous worship day and night for six days, which was organized in connection with the consecration of the temple.

The Akhanda Puja began on the 8th December, the hundredth birthday of the Holy Mother, and continued uninterruptedly till the 13th, the birthday of Swami Shivananda, one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. The Akhanda Puja consisted of two parts: On one side, there were Pāṭha, Pārāyaṇa, Bhajana, and chanting of the Vedas, Thevāram, Prabandham, etc. On the other side, continuous Archanas on Shiva, Vishnu, Subrahmanya, and Mother in her various aspects were performed. A Bhajana party composed of Christian friends sang Christian hymns.

Hundreds of men and women from far off places came to take part in these devotional functions, bringing various offerings. Twenty-two members of our Order were present on the occasion.

#### SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S BIRTHDAY

The birthday of Sri Ramakrishna falls on the 15th February 1953.