

# Prabuddha Bharata

OR

## Awakened India



उत्सिष्टत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

*Katha Upa. I. vii. 4.*

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# Prabuddha Bharata

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

*Katha Upa. I. iii. 4*

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

—Swami Vivekananda.

VOL. XXVI ]

OCTOBER 1921

[ No. 303

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

Q. How can Vedanta be realised?

A. By 'hearing, reflection and meditation.' Hearing must take place from a Sad-guru. Even if one is not a regular disciple, but is a fit aspirant and hears the Sad-guru's words, one is liberated.

Q. Who is a Sad-guru?

A. A Sad-guru is one on whom the spiritual power has descended by Gurn-paramparâ, or an unbroken chain of discipleship.

To play the role of a spiritual teacher is a very difficult thing. One has to take on oneself the sins of others. There is every chance of a fall in less advanced men. If merely physical pain ensues, then he should consider himself fortunate.

Q. Cannot the spiritual teacher make the aspirant fit?

A. An Avatara can. Not an ordinary Guru.

Q. Is there no easy way to liberation?

A. 'There is no royal road to Geometry,'—except for those who have been fortunate enough to come in contact with an Avatara. Paramahansa Deva used to say, "One who is having his last birth shall somehow or other see me."

Q. Is not Yoga an easy path to that?

A. (Jokingly) You have said well, I see!—Yoga an easy path! If your mind be not pure and you try to follow Yoga, you will perhaps attain some supernatural power, but that will be a hindrance. Therefore purity of mind is the first thing necessary.

Q. How can this be attained?

A. By good work. Good work is of two kinds, positive and negative. 'Do not steal'—that is a negative mandate, and 'do good to others'—is a positive one.

Q. Should not doing good to others be performed in a higher stage, for if performed in a lower stage, it may bind one to the world?

A. It should be performed in the first stage. One who has any desire, at first gets deluded and becomes bound, but not others. Gradually it will become very natural.

Q. Sir, last night you said, 'In you is everything.' Now, if I want to be like Vishnu, shall I have to meditate on the form also, or only on the idea?

A. According to capacity one may follow either way.

Q. What is the means of realisation?

A. The Guru is the means of realisation. "There is no knowledge without a teacher."

Q. Some say that there is no necessity of practising meditation in a worship-room. How far is it true?

A. Those who have already realised the Lord's presence may not require it, but for others it is necessary. One, however, should go beyond the form and meditate on the impersonal aspect of God,

for no form can grant liberation. You may get worldly prosperity from the sight of the form. One who ministers to his mother succeeds in this world; one who worships his father goes to heaven; but the worshipper of a Sadhu gets knowledge and devotion.

Q. What is the meaning of क्षणमिह सज्जन-सङ्गतिरेका &c.—"Even a moment's association with the holy ones serves to take one beyond this relative existence"?

A. A fit person coming in contact with a true Sadhu attains to liberation. True Sadhus are very rare, but their influence is such that a great writer has said, "Hypocrisy is the tribute which vice pays to virtue." But Avatars are Kapâlamochanas, that is, they can alter the doom of people. They can stir the whole world. The least dangerous and best form of worship is worshipping man. One who has got the idea of Brahma in a man, has realised it in the whole universe. Monasticism and the householder's life are both good, according to different circumstances. Knowledge is the only thing necessary.

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### OCCASIONAL NOTES.

IT is an established psychological fact that the man of uncritical mind is inclined to attribute the miseries and troubles of his earthly existence to outside causes and make others responsible even for his own actions, especially when they prove to be disastrous in their effects. So wide-spread has been the hold of this idea that in their attempt to find an explanation for the presence of evil in the universe, the followers of some of the

religions of the world have gone so far as to believe in the existence of a seducer, an arch-enemy of man as much as in that of an extra-cosmic God, the creator and ruler of the universe. And it is also too true that there are persons having so peculiar a mental constitution that they find it impossible to think of a religion as advocating morality, which has no place in its system of a Satan who wages on interminable war with God and leads men

astray from the path of rectitude and truth.

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But as man evolves and becomes more and more introspective he finds the solution of all such problems within himself and no longer stands in need of an objective explanation. He finds in himself the two opposite tendencies of good and evil that are constantly at war with each other and these should, therefore, be transcended that he may attain peace that neither waxes nor wanes. Further as his mind becomes more and more clear and analytic, upon it gradually dawns the conception of an immanent God who is the Self of all, and the common stay of all that exists, without being affected in the least by the attributes of things, good or otherwise. Such a person endowed with a critical mind no longer thinks himself to be a mere automaton under the sway of outside influences, but feels in his heart of hearts that he is the maker of his own destiny and is himself fully responsible for all his physical and mental actions whatever their nature may be. In such a conception of man's possibility and responsibility lies the foundation of all true strength and morality.

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The most outstanding feature in the national life of the European and the American races is the tremendous faith that resides in their hearts, though they may not generally possess any belief in the higher spiritual Self. It is the intense faith in their own potentiality that is undoubtedly the secret of their success in the various departments of life and the fountain-head of the strength that has enabled them to attain phenomenal success in being the rulers of the destinies of nations that lack the spirit of self-

reliance and self-confidence. If faith in the lower and apparent self can accomplish this, how much more should be the achievement of the power of the faith in the Spirit, the real Self of man!

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आत्मना विन्दते वीर्यं विद्यया विन्दतेऽमृतम्—“By the realisation of the Atman does man gain strength. By the highest knowledge does he attain immortality.” This message of strength is the main theme of the greatest of the Hindu Scriptures, the immortal Upanishads, and if rightly understood it brings strength to the weak, makes a saint of a sinner, infuses hope in the depressed, gives a new meaning to life and endows man with an integrity of character that never allows him to stoop down to perform actions that are mean and selfish. And the person who stands on the glory of the Soul gains in spirit as the Divinity within shines forth through him in all its splendour. No more need he cling to the role of a beggar, hoping to command respect from others by supplication and prayer, nor try to win others' heart by flattery and fawning. Before the power of such a sterling character all cannot but bow down their heads with respect and love, because the claim of strength is imperative and it does not stand in need of any help whatsoever to assert itself.

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In one of the oldest and most admirable of the Upanishads we read that before the beginning of creation the Atman only existed, and once He was overtaken by fear as He felt Himself to be alone and helpless; but when He meditated within Himself and came to think, “Why shall I entertain any fear since there is none else but Myself?”—fear left Him, for it is duality that is the parent of fear. The deep significance of this narrative lies in

the fact that it speaks in glowing terms of the glory of the Atman. Man who in his essential nature is no other than the Spirit Absolute, hypnotises himself by conjuring up things that do not really exist and forgetting the Divinity within thinks himself to be under the thralldom of matter and feels miserable. But when with the dawn of knowledge the truth is brought home to him that he is the Soul of the Universe, the One without a second, then **आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् न विभेति कुतश्चन—** “realising the bliss of Brahman he does not entertain fear from any quarter.” Being established in the Unity, the Rishi remains undaunted in the presence of death, for he knows that the Spirit cannot die; in the midst of the greatest dangers he maintains a perfect equanimity of mind as he feels that the Atman is untouched by the superimpositions of Mâyâ and is never a bond-slave of matter. It is this realisation that gives him the abiding strength of self-assurance that cannot be shaken by doubts or ignorance.

Few individuals, however high their claims to perfection, are really free from failings and defects that human beings are heir to. The average human character is a combination of both strength and weakness. No doubt it is quite enigmatic to think how entirely opposite qualities can exist side by side in the highly complex personality of man, but nevertheless it is a statement of fact. Blinded as man ordinarily is by egoism and directed as his vision is towards things external, he cannot detect his own weakness but is ever conscious of the faults and drawbacks of those around him. This is the root-cause of almost all misunderstandings and misrepresentations that lead to the unfortunate quarrels and struggles

that disturb the peace and prosperity of individuals as well as of nations.

The first step that should be taken by one who really aspires after self-improvement is to make a thorough analysis of his own character and form a right estimate of all good and evil qualities and tendencies. No sincere soul can possibly deny the existence of weakness in himself. But the remedy does not consist in brooding over the sins and helplessness whether of his own self or of others. Inside every one, even in the so-called most degraded sinner, is lodged the infinite power to manifest purity and knowledge. This faith in the soul's latent strength alone can enervate the down-hearted, energise the morbid and eradicate the very source of self-hypnotisation that debases and weakens man—the greatest superstition that falsely identifies the Self with the not-Self and keeps It entangled in the meshes of Mâyâ. It is this keynote of Upanishadic teachings that the great messenger of the Gospel of Strength, Swami Vivekananda, struck again and again when he spoke to his countrymen and co-religionists: “Stand and die in your own strength; if there is any sin in the world, it is weakness; avoid all weakness, for weakness is sin, weakness is death.....Awake, arise! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak; the Soul is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do not deny! Too much of weakness, too much of hypnotism, has been and is upon our race. O ye modern Hindus, de-hypnotise yourselves. The way to do that is found in your own sacred books.”

## THE PLACE OF UPĀSANĀ IN THE VEDĀNTA.

**L**IFE is a component of two factors, one the internal and the other external. In each act of consciousness we perceive these dual elements woven and interwoven with each other. The objective world sends a stimulus to our brain and the mind interprets this stimulus. The world which we see and feel around us, considered as a whole, is one, but how infinitely varied are our readings of this one and the same universe! The self-same object is looked at from a thousand different angles of vision, and produces in us feelings of diametrically opposite natures. Here, for instance, is a female form. It is one so far as God has fashioned it, but how differently people view this piece of God's creation! The woman is the daughter to her father, a sister to her brother, to others she is a neighbour, the servants of the house look upon her as the mistress, to her child she is the loving mother, to her husband she is the beloved wife, to a stranger she is simply a woman, and so on! So many variations in thought regarding a single object! These relations, again, vary according to differences of place, time and condition, altogether presenting an infinite multiplicity of aspects. Such indeed is the world.

It is the mind which serves as the interpreter to all phenomena we come across. It is this magician's wand that "makes a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." Between man and the universe *as it is*, there is always this veil, this barrier, thoroughly opaque to some, translucent to others, and transparent to only a chosen few. It dyes with its own tinge whatever is seen through it, and we must make a compromise with it before we can arrive at a

desired conception of any worldly phenomenon, before we can have just the thing that suits our own taste. The author of the Bhâgavatam beautifully expresses this variety in the midst of unity engendered by the mind, in the following verse in which he describes the youthful Krishna's entrance into the arena of King Kamsa for a tournament—

महानामशनिर्नृणां नरवरः स्त्रीणां स्मरो मूर्तिमान् ।

गोपानां स्वजनोऽसतां क्षितिभुजां शास्ता स्वपिबोः शिशुः ।

मृत्युर्भोजपतेर्विराडविदुषां तस्त्वं परं योगिनां ।

दृग्ग्रीणां परदेवतेति विदितो रङ्गं गतः साम्बजः ॥

—"To the wrestlers, like one whose body had the strength of thunder; to the assembled men a prince among men; to the women, the very embodiment of love; to the cowherds, their own kinsman; to the wicked kings, a chastiser; to his parents, their darling; to king Kamsa, Death itself; to the ignorant, a mere boy of undeveloped features; to the Yogins, the highest Principle; and to the Vrishnis (the line to which Sri Krishna belonged), their supreme Deity;—appearing in such manifold ways, did Sri Krishna enter the arena, accompanied by his brother, Balârâma."

The ideas of bondage and liberation also are the creation of mind. As you think, so you become,—this is the unanimous verdict of time-honoured scriptures. It is not at all the question whether a man is actually bound or not; once allow that he so thinks, and he is then and there converted into a bound soul. Instances of this overwhelming power of thought must have come to the notice of all. A man walking along a jungly track in the evening feels that something has stung at his foot, and the inveterate association

of snakes with woods at once suggests to him the idea that he has been bitten by a snake, possibly a venomous snake, and in two minutes he sinks to the ground, declaring he is dying. A comrade drags him with difficulty to a snake-bite expert's house, where he lies almost senseless on the ground. The expert examines the cut and tries his skill to find out if the bite is poisonous or not. Once, twice, he finds no indication of poison. He tries a third time, and with amazement declares that nothing is the matter, it must be the sting of some insect. The patient hears this welcome announcement, sits up, and the next moment he is wending his way to his destination, regretting that he has needlessly lost so much time! Such is the influence of hypnotisation,—in many cases, self-hypnotisation,—and, baseless though it may be, once you are under it, you must undergo a lot of trouble to remove it. There is no other way out. This is the penalty one has to pay for befooling oneself so as to come under the hypnotic spell.

We are, say the scriptures, all deluded like that. How or whence this delusion came—nobody knows. It is futile to make this enquiry. But anyhow it has come, and the next step is to seek a way out of it, rather than ruefully trace its etiology—how it arose and all that. This way out, as has been suggested above, lies in ascertaining the true state of things—in knowing positively and indubitably, that *nothing is the matter*, that we are now, as we have always been, the Self-effulgent Brahman, so much glorified in the Vedas and Upanishads, and that it is our self-hypnotisation that leads us to think we are puny weaklings, drifting at the mere breath of circumstances. When, as the result of successive experiences,

the world with its kaleidoscopic changes appears too trivial a thing to engross our serious attention, when we are sick of its phantom joys and cruel disappointments, when from the inmost recesses of our heart there comes forth the cry to get out of this never-ending labyrinth of birth, disease and death, when we are almost choked, as it were, by the tumultuous waves of this restless sea, then and then alone falls upon our ears the gentle and reassuring voice of the Guru who, standing above the storm-tossed waves, beckons us to follow him, and we instinctively obey. In his infinite mercy he teaches us the Truth that has been dinned into the ears of humanity for ages upon ages, the Truth that Brahman alone is real, that the universe considered apart from Brahman is a mere chimera, and that we are that Brahman, self-contained, infinite, eternal,—before which the spectre of Duality crouches in fear, and in whose serene effulgence the darkness of ignorance vanishes into nought. ऐतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वं तत् सत्यं स आत्मा तत्त्वमसि श्वेतकेतो—  
—“All this is of the essence of that subtle Principle, which is Truth, which is the Atman (Self), and thou art That, O Sweta-Ketu”—thus does the perfect Teacher rouse us from our self-forgetfulness, from our long sleep with its attendant uncanny dreams. If we are ready, if our attachment for this putrid corpse of the world has been sufficiently attenuated, then at a flash the Truth illumines our hearts, and enthrones itself there in all its majesty, never to depart. We are lifted, out of the reach of the waves of Time, Space and Causation, into a region where there is eternal Peace, and undying Bliss. This is called Realisation or *Jnānam*.

But if we are not so far advanced as

that, if behind our apparent dispassion for the world there still lurks the desire for its insidious joys, if we, in spite of our sincere desire to get out of the meshes of the world, have yet a secret hankering for sense-pleasures, then the Guru recommends the other path—that of Upâsanâ. The word has no exact equivalent in English, but it may be roughly rendered as 'mental worship.' This was the meaning the word had in the Upanishadic times—Bhâvanâ or systematic thinking. This instrument, then, is put into the hands of the disciple to prepare himself for the revelation of the highest Truth—Unity. By its means the aspirant is unconsciously carried to higher and higher spiritual altitudes, and finally, if he is patient and persevering enough, he comes to that dizzy height where all differentiation of thought is merged in the Oneness of the Vision Beatific. Just as, in the case of a man of weak lungs, it may be injurious to life itself to ascend suddenly to a rarefied atmosphere, so, to the ordinary aspirant an attempt to take a sudden leap into the region of the Advaita may be disastrous. His very nerves accustomed to altogether different thought-impulses, will refuse to obey the summons. But by degrees these as well as the mind may be so trained and purified, as to freely breathe in the sublime atmosphere of the Absolute. And Upâsanâ is the vehicle through which he can achieve this end.

How is this effected, it may be asked. The answer has been partly suggested above. If our present limited existence has been the outcome of persistent thinking, then, just by reversing the process we can cut through our limitations and regain our real nature, which has merely been clouded, but not lost. This

marching back, this reversing process of thought must be very intense to bear quick results, for it must be potent enough to counteract the baneful influence of ages of vitiated, poisonous thought. But it is possible, nevertheless,—for one lie may require twenty other lies to keep it alive, but Truth is paramount in power; it is self-evident. The aspirant, as the Vedanta repeatedly points out, has not to acquire any extraneous thing—which might cause great delay and obstruction—but has simply to know what he has always been. If only the desire to know the true nature of the Self is genuine, the path is already clear.

So, for the great majority of human beings who seek a deliverance from this relative existence, Upâsanâ is the safest and surest way to Realisation. Upâsanâ concretised is external worship—the worship of the immanent Divinity through images or symbols. The sages of India knew its secret long ago, and for people of the most ordinary calibre they have prescribed external worship as a means to the highest goal. Anyone who has taken the pains to understand the meaning—plain, not esoteric—of the Mantras with which the worship through images or symbols is carried out, has known that the worship is made not—as is too often erroneously supposed by people of un-informed circles—to the material emblem wherein the Divine Presence is conceived, but to the Divinity Itself. Worship *minus* this meditation is nothing. So from the lowest strata right up to the point beyond which there is no duality, Upâsanâ, in one form or the other, holds sway. It may be negative, as Neti, Neti, "not this, not this"—eliminating limited adjuncts till at last the mind is absorbed into its inmost being of reality; or it may be the



meditation on comparatively limited aspects of the Reality,—the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, such as that He is possessed of all forms, all attributes—in short, conceiving the Reality in more or less personal aspects. But by degrees, as the mind is strengthened and purified, the thin barrier between the highest Personal Aspects and the Absolute Impersonal Aspect is transcended, and the seeker loses his hitherto-assumed limited individuality in the Reality-that-is. It is no lifeless, inert state, as it is feared, but it is the Essence out of which what we call life and intelligence are projected. It cannot be put in terms of thought and language, being Absolute; hence people are apt to confound It with a senseless existence.

It will be clear to all that even our daily acts can be converted into worship. Whatever work we do, the motive behind it will tell us whether it is an act of worship or not. If it is done to get beyond the ugly limitations of our present life, to that

region of Eternal Bliss, then surely it is worship—an approach towards Godhead, towards our real Nature. All disinterested works are *ipso facto* acts of worship. Selfless work and meditation are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. The one concerns itself with the Supreme Being, the Sachchidânanda, as *inside* us, and in the other case this universe is considered as His veritable form. Worship Him one way or the other, just as you like. If your worship is sincere and conducted in the right way, if you are pure and patient, you are bound to see the Light. Worship will culminate in Realisation, Upâsanâ in Jnânâ, and you will then see, with an inspired eye, that the universe with its wonderful diversity, and all beings, of whatever grade, are Brahman Itself. There is no duality anywhere, only there is the One without a second, and you are That!

SWAMI MADHAVANANDA.

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### KEDAR NATH AND BADRI NARAYAN.

( *An Unpublished Writing by the Sister Nivedita.* )

(Concluded from page 201.)

**W**ITH Buddhism we come to the bedrock of Himalayan religion. There is only a trace here and there. Most of the evidence is built upon inference. One or two of these Chaitya-like buildings, and here and there the head of the Bodhisattva, are all the direct testimony that I have been able to find, yet it seems probable that the first religious organisation of the Himalayas was the work of Buddhism, that all subsequent movements poured their influence in upon the spots which that first enthusiasm

had created, and that therefore all the most ancient sites in the Himawant derive their authority and sanctity from the Buddhist orders.

Conspicuous amongst such are those village-squares which are really the temple-close made into Bazar and inn. To this type belong Agastyamuni, Gupta Kashi, Gouri Kund, Akhi Math, Gopeswar, Joshi Math, the court of Kamaleswar in Srinagar, and more obscurely Kedar Nath itself. This is the kind of inn-yard that saw in Englaud the

development of the drama. How full of interest it is! One arrives in the village with all one's baggage, and beasts of burden, and servants, to spend a few hours, and be off, mayhap, before dawn the following morning. One is accorded a place of bivouac in one of the great verandahs that look down upon the court, and at once one becomes part and parcel of the village life. At the far end, yonder is the door that leads into the temple-cloister itself, if indeed it does not happen that the shrine is reared in the very midst of the scene before us. Coming and going, going and coming, are Brahmins and friars, merchants and travellers, and simple pilgrims. Here we watch some grave ceremony of incantation, there again we see a family at their midday meal. Beneath us a moment later is raised the cry of 'thief' and the patriarchal Brahmin appears, to lead away into the more decent seclusion of the temple-precincts an excited woman, her embarrassed husband and the remonstrating youth who stands charged with the villainy. How easy and delightful it would be to fill the court at nightfall with a crowd of villagers for a magic-lantern lecture or a Mahabharata Kathakata! A party of Bengalee students did something of the sort a few years ago, headed by the monk Sadananda, and the auditors came, I heard, from twelve and fifteen miles to enjoy the treat.

The pre-historic elements of Hinduism are not missing from even this cursory glimpse of the Himalayas. There has been a definite Mahabharata period when the whole culture-energy of the region seems to have been devoted to dramatising and appropriating the heroes and incidents of the great Epic. There is a little river called Vyasa Ganga, upon whose bank stands a tiny chapel containing an image of Vyasa! And beyond its boundary lie practically all the associations of the five Pandavas, ending in the great snowy road of the Mahaprasthanana at Kedar Nath itself. Could evidence have been

clearer that there was once an attempt, definite, deliberate, and literary, to impose the ideas of the national epic on an Himalayan kingdom, of which perhaps this particular river was the frontier, and to parcel it out into a sort of Mahabharata holy land? At Kathgodam, the Pandavas are said to have begun their last pilgrimage, and their road leads us past Bhim Tal or the lake of Bhima, and past Dhari, their treasury, while the ice-scratches on the rock at Devi Dhura are said to mark the places of their *pachisi*-\* board! The caves on the road to Kedar Nath are assigned each to one of the princes, to Draupadi or to the dog. There are way-side shrines dedicated to them. One of the great Prayags is sacred to the name of Karna. But amongst all these, the one name that impresses one as genuinely pre-Mahabharatan, that is, as non-literary, and savouring of the soil itself, is that of the Hindu Herakles, Bhima, or, as the people call him, Bhimasena. When we come to the village of Agastya-muni, indeed, and learn that the tale of the sage who drank up the ocean is also told of the Vale of Kashmere, which is merely a larger edition of this little valley of Agastya-muni, we can see for ourselves that the story is a pretty geological myth of a ravine that was once a lake. And we feel again a thrill of wonder at the encyclopædic character of the information that went to make up the great poem. But the fact that the geography of distant Himalayan valleys receives notice shows in fact that the culture-level of this neighbourhood was then such as to contribute scholars to the board of composition. Thus we come back to the integral and important part which Himawant must have played in Indian thought ever since the Asokan organisation of the propaganda. From the facts of literary history it would appear probable that the Mahabharata period between Vyasa Ganga and Kathgodam must

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\*An Indian play like dice.

have coincided with the completion of the poem about the middle of the Gupta era. The eagerness of the great dynasty and therefore, by inference, of all friendly and allied states to publish the mighty work and their idea that it contributed a kind of educational scheme, is evident enough in many other directions. Hence we cannot be surprised at the energy with which it seems to have been taken up here, nor at the appeal that has been made to the pride of the people and to their love for their beautiful country, in giving them, as it were, a local claim upon it all.

The systematic way in which this was attempted becomes particularly incontestable when we come upon such traces as the shrine and image of Sriingi at Agastyamuni. At Srinagar again, there is a temple of the Five Pandavas. And every here and there we come upon some Muni or other, as for instance Kapila Muni. One can imagine the miracle-plays of the Mahabharata that must

have taken place from time to time in these temple courts, half theatre, half college, like the rude dramas still seen in the villages of Maharashtra! And what about the Ramayana? Was it an earlier, or a rival scheme to that of the Mahabharata? Close to Hrishikesh, in Lakshman Jhula begins its terminology, which comes to a head at Devprayag, in the temple of Ramachandra. Here we realise what a large and compelling synthesis was offered by early Vaishnavism, for just as we cannot fail to understand that Ganesh has been gathered into the Saivite scheme from older pre-historic sources, so here we find Hanuman behind and Garud in front of the temple as guardians, and know suddenly that vast antiquity which these two represent. It must always be a feature of dominant religions that when fully formed they incorporate the debris of preceding systems. Garud is a strangely persistent element of Himalayan religion. He crops up occasionally even on the road to Kedar Nath itself.



## THE PROBLEM OF WOMEN IN INDIA

**T**HIS month the whole of India is in high spirits. Festivities are observed throughout the length and breadth of the land in one form or other in honour of the Divine Mother. She is worshipped everywhere, though probably Bengal takes the greatest part in these festivities. Customs and doctrines bearing on this worship vary in different parts of the country. In Bengal She shines forth as the woman perfect in beauty and purity, and even as the symbol of the Motherland. But of all the aspects the devotee would like to see Her only as the young wedded daughter returning for a few days' visit to her father's house from the snow-clad Himalayas rising in peaks above peaks over Nature's own park where the earth, plants, trees, snows and everything else express the glory of the Lord—a fit place for the Lord of the universe, Shiva, to reside with His spouse, the Divine Parvati.

The Hindu knows that the Divine Mother is no other than the *Para Prakriti* or the Divine Energy of the Supreme Being. Out of Her is born everything of the universe and hence She is the Mother of the universe. She is all-powerful, for the various forces of Nature are but the manifestation of Herself. Wherever there is any force working, it is the Divine Mother Herself. या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता—“She is the Goddess who resides in all beings as Power.” But the idea most appealing to the Hindu about the Mother Divine is या श्रीः स्वयं सुकृतीनां भवनेषु, अलक्ष्मीः पापात्मनां । सैषा प्रसन्ना वरदा नृणां भवति मुक्तये—“She is the Goddess of fortune Herself in the families of the meritorious, and the Goddess of ill luck in those of the sinful.” “She alone being satisfied is there hope of salvation for mankind.”

If this is true, why so much misery, scarcity and disease in this country where She is worshipped by

innumerable devotees? Is she not pleased with them? Evidently not, for the cause is known from the effect. What then is the reason? The Divine Mother cannot be hoodwinked by idle talks. She adjudges gifts according to the intrinsic merits of all actions. She is fully aware of the hypocrisy we practise. With folded hands and head bent low we say, "O Mother Divine Thou art beyond the reach of our praises: Thou pervadest every particle of the universe; all knowledge proceeds from Thee, O Infinite source of wisdom! Thou dwellest in every feminine form and all women are Thy living representatives on earth." But do we really act up to this? What have we done to better the condition of our women? Have we carried on the worship of the Divine Mother by trying to educate and accord the proper honour to them, Her representatives living in every home?

The Mother smiles her loving blessings on the nations of the West because of their worship of the Sakti, though not in Her highest aspects. It is this that has brought prosperity to the West. As Swami Vivekananda says, "Without Sakti (Power) there is no regeneration for the world. Why is it that our country is the weakest and the most backward of all countries?—Because Sakti is held in dishonour here. Once more will Gargis and Maitreys be born in the country. Without the grace of Sakti nothing is to be accomplished. What do I find in America and Europe?—the worship of Sakti, the worship of Power. Yet they worship Her ignorantly through sense-gratification. Imagine, then what a lot of good they will achieve who will worship Her with all purity, in a Sattvika spirit, looking upon Her as their mother!" Truly does Manu say, that Gods bless those families where women are happy and well-treated. There is no chance for the welfare of the country unless the condition of the women is improved and true womanhood honoured. That is why Sri Rama-krishna accepted a woman as his Guru and preached the Motherhood of women, the living forms of the Divine Mother. Unless the women become worthy to continue the traditions of Sita, Savitri, Ahalya Bai, Meera Bai, they cannot bring forth heroes—heroes who will once more raise Mother India to the forefront of the civilised world.

How can the condition of the women be bet-

tered? What are the problems that confront them most at present? There are many and grave problems. But liberty is the first condition of growth. "Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth and well-being." Where it does not exist the country must go down. It is wrong therefore for anyone to say, "I will work out the salvation of the women." Who is man to assume that he can accomplish everything? The women are to solve their own problems and man's right of interference is limited entirely to giving them a healthy education. They must be educated and put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. None else can do this for them. There is no difficulty that will not vanish before education. Women are not less intelligent, less intellectual than men, only they have not been given opportunities. If they are given opportunities they will glorify our country. The country can again become great only by properly educating the young girls and the women of the country. They will be the mothers of the future generation, the heart and soul of the Indian Nation. Hence they have more right than boys for education. Unless the mothers are great the children will not inherit the qualities which are great and inspiring. Even in the hoary Vedic period there were well-educated women and Brahmavadinis. Manu also says, "The daughter too should be thus brought up and educated with the utmost care." The early marriage of girls should be stopped if they are to be educated. They too will have to live the life of Brahmacharya like boys.

What is the education that is to be imparted to them? Once Swami Vivekananda said, "I should very much like our women to have the intellectuality of the Western women but not if it must be at the cost of purity. Intellectuality is not the highest good. Morality and spirituality are the things for which we strive. Our women may not be so learned but they are more pure." "Have our ancient women been a source of shame to us that we should lose their grace, sweetness, purity and child-like simplicity in exchange for intellectuality? It is much better that our women are in ignorance and fail to acquire intellectuality than lose these essential qualities." An education which uproots the training of character is no

education at all. All education must build character and strength of mind in the first place, and the expansion of the intellect is a secondary thing. We are therefore to have a clear idea of the goal towards which we are to work and India is not poor in ideals. We have Sita, a unique figure in the literatures of the world, a type of true Indian womanhood, "for all the Indian ideals of perfected woman have grown out of that one life of Sita who is purity itself, all patience, all suffering, the ever chaste wife." Any attempt to modernise our women apart from this ideal will be a failure. To quote a few more cases, we have the heroic Padmini, the saintly Meera Bai, the maiden Uma. There was no place in life that they did not fill graciously. What is it that appeals to us most in these women? It is their character. An education which does not exalt these ideal characters cannot be called true education. A thoroughly Westernised woman who does not represent the ideal of womanhood cannot be called truly educated. A woman who is modernised according to the necessity of the age but yet holds to the ancient ideals of faithfulness and devotedness, purity, tenderness and simplicity, should be the ideal woman of the age.

Schools must be started all over the country even in every village, and school-life must be made as essential a feature of girls' lives as of boys. Ideals held out at home the school will have to support and vice versa. The two, the school and the home, should not be antagonistic as is now the case in many of the schools for girls started by Christian societies for example. A training in the various works of the home, house-keeping, some elementary lessons in science, geography and history, sanitation, hygiene, and a knowledge of plants and animals, of the family environment and over and above all, child-rearing. This last would save the country from child mortality. A spirit of service and nursing, strength and self-reliance must be infused in them. At present our women are trained in helplessness and dependence on others. Circumstances have changed and it has become necessary for them to learn to depend on themselves in cases of emergency. The mother's heart, in the coming age, must be combined with the hero's will.

Though the pioneer work in the education of

women has to be done by men, yet in course of time women will have to take it up and continue it, for women know their needs better than men. In the West women teachers are often in charge of the education of children and there is no reason why a similar course should not be followed in India. Studying therefore the present conditions it is necessary that some women must be trained up in the ideals of renunciation. "They will have no idea of home save in their work, no ties save of religion, no love but for people and motherland." Such great characters alone can overcome all the difficulties present in the initial work of raising the women. Why should not women have an equal share in all the thought of the age? Is it impossible for any woman by the mere strength of character and intellect to realise the highest ideals? Some people however think that this exaltation of Brahmacharya would take the highest place from the mother and wife and thus indirectly be a blow at true womanhood. But they forget that the ideal of the Hindu is only one—the realisation of the Self; and this ideal has to be reached, be it through marriage or no marriage. There is no sex in the Atman. The greater the individual, the more will he or she transcend the limitations of sex, and such a thing has to be admired rather than deprecated.

Another great problem that confronts the Indian women is as regards the extent of their rights in the civic life of the Nation. In the West many women have long fixed the civic ideal as their goal. Under such an ideal both men and women are individuals having relation with one another. So according to it, family is only an accidental result of the co-operation of men and women by their own free choice. In India also in the ancient days women often distinguished themselves in the government of their country—a fact which goes to show that women in the East are also capable of contributing towards the growth of the civic ideal. Yet the civic ideal has never been the goal in the East, and the family has as a rule ever been the sphere of activities of the woman. Any development with regard to womanhood must be only a re-fashioning of old ideals to suit the present day conditions which have changed considerably. The path that she is to select should be one which will hold her faithful to the old ideal but at the same

time would remove much of the unnecessary and vexatious curtailing of her rights.

A word as regards woman's economic problem. As the family is her main career, here she is always in a position of dependence. No doubt the Hindu and Muhammedan laws make ample provisions for her, yet these are by no means adequate. Education of course would solve this problem to some extent. With education women will be able to strike out new paths for their maintenance where necessary. Already there are women following the professions of doctors, teachers and other avocations. But yet it will not solve the problem in all cases. Some more

provisions seem to be indispensable. Formerly helpless women were able to maintain themselves, and all this by their individual earnings, either by the spinning wheel or some other art or industry. Our women have practically given up all these and as a result they have become more dependent than ever on men. The re-establishment of cottage arts and industries would not only save our women from economic difficulties, but these would also inductly solve the economic problem of the country to a great extent.

SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA.

## EPISTLES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

### CLXXXIX.

( *Written to Sj. Sarat Chandra Chakravarti, B. A.* )

ओं नमो भगवते रामकृष्णाय !

शुभमस्तु ! आशीर्वादप्रेमालिङ्गनपूर्वकमिदं भवतु तव प्रीतये । पाञ्चभौतिकं मे पिञ्जरमधुना किञ्चित् सुखतरम् । अचलगुरोर्हिमनिमण्डितशिखराणि पुनरुज्जीवयन्ति मृतप्रायानपि जनानिति मन्ये । श्रमवाधापि कथञ्चित् दूरीभूतेत्यनुभवामि । यत्ते हृदयोद्वेगकरं मुमुक्षुत्वं लिपिभङ्ग्या व्यञ्जितं, तन्मया अनुभूतं पूर्वम् । तदेव शाश्वते ब्रह्मणि मनः समाधातुं प्रसरति । “नान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽयनाय ।” ज्वलतु सा भावना अधिकमधिकं यावन्नाभिगत एकान्तक्षयः कृताकृतानाम् । तदनु सहसैव ब्रह्मप्रकाशः सह समस्तविषयप्रध्वंसेन । आगामिनी सा जीवन्मुक्तिस्तव हिताय तवानुरागदाढ्यैर्णैवानुमेया । याचे पुनस्तं लोकगुरुं महासमन्वयाचार्यं श्री १०८ रामकृष्णं आविर्भवितुम् तव हृदयोद्देशे येन वै कृतकृतार्थस्त्वं आविष्कृतमहाशौर्यः लोकान् समुद्धर्तुं महामोहसागरात् सम्यक् यतिष्यसे । भव चिराधिष्ठित ओजसि ।

वीराणामेव करतलगता मुक्तिः, न कापुरुषाणाम् । हे वीरा, बद्धपरिकरा भवत; सम्मुखे शत्रवः महामोहरूपाः । “श्रेयांसि बहुविधानि” इति निश्चितेऽपि, समधिकतरं कुरुत यत्नम् । पश्यत इमान् लोकान् मोहग्राहप्रस्तान् । शृणुत अहो तेषां हृदयभेदकरं कारुण्यपूर्णं शोकनादम् । अग्रमा भवत, अग्रमा, हे वीरा, मोचयितुं पाशं बद्धानां, श्लथयितुं क्लेशभारं दीनानां; द्योतयितुं हृदयान्धकूपं अज्ञानाम् । अभीरभीरिति घोषयति वेदान्तडिण्डिमः । भूयात् स भेदाय हृदयग्रन्थेः सर्वेषां जगन्निवासिनामिति ।

तवैकान्तशुभभावुकः विवेकानन्दः ।

TRANSLATION

Darjeeling.  
19th March, 1897.

*Salutation to Bhagavan Ramakrishna !*

May you prosper ! May this letter conveying blessings and cordial embrace make you happy ! Now-a-days this fleshy tabernacle of

mine is comparatively well. Meseems, the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas, the Chief among Mountains, bring even the moribund back to life. And the fatigue of the journey also seems to have somewhat abated. I have already felt the yearning for Freedom—potent enough to put the heart into turmoil—which your letter suggests you are experiencing. It is this yearning that gradually brings on a concentration of the mind on the Eternal Brahman. “There is no other way to go by.” May this desire blaze up more and more in you, until all your past Karma and future tendencies are absolutely annihilated. Close upon the heels of that will follow, all on a sudden, the manifestation of Brahman, and with it the destruction of all craving for the sense-world. That this freedom-in-life is approaching for your welfare, is easily to be inferred from the strength of your fervour. Now I pray to that World-teacher, Sri Ramakrishna, the Preacher of the gospel of Universal Synthesis, to manifest himself in the region of your heart,

so that, having attained the consummation of your desires, you may with an undaunted heart try your best to deliver others from this dreadful ocean of infatuation. May you be ever possessed of valour! It is the hero, alone, not the coward, who has Liberation within his easy reach. Gird up your loins, ye heroes, for before you are your enemies—the dire army of Infatuation. It is undoubtedly true that “all great achievements are fraught with numerous impediments;” still you should exert your utmost for your end. Behold, how men are already in the jaws of the shark of Infatuation! Oh, listen to their piteous heart-rending wails! Advance! Forward! O ye brave souls, to set free those that are in fetters, to lessen the burden of woe of the miserable, and to illumine the abysmal darkness of ignorant hearts! Look, how the Vedanta proclaims by beat of drums, “Be fearless!” May that solemn sound remove the heart’s knot of all denizens of the earth!

Ever your well-wisher,

Vivekananda.

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### THE VILLAGE GODS OF SOUTH INDIA.\*

**T**HIS is an interesting book dealing with the worship of various deities, both male and female,—by the simple yet sincere and devotional country folk of South India. It not only gives the names of these deities but also a detailed account of the rituals and ceremonies connected with their worship, including the sacrifice of buffaloes, sheep etc. The author has taken great pains to study closely all these ceremonies and how they vary in different localities and with different deities. He has tried to throw a flood of light on these ceremonies in his own way and must be congratulated on his im-

partial view of the whole matter so far as the descriptive portion of the cults is concerned. As regards his remarks and theories we are not able to be at one with him.

There is one peculiarity in the religion of the Hindus, which the author seems to deny on page 139—that it has never been separate from philosophy. It has room for all phases of religious thought and all systems of philosophy. From the highest flights of Vedanta down to the crudest form of ceremonial and ritualistic worship, worship of symbols and images, or any other forms which the human mind can ever conceive of—all these have a place in Hinduism. Even the agnostic and the atheist, Hinduism is broad enough to accommodate. The Hindu alone recognises the necessity for different phases of religious expression for people in different stages of evolution.

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\* New Edition, revised and enlarged, by the Bishop of Madras. The Religious Life of India Series. Published by the Association Press, 5 Russel Street, Calcutta. Pp. 175. Price Cloth Rs. 3, Paper Rs. 2.

Everyone will have to choose for himself his own religious ideal, for without that the spirit of religion is lost. The greatness of Hinduism lies in this. The Hindus know that there is infinite power of development in everything and so they never attempt at destruction. Construction is their watchword. The Indian sages knew how society and individuals should grow. Man travels from lesser truth to higher truth, never from error to truth. Knowing these the sages laid down the general plan to guide the society and individuals upwards step by step. They never denounced. Step by step everyone must be led from the lowest truth to higher ones till the Oneness that exists throughout the universe is realised.

It is for this reason that very few can correctly read the religion of the Hindus, and much less indicate what it teaches. When a foreigner comes to India and looks about he finds the worship of some great sage or of some symbolic representation like Siva, Vishnu, Kali or Durga, and this he cannot understand as he finds it difficult to enter into the spirit of the worship. The result is that he comes to the conclusion that the Hindu religion is false, or at best—like our author who professes to be exceedingly kind and impartial—he credits it with some amount of sincerity, yet it is after all a groping in the dark and the only solution for the forsaken heathen souls would be a wholesale evangelisation, as if it were a possible and easy affair.

One peculiarity which the author points out is that the majority of these village deities are feminine. He attributes this to the fact that the South Indians were an agricultural race, where the agriculture was largely left to the women. Moreover, he says, the idea of fertility is connected with the female all the world over and therefore the deities are also feminine. But we are rather inclined to think otherwise. The Hindu has been worshipping God as Mother from prehistoric times. As long as we conceive God as an extra-cosmic Being separate from nature, so long He will appear as Father only. But when we begin to realise that He is immanent in nature, we would realise Him both as our Mother as well as Father, for the feminine principle is then inseparable from the masculine element and Nature is not passive

and powerless but is the expression of the Divine energy which is worshipped by the Hindus as the Mother Divine. Why Mother? For this energy is the source out of which the whole phenomenal world is projected in space, and by which it is also preserved after it comes into being. This energy expresses itself in two sets of opposite forces, the good and the bad. Sometimes these opposite forces are personified and worshipped as the Divine Mother and sometimes as Her attendants. Hence the worship of Mariamma and others—small-pox-amma, plague-amma as our author calls them, not understanding the full significance of the worship. The Hindu has ever paid to woman the greatest respect that can ever be given, for he regards her as the representative of the Divine Mother. The earthly mother is regarded as a deity. The idea of motherhood has become so much ingrained in the Hindu that every village or city has its own guardian mother who takes care of all the citizens and villagers as her own children.

The author cites a few examples of persons of bad character who are worshipped especially as their death was rather sudden or accidental. But the fact is that it is not worship but only a case of pacifying the evil-spirit. The Hindus have ever believed in the existence of spirits which the West, too, is gradually coming to believe. When a man suddenly dies he is snatched away from the midst of his enjoyments, family etc. before he is satiated, and the attachment still surviving after death, the spirit may hover over the objects to which he was attached before death. Now if a man happens to be a bad one, death will not help him to get over his evil propensities and so when in the spirit world, having all the more power than before, he may not give up troubling people as was his wont when in the body. The simple country folks just give something to this evil spirit to escape from his torments which they fear, not remembering that before God this spirit can do nothing, just as they would try to satisfy a wicked officer, not knowing of the justice and paternal care of an established government. These spirits are neither worshipped nor given the same reverence as the deities.

No doubt the sacrifice of animals, in a method rather cruel, may appear to be a great black mark



in the cults. But yet we cannot deny that the sacrifice symbolises some moral and spiritual truths. The victim represents the worshippers, and the sacrifice represents the offering of their own souls to God and the killing of all evil propensities of man at the altar of the goddess. Or why should not this be a method of vicarious atonement? The author is liberal enough to grant this to the Jews probably because Christianity is much indebted to them, whereas he is not willing to allow the same to the South Indians evidently owing to his proselytising zeal.

Another great defect pointed out in these cults is that the worship is mere propitiatory and is wanting in such sentiments like love &c. In the case of the ignorant we admit that propitiation forms a major part of the worship. But if we just have a glance at the various religions, we feel that it is a common factor in all religions with the ordinary people. How many men do really want God in any religion? Man by nature is after sense-enjoyments and few can think of the Lord except when they are in difficulties. Truly does the Lord say in the Gita, "One perchance in thousands of men strives to attain Me." Again in another place He says, "Four kinds of men worship Me, O Arjuna!—the distressed, the seeker for knowledge, the seeker for enjoyment and the wise." The majority in any religion fall under the first and third categories and only a handful come under the other two. The author, himself a clergyman, must be quite familiar with this psychology and we only wonder that he should have found fault with only the worship of the village deities in this matter.

Some occasional remarks regarding the degeneracy of Hinduism and the immorality attached to various cults is harped on by the author which he hopes to remove by evangelising. Granting that this is true, may we ask him what Christianity has done for the immorality and degeneracy in Christendom itself? We withhold in this connection from mentioning the incidents connected with the history of the Christian religion which form the foundations of the modern churchianity. By an irony of fate the followers of these churches come to tell us that churchianity has civilised the world, and brought peace on earth!

According to the author the following is the idea of God which the country folk of Southern India possess: "The village deity is nothing more than a petty local spirit, tyrannising over and protecting a small hamlet \* \* She inspires fear because of power to do grievous harm by inflicting diseases &c. \* \* So she does not draw out any feelings of wonder and admiration, still less of love and gratitude." Can Christianity give these people any better idea of God? What is the idea of God of the ordinary Christian monotheist of to-day? It is the same Jehovah of the Jews Jehovah sitting on a throne somewhere in the Heavens, with hands and legs, with eyes red with anger, holding a rod ever ready to punish the wicked with eternal hell-fire. The relation of man to such a God is that of a slave to his master obeying all his commands for fear of punishment. This is the idea preached from many of the orthodox pulpits of Christendom to-day, a conception after all not very far from that of the South Indian village deities.

We are struck by the author's optimism to evangelise 80 p. c. (according to his own figures) of the South Indian population. But we on the other hand cannot help being pessimistic and at best can think that the evangelizing zeal may at the utmost add to Mariamma already existing, another Maryamma (Virgin Mary) and Kuttandevar may have an younger brother Christ-andevar, for the Hindus have always been broad-minded enough to worship purity, chastity, renunciation, self-control, and love to all, wherever and in whomsoever these are found.

Religion must be studied from a broader standpoint than heretofore. All narrowness and bigotry must be effaced from this earth, for religion must keep pace with the broad outlook that nations are having in other matters like politics, science &c. In future, religions have to become as universal as wide if they are to be accepted by people. They must embrace all that exists in the world and is good and great and at the same time have infinite scope for future development. Religions must also be inclusive and not look down with contempt upon one another because their particular ideas of God are different or forms and rituals vary. When religions become thus broadened, their

power for doing good will increase a hundred-fold. Religions having great power have often done more harm than good to the world owing to their narrowness and limitations. There must be a fellow-feeling between different types of religion,

and this can result only from mutual esteem and reverence. All religions express the same Truth and only differ in forms, for Unity is behind them all.

S. V.

## SRI KRISHNA AND UDDHAVA.

( Continued from page 211. )

त्वं हि नः पृच्छतां ब्रह्मज्ञात्मन्यानन्दकारणम् ।  
ब्रूहि स्पर्शविहीनस्य भवतः केवलात्मनः ॥३०॥

30. O Brahmin, do tell us who ask you, how you derive bliss in your Self alone, untouched by sense-objects, and living a solitary life.

[ Please tell me the secret of your strength. ]

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

यदुनैवं महाभागो ब्रह्मण्येन सुमेधसा ।  
पृष्टः सभाजितः प्राह प्रश्रयावनतं द्विजः ॥३१॥

The Lord said :

31. Being thus asked and honoured by the intelligent Yadu who was devoted to Brahmins, the noble Brâhmana addressed the king who had bent himself low in reverence :

ब्राह्मण उवाच ।

सन्ति मे गुरवो राजन् बहवो बुद्ध्युपाश्रिताः ।  
यतो बुद्धिमुपादाय मुक्तोऽयमीह तान् शृणु ॥३२॥

The Brahmin said :

32. I have many teachers, O king, whom I resorted to through the intellect,<sup>1</sup> receiving wisdom from whom I roam on earth at large. Listen who they are.

[<sup>1</sup>Through the intellect—Not that they actually instructed me but I derived these lessons from their way of living. ]

पृथिवी वायुराकाशमापोऽग्निश्चन्द्रमा रविः ।  
कपोतोऽजगरः सिन्धुः पतङ्गो मधुकृद्भजः ॥३३॥

33. The earth, air, sky, water, fire, the moon, the sun, the pigeon, the python, the sea, the moth, the bee, the elephant ;

मधुहा हरिणो मीनः पिङ्गला कुररोऽर्भकः ।  
कुमारी शरकृत् सर्प उर्णनाभिः सुपेशकृत् ॥३४॥

34. The honey-gatherer, the deer, the fish, the courtesan Pingalâ, the osprey, the child, the maiden, the arrow-maker, the snake, the spider, and a particular insect known as Bhramara-kita.<sup>1</sup>

[<sup>1</sup>Bharamara-kita—When it catches a cockroach, the latter through fright is almost metamorphosed into the likeness of this insect. ]

एते मे गुरवो राजंश्चतुर्विंशतिराश्रिताः ।  
शिक्षा वृत्तिभिरेतेषामन्वशिक्षामिहात्मनः ॥३५॥

35. These, O king, are the twenty-four teachers whom I have resorted to ; from the characteristic traits of these I have gathered all my lessons.

यतो यदुनुशिक्षामि यथा वा नाहुषात्मज ।  
तत् तथा पुरुषव्याघ्र निबोध कथयामि ते ॥३६॥

36. O grandson of Nahusha, I am going to relate to you which lesson I have learnt from whom, and how,—listen.

भूतैराक्रम्यमाणोऽपि धीरो दैववशानुगैः ।  
तद्विद्वान्न चलेन्मार्गादन्वशिक्षं क्षितेर्व्रतम् ॥३७॥

37. The man of steady intellect should not, even though oppressed<sup>1</sup> by creatures that are themselves under the sway of

destiny,<sup>2</sup> swerve from his path,<sup>3</sup> being conversant with this fact;—this is the trait I have learnt from the earth.

[<sup>1</sup> *Oppressed etc.*—The earth is called 'all-for-bearing.' So should the saint also be. Hills and trees also are cited in the next verse as forming part of the earth and giving their own lessons.

<sup>2</sup> *Destiny*—or God's dispensation.

<sup>3</sup> *Path*—of sameness of vision. ]

शश्वत्परार्थसर्वेहः परार्थैकान्तसंभवः ।

साधुः शिचेत भूभृत्तो नगशिष्यः परात्मताम् ॥३८

38. The good man should learn from

the hill<sup>1</sup> how one should always direct one's entire actions to the good of others and one's very birth should be absolutely for the sake of others; while, as a disciple of trees, he should learn how to be at the disposal<sup>2</sup> of others.

[<sup>1</sup> *The hill*—produces vegetation and streams etc., which contribute to others' good.

<sup>2</sup> *Disposal etc.*—Even if you hew it down, it won't murmur. Pelt at it, and it will give you luscious fruits. It calmly bears the ravages of the seasons, and so on. ]

( To be continued ).

## REVIEWS.

*The Future of the Indo-British Commonwealth.* By Colonel Josiah C. Wedgwood, M. P., with a preface by Viscount Haldane. The Asian Library Series. Published by the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras. Pp. 251 + xvii. Cloth-bound. Price Rs. 3-8.

This is the first of a series of books on Asian Culture including Religion, Philosophy, Literature, History and other subjects, which the Theosophical Publishing House intends to publish. In the present volume Colonel Wedgwood considers the possibility of a Commonwealth which would be not a Federation but a voluntary Union of the English-speaking peoples including the United States of America with India, the Dominions and other Imperial units etc., in which each would control entirely its own home affairs. In such a Commonwealth of which England herself would become the centre, the author says, there may be an education test which would wear out with the spread of education, but there would exist no colour or racial bar. While speaking of the Indian problem Colonel Wedgwood writes—"With all my confidence and pride in the incorruptibility of British political leaders, I say that India can provide men to be followed, not one whit inferior in either honesty or intellect."

According to the author there are three great obstacles to the Union by means of free Commonwealth—Ignorance, Selfishness and Insolence.

"Ignorance is vanishing; so far as selfishness is nationally damaging, Self-government in Dominions cuts it out; insolence too can only be ended in the same way. Free institutions in every intelligent part of the Commonwealth, and equal right for all throughout the Commonwealth! By these, these only, can insolence, selfishness and ignorance be vanquished and a true Commonwealth established." But whether the obstacles can at all be removed and the establishment of complete equality between the white and non-white races would ever be possible is another question.

In the concluding chapter discussing the common basis of Union the author says that the basis might have been a common religious faith if men could have had enough belief in the altruism of the old Gospels. As this is not possible, "the only basis of Union that has not been tried yet, is democratic Union..... Union alone through democracy is not enough. Education in democracy is essential, as well as free run for democracy, safe from brute force. If the education is sufficiently widespread and sufficiently true, we may find the way from Union to true Brotherhood."

But we doubt if even this would suffice. True Brotherhood can be established only when man comes to realise the fundamental unity of mankind in the Spirit, the common substratum of all that exists, when man seeing the Unity equally

existent in all beings will give up national prejudices and racial animosities, cease to dominate and exploit others for the satisfaction of the greed of material power and wealth, and be ready to recognise that in working for others without any selfish motive or sense of personal gain he really works for his own Self and in loving others he but loves his real Self, for it is the Spirit that has assumed all the various forms; and before the realisation of the Unity all distinctions of colour, creed or race vanish away into nothingness.

On a complicated subject like the one treated in the book it is not possible for everybody to agree with all the opinions and estimations expressed by the author who sees things mainly from the standpoint of a member of the British Labour party, though his outlook of life is broader than that of ordinary men. But few would question, we think, that Colonel Wedgwood writes with a conviction that is sincere and an optimism which if it ever proves to be true would at least to some extent conduce to the peace and happiness of the world.

—  
*"Dry" America.* By St. Nihal Singh. Published by Messrs. Ganesh & Co., Madras. Pp. 164 + xi. Bound in cloth. Price Rs. 3.

We are glad to receive with thanks a copy of the book through the courtesy of Mr. W. E. Johnson, the great American prohibitionist and heartily welcome the timely publication written with a view to enlighten the Indian people as to the means that America adopted to overcome the difficulties standing in the way of prohibition, so that India may profit by America's experience and example.

Mr. Nihal Singh gives an interesting narrative of the rise and victory of the movement in the

United States, describing with ample facts and figures how Mr. W. E. Johnson ("Pussyfoot") and other noble souls fought hard in the teeth of great opposition with considerable risk even to their lives, and at last won the cause. He speaks of the many blessings it has brought to the American nation—the banishment of liquor means that money instead of being wasted is being utilised with great profit for productive purposes, for the improvement of the economic, sanitary and moral condition of the American people.

"Cases of brawls, assaults and even more heinous forms of crime, and of insanity," writes the author, "are decreasing. Municipalities and states are saving money upon police court establishments, jails, "poor-houses" (work-houses), insane asylums, and other institutions. Sobriety is promoting domestic happiness and thrift, and increasing the value of property in the areas from which "saloon" (drink shop) has been evicted, and thereby is benefiting the state as well as the individual."

Owing to the prevalence of widespread poverty India at first may, unlike America, experience some difficulty in recouping the loss that may be entailed upon her by prohibition, but if the authorities take the trouble, it can no doubt be surmounted. The author very rightly concludes:—  
 "Any temporary difficulty that may be experienced in making the necessary financial adjustments should not, in any case, be permitted to stand in the way of a reform which conforms to the religion and traditions of the people, and which demonstrably will confer incalculable benefits upon them."

The get-up of the book is good. We recommend it to our readers with the greatest pleasure.

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## NEWS AND NOTES.

### The Ramakrishna Mission Relief Work, Khulna

The Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission has sent us the following for publication:—

The Mission has already informed the public that besides cloth-distress and starvation, malaria has broken out in the affected area of Khulna. It

is a heart-breaking sight to see that men and women having no rags even to cover their loins cannot come out of their houses to receive rice. Most of our recipients are half-naked. The distress of cloth is growing very acute and will be more so unless the generous public lend their helping hands to their brothers and sisters. The

Mission has already sent 220 pairs of tents and some old cloth, but this is too insignificant a quantity to cope with the present condition of the people. Owing to the want of funds it has been unable to send more for their relief. It has sent two dozen bottles of Edward's Tonic and other medicines for the prevention of malaria, and distributed on the 31st August 85 maunds and 30 srs. of rice among 1728 recipients. As the area of the work is gradually extending the Mission ardently hopes that the public will never remain silent to its repeated appeals.

9th Sept., '21.

(Later)

The people of Paikgacha, Kaligaunge Thanas and several other neighbouring villages are so much afflicted with starvation that they do not feel any hesitation to subsist on wild plants suitable for animals only. It is impossible for us even to imagine the critical condition of the sufferers unless we see it with our own eyes. The Mission apprehends that during the coming winter those sufferers who have got a narrow escape from the present starvation will be quite unable to save themselves from the pinching cold owing to the want of clothes and become sure victims to death. A good many appeals are coming for opening new relief centres, but the Mission cannot comply with their piteous requests on account of the want of sufficient funds. Since 14th September it is distributing 113 maunds and 20 seers of rice among 2260 recipients at the rate of two seers per week without any distinction of age or sex and has recently sent 80 old cloths and shirts, to Nakipore. It thankfully acknowledges that during the last month Messrs. Butto Krishna Paul & Co. of Sova Bazar Street, Calcutta and the Banga Lakshmi Mills kindly contributed 18 bottles of Edward's Tonic free of cost and 220 pairs of new cloth at Mill price respectively. It is impossible for a single community to cope with the present distress of the people unless our generous sisters and brethren lend their helping hands to the same cause.

Contributions will be thankfully received at the following addresses:—(1) Udbodhan Office, 1 Mukherji Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta. (2) Sri Ramakrishna Math, Belur, Howrah.

(Sd.) Saradananda.

26th Sept., '21.

Secretary, Rk. M.

#### Dr. Rabindra Nath on Education

In the course of his first speech on Education delivered in Calcutta Dr. Tagore said—"The one true path of attaining freedom in the external world is the knowledge and faith in these immutable laws which have now been made known to mankind. In order to attain this knowledge we shall have to accept the West as our teacher..... The immutable laws of the material world properly used lead to success but success itself is not the fulfilment of our humanity... With all its efficiency for producing material comforts and even benefits for mankind, the West has taken away at the same time much of that delight which comes to man from the realisation of the soul..... The best minds of the West are now busily employed in seeking for that missing truth which has been forgotten. In doing so, they have instinctively turned their heads towards the East.

"The East has its unshakable faith in the infinite living ideal, which gives meaning to all things and fulfilment to our humanity. The time has come for the West to come to the East. For the soul of the West is famished and her social life has been wounded to the quick. This is the point reached in world-history to-day. It is the problem of every country of the world to bring to pass the deeper reconciliation of East and West, so that humanity may become one."

In his second lecture the poet dwelt on the same theme and after speaking of the achievement of the West in the mastery of the world through the mastery of the laws of nature pointed out—"She has been too busy with the mechanical relationship and has tended to forget the spiritual..... A creative ideal, which gave a unity to the conception of life, was one given to the West two thousand years ago from the East and the West bowed her head and accepted the truth which was offered. By its help she built up her civilisation age after age. And the time has come again in her present disastrous ruin through war and desolation, when she has again turned instinctively her face towards the East for that missing ideal of a creative unity which shall harmonise her life afresh."

A better understanding between the East and the West, and the interchange and assimilation of each other's ideas are absolutely necessary for the

growth and welfare of both, but before that can be accomplished each must properly understand herself, regain her true soul and realise the mission of her life. And without the fulfilment of this preliminary condition no real assimilation is ever possible, for a healthy body alone can possess the vitality to draw its nourishment from what is best in the outside world. It is on this fact that Swami Vivekananda laid the greatest stress:—"The one point to note is that when we take anything from others we must mould it after our own way. We shall add to our stock what others have to teach but we must always be careful to keep intact what is essentially our own. We must mould it after our own fashion, always preserving in full our characteristic Nationality."

Each race has a national purpose of its own and, therefore, one should not merge one's individuality into another but should grow receiving noble and life-giving materials from all healthy quarters, maintaining in full one's individual characteristics. The East should learn science from the West but keep it subservient to the spiritual scheme of her life; and education can be national only when this ideal is kept in view. The West on the other hand has to accept the East as her teacher in matters spiritual. Higher ideals of life alone can save the West from her imminent danger. "The whole of the Western world is on a volcano which may burst to-morrow, go to pieces to-morrow. Now is the time to work so that India's spiritual ideas may penetrate deep into the West." What Swami Vivekananda said more than two decades ago holds equally true or more so after the war.

Free relation of love can never exist between a master and a slave, neither between a beggar and his patron. Willing co-operation is possible among equals. And Swamiji also speaks of this when he suggests how the union between the East and the West may be brought about. "You go to England, but that is also in the garb of a beggar—praying for education. Why! Have you nothing to give them? An inestimable treasure you have, which you can give,—give them your religion, give them your philosophy! From time immemorial India has been the mine of precious ideas to human society; giving birth to high ideas herself, she has freely distributed them broadcast over the whole world.....Give those invaluable gems in exchange

for what you receive from them. The Lord took me to their country to remove this opprobrium of the beggar that is attributed by them to us. It is not right to go to England for the purpose of begging only. To give and take is the law of nature. ..Any individual or class or nation that does not obey this law, never prospers in life. We also must follow that law. That is why I went to America ...They have been for a long time giving you of what wealth they possess, and now is the time for you to share your priceless treasure with them. And you will see how their feelings of hatred will be quickly replaced by those of faith, devotion and reverence towards you, and how they will do good to your country even unmasked."

Dr. Rabindra Nath's achievement lies in the fact that he went to the West not as a beggar craving for boons but as a teacher who carried the spiritual message of India to peoples greatly in need of the light spiritual.

#### **Plea for Humanistic Economics**

Dr. Radha Kamal Mookerji, Head of the Department of Economics and Sociology in the Lucknow University in his inaugural lecture in August last, discussed the need of a new school of economic thought and research. We abridge the following from the Associated Press report:—"Economics has hitherto ignored the economic organisations and values of Asia. In the East the settled habits of many a socialised stock, the strong endowment of communal instincts and sympathies, the tradition of mutual help and neighbourly offices which spring in the village commune, have developed into a rich constructive communalism in a deeply socialised and harmonised life and have given a distinct cast to its economic life and institution. We need not brush aside our old and essential communalism as primitive and rudimentary and repeat the worst mistakes the West committed in her first phase of industrial evolution in the last century. With our streams and waterfalls harnessed and with the co-ordinated use of oil and gas engines and small inexpensive windmills we may not only witness a revival of cottage industries and of communal workshops in which a multitude of artisans will work for the account of an entire village or guild under its law and protection but also the system

of decentralisation, i. e. of autonomy and responsibility in the big industry as well. With the help of the important lessons from the communalistic experiments in the West, her recent ideals, and experiences of co-operative productions, Guild Socialism, Syndicalism and self-government in industry on the one hand, and the implied socialism and humanism and the variety and vitality of group life in China and India on the other, there may emerge a true world scheme of economics for the industrial reconstruction in both the East and the West, in which immature and advanced peoples will help one another in the exploitation and distribution of the world's material resources, and the moral resources both of the East and the West will be utilised in the new economic experiments for bringing peace and harmony to a discordant and distracted humanity."

Capitalistic industrialism has led to social disintegration and other manifold evils and has in spite of its uses proved to be a failure in advancing the real well-being of the society, and hence industrial reconstruction on a humanistic basis suited to the modern age has become the crying need both in the East as well as in the West.

#### Conscience Clause

The United Provinces Legislative Council, we are very glad to note, has given the lead to the country in demanding the introduction of the Conscience Clause in the Educational Code. In August last was moved the resolution recommending it to the Local Government that every institution aided in any form under the provisions of the Educational Code should comply with the following constitutions: (a) no one shall be required to attend any religious instruction or observance as a condition of his admission into or continuance in the institution unless, if he is a minor, his parents shall have sanctioned it in writing and (b) the time or times during which religious instruction is given or observance practised shall not be fixed without the previous approval of the Education Department or in such way that the pupil not remaining in attendance during the time of such instruction or observance is excluded directly or indirectly from the advantages of secular education given in the institution.

After a heated discussion the resolution was carried amidst acclamation.

The example of the U. P. Legislative Council should be followed by all other Councils in India and proper steps should be taken early to put a stop to compulsory religious instruction against the wishes of the pupils or their parents or guardians. In many Christian Missionary schools and Colleges compulsory Bible classes are held with the avowed object of fostering a particular religion at the expense of others. It was declared at the Church of Scotland Assembly in Edinburgh that Presbyterian work in India was seriously threatened by Government's introduction of a Conscience Clause in dealing with state-aided schools and colleges and this meant the ending of concordat between the state and Christian Missions in India regarding education which had prevailed with great benefit for 65 years. It was finally resolved to approach the Government claiming that the Churches should have two or three years' notice.

If any religious instruction is to be imparted in educational institutions it should be done first on the student's own religion and that by competent and truly religious men. No doubt there is much in any scripture that is noble and healthy from both spiritual and moral standpoints, but it also contains things that are positively objectionable to the follower of a different scripture. As such it is the height of indiscretion to force religious teachings on students without any distinction whatsoever; and this practice should be stopped whether it is carried on by a particular institution or university. The religious ideal of the day should be to make the student a true follower of his own religion and not to undermine his faith by an alien one. "Every man should follow his own religion. A Christian should follow Christianity, a Mahomedan should follow Mahomedanism. For the Hindu,—the ancient path, the path of the Aryan Rishis, is the best... Every person must remain always strong and steadfast in his or her own faith but maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions." (Sri Ramakrishna)

#### Traffic in Liquor and Opium

It is a grim irony that temperance movements are necessary in India, where there exists an agelong

tradition of abstinence, and the Hindu, Mahomedan and Buddhist law-givers look upon the drink habit as one of the greatest sins. But in spite of the injunctions of the Scriptures things have come to such a pass that at present there are many in India who are addicted to the curse of drink. How the evil of drink is spreading in India can be gauged from the testimony of Mr. C. F. Andrews: 'When I first came out I wrote in one of my books, "I have never once seen in the streets an Indian drunkard!" Alas, I could not write this to-day. \* \* \* Drink and drug habit has been steadily and insidiously increasing.'

Indians it is generally argued are very moderate in the habit of drinking, but it can not be gainsaid that the evil habit is steadily on the increase and unless immediately arrested it may assume huge proportions that would prove to be very disastrous to the Indian people. This is the reason why complete abstinence should be practised and total prohibition introduced without any further loss of time. Indian sentiment everywhere is strongly in favour of total abstinence and we hope the day is not far off when the sale of liquor will be completely stopped throughout the length and breadth of the country except of course for medicinal, industrial and sacramental purposes.

Social morality should be preserved at any cost and by no means should social evils be encouraged either directly or indirectly on the so-called prudential and financial considerations. Total prohibition will conduce both to the moral and material welfare of the country, as the case of America conclusively proves. And what America has done India can accomplish with greater ease for the problem here is decidedly much simpler. As Mr. W. E. Johnson ("Pussyfoot"), the great American temperance missionary, said in a recent lecture in India, the best way of stopping the drink evil was to close the liquor shops and abolish the necessity of picketing. By prohibiting drink, he said, America was free and happy and India by following America in this matter would be equally so.

The curse of opium also is no less dangerous than that of drink and it too should be combated immediately. It is bringing about the ruin of not only an ever-increasing number of Indians at home

and abroad but of the Chinese and others as well. But those who make money by exploiting human frailties do little think that they cannot harm others without doing harm to themselves!

#### **Re-admission to Hinduism of the Forcibly Converted**

The news of the forcible conversion of a number of Hindus, men and women, into Mahomedanism by the fanatical and misguided Moplas of Malabar and other tales of heart-rending oppression and ghastly crimes have been received by the Hindus of all classes with the greatest honor and indignation. Conversion against one's will and conscience is an inhuman atrocity and is devoid of any meaning from the true spiritual standpoint. We are pleased to learn that many of the leaders of the Hindu society are taking steps to admit the so-called converts back into the Hindu fold and a leading Nambudiri high priest in the affected area has declared in the Nambudiri Organ "Yoga-Kshemam" about his decision to take back into Hinduism the forcibly converted after the necessary purificatory ceremony. Such a step would be in full accordance with the past history of Hinduism, the precedents of many of the great Vaishnavite reformers of India and undoubtedly in keeping with the spirit of the Hindu Shastras. Some of the Mahomedan leaders, including both divines and laymen, have declared that, according to the recognised principles of the Shariat conversion by force is not permissible and produces no result.

The converts by force are at heart as good Hindus as before and have by no means forfeited their birthright after being made to go through some forced forms and ceremonies.

It is a significant fact that the Hindus in all parts of the country are showing great solicitude in the matter of receiving back the forced converts and we earnestly hope that the doors of Hinduism would henceforth be freely opened to receive all who are willing to come within the fold of the Sanatana Dharma.

#### **Swami Abhedananda in Singapore**

On Saturday, the 24th September, Swami Abhedananda reached Singapore by the steamer Tanda, on his way home from America. Representatives of the various local Hindu communities and



deputations from Kuala Lumpur and Seremban waited at the wharf. On landing the Swami was garlanded by the respective deputations, after which he motored to the place arranged for his residence. In the evening he, accompanied by Swami Videhananda of the Kuala Lumpur Vivekananda Ashrama, was taken in a grand procession to the Subramaniam Temple, Tank-road, where an address of welcome was read to him. The Swami was conducted to a raised dais and was garlanded by the temple authorities. Rai Sahib Ishwar Das, who was in the chair, introduced the Swami in a few words. This was followed by the reading of a Sanskrit poem, specially composed in the Swami's honour.

An illuminated address printed on silk and executed artistically, welcoming the Swami to Singapore was read. It was enclosed in a beautiful and massive silver casket and presented to the Swami, who rose to reply amidst deafening applause. In thanking the people for the honour done to him the Swami said that he took that

honour not upon himself but in the name of the religion to which they were all proud to belong. There was a great need for Hindu teachers, he said, in the West where it has been established that the Vedanta doctrine alone satisfied the highest demand of logic and science. He referred to the Hindu law of Karma which explained that one's own thoughts and actions placed one in a position of misery or otherwise. It also held out the chance of retrieval in a future life. Wasn't it a grander ideal for humanity than that of an eternal hell? This was only one of the eternal truths discovered by the great seers of truth in the very morn of the world. He concluded by saying that more missionaries were wanted to make known to the world those eternal truths and he urged his audience to study their own religion more intuitively and impart their knowledge to others who came within their daily sphere of life. On the night of the 26th September the Swami delivered a lecture on Progressive Hinduism at the Victoria Theatre.—From the *Malay Tribune*.

### THE MAYAVATI CHARITABLE DISPENSARY.

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We have more than once brought to the notice of the kind-hearted public that the Dispensary building is badly in need of repairs. We earnestly hope the claims to charity of the sick hill-people will not be overlooked, and we entreat all generous-minded people to send in their quota of help in aid of the Dispensary, which will be gratefully received and acknowledged.

Mayavati, } Madhavananda.  
Dt. Almora. } Secy., M. C. D.