

Om!

BRÁHMAISM :

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

Pitanath

Tattvabhushan

NOTE.

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BRAHMAISM :

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BRÁHMAISM:

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE.



I. HOW RELIGIOUS TRUTHS ARE KNOWN

There are two current views on Revelation, that is, the way in which GOD makes Himself known to man. One of them is that He is known through the natural faculties of man — the powers of knowing which every man possesses, either in a developed or in an undeveloped form. The other view is that GOD reveals Himself in a miraculous supernatural way to chosen men, and that ordinary people must accept this supernatural revelation without criticism. The Brahma Samaj accepts

the first of these views. Raja Rammohan Ray, the founder of the Brahma Samaj, says in his *Tuhfat-ul Muwahiddin* ("A Present to Believers in One GOD") : "Notwithstanding implicit faith in the orders of the *mujtahids* or the doctors of religion, there is always such an innate faculty existing in the nature of mankind that in case any person of sound mind, before or after assuming the doctrines of any religion, makes an impartial and just enquiry into the nature of the principles of the religious doctrines of different nations, there is a strong hope that he will be able to distinguish truth from untruth and true propositions from fallacious ones, and also hewill turn to the One Being who is the foundation of the harmonious organisation of the universe." Again : "Each individual, without the instruction or guidance of any one,.....has an innate faculty in him by which he can infer

that there exists a Being who, with His wisdom, governs the whole universe."

This doctrine of natural revelation was emphasised and expounded in various ways by the other great leaders of the Brahma Samaj who immediately followed the founder, such as Maharshi Devendranath Thakur. Brahmananda Kesavachandra Sen and Babu Rajnarain Bose. They also drew a distinction between Intuition and Reason, that is, the mind's power of knowing truths immediately and that of knowing them mediately. The Brahmananda thus defines Intuition: "Intuition denotes those cognitions which our nature immediately apprehends—whose truth we perceive independently of reflection." (*Essays*, Pt. II.) The Maharshi calls the intuition of GOD *atmapratyaya*, which he defines thus in his lectures at the Bhawanipur Brahma Samaj: "Since I am, therefore Brahman, my Creator, Preser-

ver and Guide, is,—this is *atmapratyaya*. The Person who is my Creator, Preserver and Guide, is my Well-wisher, Friend, Support and Lord,—this is self-evident *atmapratyaya*." Babu Rajnarain Bose, in his *Dharmatattva Dipika*, says that the characteristics of intuitive truths are their universality, spontaneity and self-evidence. He also shows how intuitive truths are used by Reason or the logical faculty and elaborated into the fundamental doctrines of religion,—the doctrine of an Infinite and Perfect Cause of the world, of the immortality of the soul, of the union of man with GOD through spiritual culture and so on. The leaders of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj have tried to construct a system of Brahmic Theology in general harmony with the ancient *Brahma Vidya* of this country, to which Raja Ram-mohan Ray drew the attention of his contemporaries, and with the present-

day philosophical theology of the west. They state and expound four proofs of the existence of GOD,—the Causal, the Teleological, the Ontological and the Moral, and show that the first establishes the power and intention of GOD, the second His creative wisdom, the third His unity and infinity and the fourth His love and holiness. (1) The Causal proof proceeds upon the idea of force or activity. Behind every change we believe in something active as its cause. Common sense conceives of it as a thing,—a material or conscious thing, while science calls it by the abstract term *force*. This thing or force is not an object of sense, and yet we cannot but believe in it. It is only its effects, its actions that appear to our senses, and not itself. Where then have we a direct knowledge of it? We know it in ourselves,—we know it as our *self*. All *our* actions proceed from this *Self*. Knowing

this active thing directly, in us, we cannot but think that changes not produced by us are due to such a thing or such things. But the active thing in us is active because it knows and wills. Its action would be impossible without knowledge and intention. In fact, mere force or activity is an abstraction: a knowing and willing self is the only concrete thing. Hence we instinctively believe in such a self behind every change. In a primitive state man believes in many divine beings. As he sees unity of purpose and action in nature, Polytheism is changed into Monotheism. As both common sense and science have a tendency to abstract, a *thing* or a *force*, apart from knowledge and purpose, *seems* to explain changes. But self-consciousness, the ultimate source of knowledge, corrects all abstractions and reveals the truth that all so-called 'things' or 'powers' are the

manifestations of one infinite mind or spirit. (2) The Teleological proof is based on the idea of design or adaptation. Organisms and their relation to matter are inexplicable without the idea of design, of means *intended* to serve ends. The growth of a seed or germ to a plant or animal, with its parts or limbs distinct from and at the same time related to one another, and the functions they discharge, disclose the fact of adaptation, that is, the fitness of something to serve an end; and this fact cannot be explained unless this adaptation is supposed to be designed,—intended by a wise mind. The growth of the seed or germ by taking sap or food, the development of the plants' parts and the animals' limbs, the various actions of the heart, liver, lungs and of our senses and organs of action, all show wonderful adaptations and the existence and constant activity of a wise Creator in and

around us. The various purposes of life, growth and happiness which light, heat, electricity and other objects of nature serve, prove, though we call them mere material objects, the presence in them of the same wise spirit and his beneficent attitude towards us. (3) The Ontological proof is founded on insight into the truth that the subject and the object of knowledge, though distinct from each other, are nevertheless related and in that sense one and form an integral Whole, infinite and all-comprehensive. Sensations,—colours, sounds, smells, tastes and touches,—are necessarily related to ideas, and all ideas are mere forms of self-consciousness, of *I am*. Space and time are forms of perception,—abstractions apart from knowledge, and their limitations,—*here and there, now and then*,—imply that the conscious self to which they are related is above these limitations, that is *everywhere and ever*,

infinite and eternal. That our actual knowledge is limited and that we know the fact, show that the All, the Infinite, is present in us as our truest and inmost self. The part, the finite, could not be known unless the Whole, the Infinite, were in its knowledge in His essence, though not in the amplitude of the contents of His knowledge. In every act of knowing, it is the Infinite Spirit who is the object. All finite objects, whether we call them material things or human souls, are contained in the Infinite Mind. (4) The Moral Proof is really the witness of our conscience to GOD as the perfectly loving and holy. All our moral experiences reveal an ideal of *perfect good* to us,—a good which is at once physical, intellectual, affectional and aesthetic. We owe duties to our body, to truth and knowledge, to love, that is to our fellow-beings as related to us, and to the sublime and the beautiful.

in nature and mind. Our duties, when we clearly conceive them, come with the force of an authority upon us, filling us with penitence when we fail to discharge them and a supreme sense of satisfaction when we faithfully perform them, and thus reveal their character as the commandments of a Being perfectly true, good and beautiful. They reveal both His power over us as our Judge and the perfection of His nature in all respects. In acts of devotion, the witness of GOD in our reason and conscience rises into direct vision and removes all doubt and all distance that sin and ignorance interpose between GOD and man. Thus Brahmaism holds that GOD reveals Himself to man through his natural powers of knowing and not in a supernatural way, and that the truths found in the scriptures of the different religions were revealed naturally, and not supernaturally, to the teachers of those

truths, and that, therefore, religious books should be studied and religious teachers listened to critically, though reverently, and not with blind faith. As all men are subject to error, no religious book or teacher should be regarded as infallible. As GOD'S revelation is universal, the prophets and scriptures of all nations should be respected, and, so far as possible, devoutly studied. They help us by turning our eyes inward, by stimulating thought, by rousing our higher feelings and by stirring us to fresh activity. We should, therefore, give honour to them all, but should not sacrifice to them the freedom of our souls.

II. THE BRAHMA IDEA OF GOD

The Brahma idea of GOD is briefly embodied in the Upanishadic texts which are chanted by the Brahmas at the commencement of their public adoration of GOD and which also guide the general tenour of both their public and private adoration. They are "*Satyam jnanam anantam Brahma* ('Taittiriya Upanishad,' II. 1.), *Anandarupam-amritam yad vibhati* (II. 'Mundaka' II. 7.) *Santam sivam advaitam* ('Mandukya', 7) and *Suddham apapaviddham*" ('Isa,' 8). The first means "Brahman or GOD is real, knowing and infinite", the second, "Who reveals Himself as blissful and sweet", the third, "He is beyond all change (or, "peace itself"), good and without a second", and the fourth, "He

is holy, untouched by sin". To put briefly our idea of GOD, He is the Soul of our souls, and the Creator and Support of the world. He is the only absolute, self-sustained Reality, while all else are relative to or dependent upon Him. He is all-knowing—knowing all things in space and all events in time and seeing our inmost thoughts and feelings. He is infinite in power, knowledge and moral excellence. He is Himself full of bliss and the source of all happiness that His creatures enjoy. He is good, — maintaining the world with beneficent laws and taking direct and special care of every being. He is our Father, Mother, Friend and constant Companion in the journey of our eternal life, and His love to us transcends the love of all human relations. As infinite, He is one, for there cannot be two infinities, as the one would limit the other and thus cease to be infinite. To the

one infinite GOD, therefore, and not to fancied finite deities, the whole homage of our heart and life is due. He is just and righteous, and there cannot be the least tinge of unholiness in Him. To be convinced of the truth of this idea of GOD, one must go through a great deal of study and devout meditation. The literature of the Brahma Samaj aims at helping every earnest inquirer to comprehend and see the truth of this idea. With this positive idea of GOD the Brahma Samaj teaches a number of negative truths which follow from it and which clearly distinguish Brahmanism from some of the current religions of the world. One of these negative truths is that GOD cannot have any body, such as He is believed to have by popular Hinduism. As GOD is infinite and all-powerful, He cannot be contained in a body, whether it is ten-armed, four-armed or two-armed, and it cannot

be necessary for Him to employ such bodies as the means of His universal activity. Since He has no body and no bodily wants to satisfy, His worship cannot be material, consisting in the offering of animal sacrifices, or of food, drink, flowers and incense. His real worship is spiritual, consisting in the offering of our love, reverence and allegiance to Him. Another of these truths is that the Infinite One does not incarnate Himself as a man, an inferior animal or any other embodied being, for such incarnation conflicts with His infinitude. As He is present everywhere and in the soul of man, such incarnation is needless and meaningless at the same time. A third of these truths is that as GOD is infinitely loving and perfectly just, and as man's sin, however great, must always be limited, it is impossible that GOD should condemn him to endless punishment. It follows from GOD'S love

to every person that He will lead everyone to ultimate salvation or union with Him, though our rebelliousness may long keep us away from Him.

III. THE WORSHIP OF GOD

As GOD is infinite in power and wisdom and perfect in love and holiness, as we live, move and have our being in Him, and as He loves every one of us with infinite love, it is evidently our duty to cultivate the consciousness of His presence with us and His love for us. Our habitual forgetfulness of our relation to Him is an evil, an imperfection, and ought to be got rid of, as we endeavour to get rid of our natural ignorance and our moral defects and imperfections. This we can effectively do only by setting apart regular hours for realising the presence

of GOD within and without us and His moral relation to us as our Father and Master. It is this realization of GOD's relation to us that the Brahmas call *upasana* or worship. Worship is evidently a duty and its conscious and intentional rejection a sin. It is a duty and a source of joy and moral strength. We feel deep joy at the presence of a man or woman who loves us. As GOD loves us more than any man or woman, and as He is nearer to us than any human being can be, the consciousness of His presence brings unspeakable peace and joy to the worshipper's heart. And as GOD is perfectly just and holy, approving and encouraging every holy thought and purpose in us, the realisation of His presence strengthens all our noble intentions and determinations. Worship should, therefore, be cultivated as a regular habit. As it enables us, more than anything else, to do our other

duties, it is our supreme duty. As it infuses strength and holiness into all our other habits, its cultivation should receive our greatest care. Early morning, when we begin our daily life and are in need of spiritual nourishment, should be devoted to worship. Evening, when daily work closes and it is necessary to take a retrospect of our daily life, to see where we failed and to take warning for the future, is also a suitable time for worship. The daily meals and the beginning and end of daily lessons or office duties are also special occasions for approaching GOD. When habits of worship are thus cultivated with care, the whole of daily life is gradually hallowed by the remembrance of GOD, and the chances of unholy thoughts and of unloving and unrighteous words and deeds are lessened more and more.

Worship, in its fulness, consists of three attitudes of the soul towards GOD,

attitudes which are, in the language of the Brahma Samaj, called *Aradhana* (adoration), *Dhyan* (meditation), and *Prarthana* (prayer). *Aradhana* is the devout praise of GOD as a Person directly present to us. In this exercise we endeavour to realise all His known attributes or relations to us. *Dhyan* consists in being filled with or absorbed in His presence, and is the fulness or completion of *aradhana*. *Prarthana* is the breathing of our spiritual wants and aspirations to GOD and asking for His help and guidance. All real prayers are followed by response from GOD, just as breathing out air is followed by the breathing in of fresh air. All these elements of worship should be cultivated with care. The full effect of worship cannot be expected from the cultivation of one of them in exclusion of the rest.

Brahmaism inculcates, not only private worship, but also family and con-

gregational worship. For the proper cultivation of domestic and social life it is necessary that the members of a family and those of a society should meet periodically and worship GOD with one accord. As private worship is the source of personal religion, so is family and congregational worship the source of domestic and social religion. Men and women who do not meet for united worship and do not find delight in such worship are not likely to have any spiritual relationship with one another. The Brahma Samaj, therefore, attaches great importance to united worship, provides for weekly and periodical worship in the samajes or congregations attached to it and encourages such worship in Brahma families.

Congregational worship usually begins with a hymn, which is followed by the minister's *udbodhan* or call to worship. After a second hymn the minister con-

ducts the *aradhana*, in which the members of the congregation join mentally. *Aradhana* begins with the united chanting of the Upanishadic *mantras* or texts mentioned in the last chapter. When the chanting is over, the minister addresses GOD and praises Him in all the attributes mentioned in the texts. This *stuti* or praising is done, not to flatter or propitiate GOD, as superficial critics of worship suppose, but for our own spiritual good. It helps us in realising our relation to GOD,—in setting our hearts in a right attitude towards Him. As it is good for us, however, it is, for the same reason, pleasing to GOD, for He wishes good to us. At the end of *aradhana*, the minister stops and remains silent for a few moments. These moments are devoted to *dhyan*, that is, endeavouring to dive deep into GOD'S presence. Some ministers call the congregation to *dhyan* by a short address. Most seem to think

such an address to be unnecessary and a breach of continuity between *aradhana* and *dhyan*, and therefore omit it. At the close of *dhyan* the congregation, led by the minister, unitedly offers aloud the following prayer taken from the *Sanhitas* and the *Upanishads* or its translation or purport in the vernacular of the people who form the congregation:—

Asato ma sad gamaya

Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya

Mrityor ma 'mritam gamaya

Avir avir mayedhi

Rudra! yat te dakshinam mukham

Tena mam pahi nityam.

Translation

From untruth lead me to truth

From darkness lead me to light

From death lead me to immortality

O self-manifesting One, manifest Thyself to me

O terrible One, protect me by that auspicious face (aspect) of Thine.

The vernacular form, which somewhat differs from the original, and which many ministers seem to prefer to the latter, can thus be translated:—
 “Lead us from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality. O Thou true One, reveal Thyself to us. O Thou merciful One, protect us by Thy infinite mercy.”

Then follows a third hymn, after which the minister preaches a sermon, which is followed by a prayer offered by him. A fourth hymn closes the service.

In private worship there may not be any *udbodhan* or hymns; but when such worship is full, the three elements of *aradhana*, *dhyana* and *prarthana* are duly cultivated. A short *aradhana* is subjoined, with the hope that it may help beginners in their cultivation of this important and at the same time difficult element of worship. Usually the attributes of GOD enumerated in the *mantras*

are reduced to seven,—*satyam, jnanam, anantam, anandam, sivam, advaitam and suddham.*

Satyam—Thou art true, Thou existest in Thyself while all else are dependent on Thee. It is Thy power that is manifested in the material world and in the soul of man. Thou art the Support of the world and the Soul of our souls. Thou art in and around us, filling all with Thy presence.

Jnanam—Thou art all-knowing. Thou seest all things in heaven and earth; Thou seest even the inmost thoughts and feelings of our hearts. The inner and the outer world manifest Thy infinite wisdom. Thou orderest with wonderful skill all things in the material and the animal world and in the life of man. It is Thy wisdom that shines through our senses, intellect and conscience, and guides us through the intricate ways of life.

Anantam—Thou art infinite,—filling all space and time and all souls, and yet transcending them. Our small intellects are humbled in their attempts to comprehend Thy power and glory. Thy kingdom spreads far in space—farther than the farthest star—and through millions of years without beginning and without end. Thou art vaster than the vastest object and subtler than the subtlest. Thou containest all things, but nothing can contain Thee.

Anandam—Thou art perfectly sweet and blissful. Nothing can disturb the peace and joy of Thy infinite heart. A particle of Thy perfect joy enters into Thy creatures and constitutes their joy. Though Thou hast filled the earth with joy, nothing can give abiding satisfaction to man's heart but companionship with Thee. Our hearts long for Thee and would live with Thee in unbroken communion. Those who live in Thee have found joy everlasting.

Sivam—Thou art infinite goodness. Thou carest even for the humblest soul and leadest it to perfect good. All goodness on earth is but a faint reflection of Thy infinite goodness. The love of father, mother, husband, wife, friend, saint and philanthropist is but a particle of Thy unfathomable love. Thou art with us every moment of our life,—feeding us, clothing us, nursing us, teaching us, inspiring holy thoughts, feelings and desires in our souls, helping us in our struggles, comforting us in our griefs and disappointments, and constantly leading us on in the path of eternal progress. Thou art our Father, our Mother, our Friend and Helper, the Lord of our hearts and our constant Companion through life everlasting.

Advaitam—Thou art one only without a second. The infinite diversities of the world are all unified in Thee. All proceed from Thee and exist in Thee. Thou

art the Source, Cause and Support of all. Thou art the only object of our worship. Our intellects, hearts and wills all seek Thee and find their fullest satisfaction in Thee alone. Thou alone art our goal and object, our Saviour, our Lord and our Master.

Suddham—Thou art perfectly holy. Not a tinge of sin can touch Thee. Thy thoughts are all true, Thy feelings perfectly pure and loving, Thy will ever just and righteous. Thou speakest to us through our conscience in tones of perfect holiness, and guidest us through the dark ways of life. Thou art our life, our teacher, our guide, our end and our way. We seek Thee, we approach Thee, we take refuge in Thee, and consecrate our souls to Thee. Accept the humble offering of love and reverence that we bring to Thee. We bow down to Thee again and again.

IV. THE MORAL LIFE

In his *Brahma Dharma Bijam*, that is, the seed or substance of Brahmaism, Maharshi Devendranath Thakur thus defines the worship of GOD.—“*Tasmin pritistat-priyakarya-sadanancha tadopasanameva*,” that is, “Loving Him and doing the work dear to Him constitute His worship.” That the meditative and emotional worship described in the last chapter is an effective means of cultivating love to GOD and is absolutely necessary for cultivating it, we have seen in our last chapter. But worship is not merely meditative or emotional; it is

also practical and is vitally connected with our active life. There can be no real reverence for GOD, no real love of Him, without an earnest desire and endeavour to do what He wishes us to do.

Like human love, love for a human being, love to GOD necessarily results in an attempt to please Him. Now, how can we please Him? What constitutes His *priya-karya-sadhanam*? The Brahmas believe that as man has a natural power of knowing the existence and attributes of GOD, and has not blindly to follow any prophets and scriptures in the matter, so he has a similar power of knowing what GOD approves and disapproves. As GOD reveals Himself to our intuition and reason, so does He reveal His will through our conscience. The nature of conscience,—how far it is direct and immediate in its deliverances, how far it depends on observation, and how far it lends itself to the influences

of education and external circumstances, —about all these matters there may be differences among the Brahmas; but they are all agreed as to the truth that we have all a natural power of knowing our duties, a power which we call conscience. Conscience tells us that we have certain duties to GOD, duties to ourselves as embodied beings and rational souls, and duties to our fellow-beings and to the lower animals. For instance, we owe reverence, love and obedience to GOD: care to our bodies; culture and improvement to our minds and souls; truth, justice and kindness to all human beings; honour to our elders and superiors, and particular love and care to those who are closely related to us by ties of blood, marriage, religion, etc. Conscience thus holds before us an ideal of holiness, internal and external, an ideal that grows in depth and breadth with the increase of our knowledge and

with our greater and greater faithfulness to its dictates. Conscience takes cognisance of all our relations—our relations to GOD, to the members of our respective families, to those of the particular community to which each of us belongs, to our native country and to humanity in general, and dictates our duties to them all. It takes notice of the different aspects of our complex nature—physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual,—and sets forth schemes of culture relating to each of these departments of life. *Tat-priya-karya-sadhanam* — doing the work dear to GOD—thus consists in being faithful to the ideal of holiness held up before us by our conscience, and this the Brahmas have always regarded as a part of the worship of GOD. They have always been free from the error of supposing religion to be merely ceremonial or emotional,—to consist in performing a few rites or indulging in a number of

feelings,—and have never divorced morality from religion. To them the attainment of inward holiness, the practice of truth, justice and kindness in private and public life, the reform and reconstruction of domestic and social life in the light of higher ideals revealed by reason and conscience, have always been integral parts of religion. In following this higher ideal of the religious life they have gladly faced obloquy and persecution. The popular idea of religion in this country, and perhaps more or less in all countries, is that it is only the performance of a number of rites, or at best going through a number of meditative or emotional exercises, and has nothing to do with practical life. The religious man is popularly expected, in spite of his religion, to conform to corrupt practices like lying and offering and accepting bribes which have become current and fashionable. to connive at

breaches of moral laws in domestic and social life, to submit to rites and ceremonies even though they may seem to him highly objectionable, and to leave untouched the evil customs that he sees rampant around him. Brahmaism, with its higher ideal of the religious life, has, therefore, always been an unpopular religion and has demanded a good deal of moral strength and heroism from its adherents. It is, in its very inception, a militant movement insisting on the removal of evils and the introduction of reforms in all departments of life. It is this militant character of the religion that explains its slow progress among a people remarkably passive and conservative in its nature. Some of the social reforms which the Brahma Samaj has carried out within its own fold and which are slowly being taken up by those within the orthodox pale, will be noticed in later chapters.

V. THE FUTURE LIFE

The Brāhma Samaj believes in the immortality and endless progress of the human soul. As an immaterial substance, the soul cannot be destroyed by the destruction of the body. As knowers of material things extended in space, we know ourselves as distinct from them, as unextended units. As unchanged spectators of changes, keeping our identity in tact amidst the diversity of events, we know ourselves as above the destructive power of time,—as immortal by our very nature. We also see that we have a moral and spiritual destiny,

and are not merely animals contented with sensuous things and enjoyments. We have a thirst for knowledge which is being satisfied by our scientific pursuits. We have an affectional and emotional nature which is being developed by our domestic life and social institutions. We have aesthetic tastes and feelings which are being fostered by our love of nature and our culture of the higher arts. We have a spiritual nature which recognises the Infinite within and without us and aspires after union with Him. Thus GOD, in His infinite goodness, is leading us on towards a higher and higher fulfilment, day after day, of our spiritual destiny. It would be incompatible with the wisdom and goodness of GOD if this progress were to stop at death and if what GOD has moulded and nourished with so much care, were destroyed. As the present writer has elsewhere said, "Even a person of ordinary

wisdom and goodness does not destroy his own handiwork. but rather endeavours to make it as perfect as he can. It is, therefore, inconceivable that a Being of infinite power, wisdom and goodness should set up a scheme and give it up before it is half complete. To create an ever-progressive nature, to provide it with all the means of self-improvement, to make all nature conspire to that end and to establish direct relations with it through the devotional exercises of praise and prayer, communion and inspiration, and then at the moment when, through a long life of piety, that nature is nearest to its goal, nearest to its divine Origin, to stifle it to death—this is most clearly incompatible with the divine wisdom, love and justice, and can never be believed by anyone who truly believes in GOD. Belief in the divine perfection leads necessarily to the conviction that the soul, after its death,

will continue to make endless progress in the path in which it has started, and in which GOD Himself is leading it on. ("The Religion of Brahman," p. 103, 104).

As to the conditions of the life after death, Brahmas are not at all unanimous. Most seem to believe that the soul, after the destruction of the body, remains unembodied and makes progress through non-sensuous, immaterial means; for instance, through the help it receives from other disembodied souls. But all the varieties of belief held by the Brahmas in this matter harmonise with the central doctrine held by all, that the soul is eternally progressive and that, however great may be the progress made by it, it will ever remain distinct from GOD and continue to be in the relation of a worshipper to Him. None of them believe in the doctrine current among certain Vedantists that the finite soul ultimately

merges in the Infinite, for such a doctrine conflicts with the personality of GOD, with the doctrine of the distinction of GOD and man, with the truth of the infinite love of GOD for man, and with the belief in man's endless progress, which are all cardinal principles of Brahmaism and are belived in by Brahmas of all sections, notwithstanding their differences on minor matters.

VI. IDOLATRY AND CASTE

As GOD is infinite, not limited in space and time, nor confined to bodies like ours requiring care and nourishment, it is evident that He does not require offerings of food and drink or leaves and flowers from us. As He is not in need of these things, the offer of these things cannot please Him. The ignorant may offer them in their ignorance of the nature of true worship and thereby incur no sin. But for those who know the nature of such worship and the futility of offering material things to GOD, such a mockery of worship is

surely a sin. The Brahma Samaj, therefore, interdicts all connection with Idolatry or image-worship on the part of its members. The plea urged by some advocates of Idolatry that to fix the mind on GOD in worship we require the help of an image or symbol before our eyes, is quite groundless, for finite things cannot represent the Infinite; and as to helps, all things, irrespective of their shape and size, are in a sense helps to realising the presence of GOD, as He is present in all. To select an image as a special help is either to entertain the idea that GOD sees with eyes, hears with ears, and so on like a finite embodied being, or to promote or encourage such ideas in the ignorant. We should do nothing that may mislead others, but rather do everything to promote the cause of true worship and true religion. Brahmaism, therefore, teaches that not only in our daily devotions, but in all

concerns of life, true spiritual worship, such as has been spoken of in the third chapter, should be offered and idolatrous rites and ceremonies carefully avoided. In *Jatakarma* (the birth-ceremony of a child), *namakarana* (the naming of a child), *vidyaramba* (the beginning of education), *upanayan* and *diksha* (initiation or beginning of religious education), marriage, birthday anniversary, cremation, and *sraddha* (requiem ceremony) and other domestic and social ceremonies, only praise and prayer should be offered to GOD and simple rites, free from superstition, performed. There are hand-books published by the Brahma Samaj, giving outlines of the rituals to be observed on these occasions. These domestic ceremonies are called *anusthanas*, and those who observe theistic rites, free from superstition, on these occasions, named *anusthanic* Brahmas.

As Idolatry is opposed to the doctrine

of an Infinite Spirit GOD, and inimical to true worship, so is the current system of hereditary castes opposed to the doctrine of human brotherhood. GOD being the common Father of all, all men and women are brothers and sisters, and they should treat one another as such, admit them to equal fellowship, and allow them the same rights and privileges. No one, on account of one's birth in a particular family. should be abhorred or deprived of the rights of education, choice of profession or fellowship with others. As the current distinction of castes, with the aversion generated and the artificial inequalities created by it, is opposed to these humane and enlightened principles, Brahmas reject this distinction and advocate and promote inter-dining and inter-marriage among the different castes. In the Brahma Samaj no one, because he is born in a particular family or class, is debarred

from having free social intercourse with his co-religionists, or enjoying rights or exercising powers, such as those of a priest or minister of religion, to which he is otherwise entitled. As caste is opposed to true religion and to true national unity as well as to human brotherhood, the Brahmas consider the breaking of caste a religious duty. The Brahma Samaj aims at being a model society whose members should live in peace and unity, helping one another in worshipping GOD in spirit and in truth and in attaining to the height of their GOD-given powers. In this society the so-called highest and lowest castes are being intermingled and levelled up to a common platform of purity and enlightenment. It aims at being what Indian society and human society in general should be in future, when all artificial distinctions will be forgotten in the pure love of GOD and humanity.

VII. MARRIAGE AND THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN

As the caste system is opposed to the recognition and promotion of the brotherhood of man, so the subjection and seclusion of women and their exclusion from the rights of education and self-improvement are obstacles to both the theoretical and practical acceptance of the truth that man and woman are equal before GOD and have the same rights and privileges. The Brahma Samaj has, therefore, ever since the days of its great founder, advocated the rights of women. It was by Raja Rammohan Ray's efforts

that the cruel custom of burning widows on the funeral piles of their dead husbands was abolished, and the Brahma Samaj has since made the education and improvement of women one of the most important items of its reform programme. As marriage in childhood interferes with both the physical and intellectual development of women, as much as of men, the Brahma Samaj has abolished child-marriage and fixed a minimum of age for both men and women below which no Brahma marriage can take place. It has got a law passed by Government—Act III of 1872—according to which Brahma marriages are registered.* This law makes the marriage of a man under eighteen and a woman under fourteen an offence and allows inter-marriage

* The Adi Brahma Samaj, a small section of the Brahma Samaj, does not avail itself of this Act and so does not come under its provisions.

between different castes. It also interdicts polygamy in all cases, but allows divorce in exceptional cases. A widow has the right of remarrying even without the consent of her guardian, but bachelors and spinsters must take their guardians' consent if they are under 21. In the Brahma Samaj girls receive as good an education as boys, and already there are numerous lady graduates and undergraduates in the Samaj. Freedom of movement among women is also increasing and there are many Brahma families which do not observe the *parda* system so prominent in Bengal and the Upper Provinces. A large number of educated ladies are employed as teachers in Government and private schools and colleges and as doctors. Women are admitted into all the rights and privileges enjoyed by the members of the Samaj. Several of them are members of the different managing committees and

some have been appointed ministers and preachers of religion. These reforms are now slowly extending to the orthodox section of Hindu society and to reforming bodies other than the Brahma Samaj. But they were all inaugurated by the Brahma Samaj and form integral parts of its reform propaganda.

