

# The Wedanta Kesari

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but by me.”

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— Shridharani

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MAY 1943 — APRIL 1944

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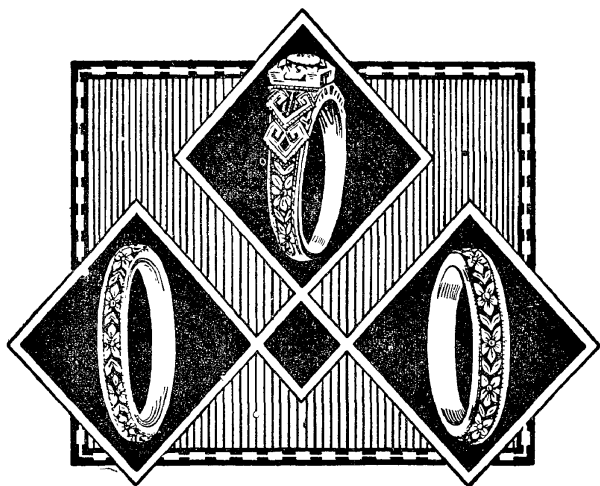
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# The Vedanta Kesari

VOLUME XXX



NUMBER 12

APRIL, 1944

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## HINDU HOSPITALITY AND CHRISTIAN INDIGESTIONS

### I

'First the missionary and the Bible; then the trader and the flag; then the soldier and the musket.' goes the Nepalese saying. The religion of the missionary and the Bible did a 'good' turn to the West. It conquered markets and hoisted the flag. And then it conquered political power through the soldier and the gun. Christianity thus enthroned success as the God of the West.

Success is the God the West worships—success with a big S; politics is its religion and victory its flower. Man perhaps has never been so victory-minded as he is in the West today and this victory-mania has whetted the success-thirst with success. When war has become an institution, an institution of glamour, things cannot be otherwise. The West wants an education that brings success, money, position; they want 'successful' social institutions, 'successful' political

machinery and more than all, a 'successful' religion, a religion as efficient in its tactics and as successful in its manoeuvres as their politics, to earn for them the earthly ends of power and prosperity. And Christianity has been always supplying this need for a 'successful' religion. The West wanted Christianity to change colours and it did so with the colour-genius of a chameleon. The West wanted it to bring earthly power; it satisfied them with captivating skill. Of all such contexts of success for Christianity, three stand out: First, in the 5th century when Christendom—more a political power than a spiritual force—reached out far beyond the limits of the Empire into Armenia, Persia, Abyssinia, Ireland, Germany, India and Turkistan. Secondly, in the 13th century when for educating the masses into the consciousness of solidarity, Christianity gave birth to the great propaganda Missions

which became since then a power in the civilized world. And thirdly in the 18th century when Christianity was a very able ally of the Colonial ambitions of England and the other European countries.

How as early as the 4th century Christianity began to get infected with political fever is described by H. G. Wells:

Ideas of worldly rule by the Church were already prevalent in the 4th century. St. Augustine who wrote between 354 and 430 gave expression to the developing political ideas of the church in his book, *The City of God*. The City, as Augustine puts it, is a 'spiritual society of the predestined faithful', but the step from that to a political application was not a very wide one. The Church was to be the ruler of the world over all nations, the divinely-led ruling power over a great league of terrestrial states. In later years these ideas developed into a definite political theory and policy.

And so we find the political fever developing under the cover of religion. As early as January 1548 St. Francis Xavier wrote from Cochin to King John III of Portugal:

You must declare as plainly as possible.....that the only way of escaping your wrath and obtaining your favour is to make as many Christians as possible in the countries over which they rule. (See Macnicol: *The Living Religions of India*).

## II

The advice of the Christian saint has always been followed by foreign political powers in India since then. When political power began to strengthen the hand of the British in India the Christian missions gained Government support. In 1813 when the charter of the East India Company was renewed Parliament insisted, in spite of the opposition of the Directors of the Company, on inserting a clause giving full freedom to the missionaries to settle and work in

India. No wonder that such successes and conquest of world prosperity made Christian nations proclaim that Christianity is the only true religion of the world, because Christian nations are prosperous. But they forget that that assertion contradicts itself. Because the prosperity of the Christian nations depends on the misfortune of non-Christian nations. There must be some to prey on. Suppose the whole world were to become Christian, the Christian nations would become poor, because there would be no non-Christian nations for them to prey on. Lord Halifax, sometime in 1942 said, 'We know that, stripped of the accidents which have brought this or that nation into war, the real issue for us is whether Christianity, and all that it means, is to survive.' Shall we not credit him with the common knowledge that the overwhelming majority of the earth's population is non-Christian? And so the issue for Christianity is very 'real', the issue of preying on this non-Christian majority.

If as a result of their conversion activities the whole world is to become Christian, then they would at once stop such activities. For such a consequence would affect the prosperity of the Christian nations and they are not the people to choose between conversion and prosperity. They always want prosperity first and then conversion. But if they have both, i.e., power and prosperity at the cost of non-Christian population and sufficient food for their pseudo-spiritual hunger—in reality a base appetite—of conversion, then that is the most attractive and fertile field. And such a fertile field has been India. India has been the theatre for the dance of British political power, and Indians merely spectators. On

Indian soil has sprung up numerous educational institutions run by Western Christian missionaries who since the first half of the nineteenth century have been minting in their mints coins which must be culturally current in the future India of their dreams. They have been giving us education, but slowly and steadily they have been giving us religion also. India is famous for her cordial hospitality to foreign faiths and cultures. All she receives with an inviting smile and gives room both on her wide soil and in her wider heart. In the case of the Christian missions, India has been so lavish in her hospitality as to cause indigestion in the Christian stomach. Christianity has taken advantage of the indiscriminating kindness and fellow-feeling of Hinduism and has gulped so much material that she cannot digest it now. Even from their side there rise protests against the poisoning such indigestions cause in the Christian 'body'. Such a cultured and sincere Christian as Rajkumari Amrit Kaur writes :

I say "so-called Christianity" advisedly, because I know not one of these people to whom I have spoken—and I have spoken to many—who has been able to tell me anything of the spiritual implications of his change of faith ..... Is there not room for Jesus in Hinduism? There must be. I cannot believe that any who seek to worship God in spirit and in truth are outside the pale of any of the great religions which draw their inspiration from Him who is the fountain-head of all truth. I am sure that I am not the only Indian born in the Christian faith who holds these views. (*The Harijan*, 30 Jan. 1937).

### III

It is disappointing to find that movements and institutions pure as crystal ideals, high and noble in

motive at the start get awfully vitiated and dirty with time and with passage across countries. The Roman Church wanted an effective means of raising the common masses to the consciousness of solidarity and of a political ideal. The great propagandist religions in the Roman world of which Christianity was the chief and the survivor answered the need by giving birth to Missions who actively took up the systematic instruction of the masses. It was somewhere in the 13th century that the Missions gathered shape and strength. India of the 13th century is spoken of by western historians even, as cultured and educated. It was the India of the Vijayanagar Kings. She was cultured without the blessings of western education and the ministrations of the Christian missionaries. Five centuries later, in the 18th century, one fine morning, the Christian conscience got pricked by the appalling illiteracy and lack of culture of the non-Christian peoples of the world and especially of India. 'It was the toil of Carey (an Indigo-planter) and his colleagues' observes Farquhar, 'that roused first Britain and then America and the continent to a sense of their duty to the non-Christian peoples of the world.' (*Modern Religious Movements*). This concern for the non-Christians in India was working *incognito* through conversions until 1813 when with the renewal of the charter of the East India Company the Parliament insisted in spite of the opposition of the Directors of the Company on inserting a clause in the charter, giving Missions full freedom to settle and work in India. We cannot persuade ourselves to believe that this had no cause-and-effect relation with the Indian Mutiny in 1857, called the First War

of Independence by patriotic Indian historians. 'In that year', observes Farquhar, 'the Home Government took charge of India and declared the wise policy of absolute religious neutrality.' The Home Government wisely realised that an official neutrality was the safest and best cover under which unofficially and most effectively Christian interests in India can be furthered.

The year 1857, the year of the Indian Mutiny stands at the middle of an era of Indian Awakening in religion, culture and nationalism. In 1813 the Atmiya Sabha which flowered into the Brahmo Samaj was formed by Ram Mohan Roy. In 1885 the Indian National Congress was established. Between 1815 and 1895 or even 1908, numerous Samajs, Panthis, Satsangs and Missions sprang up in India in quick succession, some favouring vigorous reform in religion and society, some defending the old faiths, but all having the common feature of a missionary zeal in them. It seemed as though Hinduism wanted to show to the militant missionary Christianity that it also can be aggressively missionary, if it chose. But none of these vigorous new births, it must be remembered, showed any trace of jealousy or animosity towards their foreign sisters. Their efforts were turned towards self-correction, self-improvement and self-realization. Though Christianity by its militant missionary attitude many a time provoked Hinduism, its prevailing note continued to be one of understanding and acceptance of the bonafides of other faiths. The first Christian Church in Travancore was built by generous grants from the Hindu King. The two races of Jews, the white and dark who settled on the West Coast in the 15th century

received such charters of tolerance and freedom of worship from Hindu princes as to elicit from Dr. Fortescue the words: 'Both are interesting proofs of the characteristic tolerance of Hindu Kings.' No country and no religion have adopted this attitude of understanding and appreciation of other faiths so persistently and consistently as India and Hinduism and its offshoot, Buddhism.

#### IV

To such friendly and cordial attitude Christianity has turned an imperious and arrogant face. The report of the Commission on Christian Higher Education in India, presided over by Dr. A. D. Lindsay testifies to this uncharitably narrow and imperious attitude of Christians:

The Christians are convinced that they have a message which alone is a solution for the problems of humanity and therefore of India. They believe themselves to be bearers of good news which they wish to share with others. Their hope and desire is that India may become Christian.

We cannot expect an English Christian to use such language for his religion unless he is compelled by his good sense and overwhelming injustice on the Christian side.

Can such a proud, self-centred and imperious religion thrive on Indian soil, the mother of most broad-hearted faiths? India's body has tolerated an imperial Government; will India's heart tolerate an imperial religion? It can live by dint of force, under the shade of political power—a very suffocating existence. It can feed on the indiscriminating hospitality and charity of Hinduism. But how unhealthy is such life? Will not Christianity realise this? We have said above that the Christian stomach has been generating poisons due to indigestion. Equally injurious is



this growth under the shadow of power or on the leniency of other faiths. It is not too late for Christianity to realise that the best a religion can do is to allow one to develop along the line of one's traditional culture. We are reminded of R. L. Steavenson asking a lady missionary, to remember that she cannot change ancestral feelings of right and wrong without practically murder. All that one can do, he says, is to civilize the man in the line of his civilization, such as it is. Pitt-Rivers, the famous anthropologist in his *Clash of Culture and Contact of Races* says how conversions are injurious for both parties :

The public at home probably does not appreciate how strongly the majority of field ethnographers, sympathetically anxious to learn all about the customs and religion of the people and working in all parts of the world, have been driven, often against their inclinations, to the conclusion that Christian proselytism has done irretrievable harm to native races, by disintegrating their culture and *to us also by the unrest and antagonism the process evokes.* (Italics ours )

## V

All religions have warned man of spiritual pride as his most subtle enemy, the most heinous sin. The sense of spiritual superiority which is anxious to win over the 'spiritual inferiors' to one's side is spiritual pride in another form. The temptation to bring another into one's own way of thinking whether religious, political or social is a great temptation. One must be judged not in normal circumstances, but when one is faced with temptations. There is massive historical evidence to show that the temptation for converting others is the most powerful temptation for religions. And the way in which Christianity has acted in the face of such temptations betrays an absolute

lack of imagination, charity and understanding—not to speak of a spiritual attitude. Even very recently there had been an occasion when Christianity lost all balance and all sense of judgment when placed in a context concerning conversions. We read in the papers on March 5th that for the first time in the history of Catholicism in the city of Bombay, every church was closed and no services were held on Sunday evening, by a special order of His Grace the Archbishop of Bombay, to facilitate attendance at a crowded meeting of Christians of all denominations held at Parel to protest against the recent disaffiliation of the Sophia College by the Senate of the Bombay University. It will be remembered that the Sophia College was very busy recently with her proselytising activities.

Christianity has learnt many things from Hinduism. Can it not learn the fundamental thing, the attitude of positive fellowship, the very life-breath of all Religion. 'That which is called the Christian religion' says Augustine, 'existed among the ancients, and never did not exist, from the beginning of the human race until Christ' came in flesh, at which time the true religion which already existed began to be called Christianity'. This surprisingly is the true Hindu attitude to religion. Is it difficult for modern Christianity to turn to the teachings of its own acclaimed Saints!

There is need to-day for all religions, to join forces to resist the gathering evils of materialism and secularism. 'To this end the relations between religions,' says Sir S. Radhakrishnan, 'must take increasingly hereafter the form of a common search for truth. Perhaps the chief hope for an important deepening of self-know-

ledge on the part of Christendom is by way of a more thorough-going sharing of its life with the life of the Orient.'

Winston Churchill confessed in 1935 that two out of every ten Englishmen depend on India. This dependence has become very signal to-day.

Britain's victory in the war depends largely on Indian men and material. Will not Christian Britain at least in this anxious hour of need realise the urgency of winning the Heart of Hindu India by dropping its imperious and self-righteous attitude and rising above private gains?

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## ACHARYA SANKARA

### The Nation-builder of Post-Buddhistic India

BY PROF. AKSHAY KUMAR BANERJEE

Acharya Sankara was the greatest thought-leader and nation-builder of post-Buddhistic India. After the revolution created in the moral and spiritual atmosphere of India by Lord Buddha and his followers, Sankara may rightly be regarded to have been the rebuilder of the cultural nationality of Hindustan. His philosophical and organising genius perfectly assimilated Buddhism into the eternal thought-current of Aryan India and made India what she has continued to be even to this day.

#### *The Acharya of the Hindus*

Since the time of Sankara Mother India has given birth to numerous renowned saints, philosophers and founders of religious sects. But they only raised the superstructure on the foundation laid by him, with the materials collected by him. None of them, however, has been able to exercise such a deep and permanent influence upon the life, thought and spiritual outlook of all the sections of the Indian people as he did. Most of them are revered chiefly as leaders of particular sects and formulators of particular 'systems' though their indirect influence upon the life and

thought of the people is by no means negligible. But Sankara is not the leader of any particular religious sect within Hinduism. He is the *Acharya* of all Hindus. By Hinduism we understand a moral and spiritual outlook on life and the world, and a form of social organisation for the realisation of this outlook. It was this Hinduism that was most effectively expounded and placed on an unassailable philosophical basis by Sankara. Though Hinduism has got newer and newer light from the *sadhana* of the post-Sankarite saints and philosophers, the fundamentals as laid down by Sankara have not been seriously questioned by any of them.

Sankara's method of philosophical speculation, his plan of moral and spiritual self-discipline, his viewpoint on the worldly life and the life beyond, his conception about the highest ideal of human life and the relative value of domestic and social duties, his *sannyasi* organisation for the practical demonstration of the moral and spiritual truths and the propagation of them among all the grades of the human society, have since his time been exercising the

most powerful influence upon the mind and heart of Hindu India.

### *What Buddha did to Hinduism*

We may here draw a respectful comparison between Acharya Sankara and Bhagawan Buddha, two illustrious sons of Mother India. Buddha was the noblest embodiment of universal love and sympathy, of absolute selflessness and non-violence, of perfect peace and tranquillity and harmony. It was his aim to give the highest religion to one and all and to show to every man and woman the surest path to peace and bliss. For this purpose he selected the fundamental ethical and spiritual tenets of the Vedas and the Upanishads, made them free from the heavy burden of ritualistic observances on the one hand and the bewildering puzzle of metaphysical dialectics on the other—both of which were suited only to the upper strata of the society—and preached them on the authority of his own innermost experience to all classes of people as the most effective means to absolute freedom from all kinds of sorrows. In this noble attempt to make the highest religion universally available and capable of being practised by everybody, he went to the length of disowning the national scriptures and the valuable traditions associated with them. This was a great revolutionary movement in the Aryan society.

Hinduism in its Buddhistic form easily crossed the borders of India to make a spiritual conquest of the other races of the world. It showed how a man could be religious without believing in the existence of God or soul, without bowing down to the injunctions of any revealed scriptures, without performing any rites and ceremonies. It taught that a man

could attain the highest plane of spirituality and enjoy perfect peace and bliss by the simple method of practising absolute purity and non-violence in thought, word and deed. It made no distinction between Brahmans and non-Brahmans, between Aryans and non-Aryans, between the learned and the illiterate, and the most talented and the most uncultured. Thus Hinduism was universalised by Buddha. It appealed to the mind and heart of the high and the low alike. The masses listened to this message of hope and cheer and were deeply attracted towards the Lord's life and teachings. The rationalists and the positivists, the free-thinkers and the dissenters, were also attracted by the new interpretation of spirituality. The classes and the masses were thus united together on the same ground of non-dogmatic and non-ritualistic religion.

### *Hinduism loses its National Character*

But the Buddha by thus giving a cosmopolitan turn to Hinduism dealt a severe blow at its national character. He preached his noble doctrines, not as the teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads, not as the fruit of the spiritual *sadhana* of her saintly sons and daughters of earlier periods, but as newly revealed to him. But Buddhism, in spite of its original universalism in time turned out into a sectarian religion. The standard of rebellion, raised by Lord Buddha against Hinduism emboldened many other powerful religious reformers to initiate other new sectarian systems in defiance of the authority of the national scriptures. The result of all these was that the national character of Hinduism was greatly weakened, the social and religious

bond that knit the people greatly relaxed.

### *Sankara restores the national tempo of Hinduism*

It was the great achievement of Acharya Sankara that retaining its universality he restored the national character to Hinduism by re-establishing the sacred authority of the Vedas and the Upanishads. Sankara's Vedantic interpretation of Hinduism perfectly assimilated the universal ethical teachings of the Buddha and all other great reformers. He demonstrated that the scriptures, which formed the foundation of Hinduism, were the linguistic embodiments of the highest spiritual truths, which were from the philosophical point of view the most rational conceptions about the ultimate Reality, from the religious point of view the unquestionable and most blissful spiritual experience, and from the moral point of view the loftiest regulative principles of life leading to the establishment of peace, harmony and unity in the human society. He proclaimed that the Hindus were an immortal race, that all the departments of Hindu life and culture were ultimately based on eternal spiritual principles and were meant for the progressive realisation of the great ideal of human life. He sought in all possible ways to make the Hindu society fully conscious of its inherent glory, the deathlessness of its life and culture, the universality of its moral and spiritual ideals and principles and its responsibility as the bearer of the message of the divinity of man and the universe.<sup>c</sup>

### *Highest Conception of life and the universe*

The loftiest message, which Sankara has brought down to man-

kind from the Hindu scriptures and from the spiritual experience of the Rishis and Saints, is that of the absolute identity of all individual souls (*jivas*) with the supreme self (Paramatman) and the illusoriness of all differences. He has logically proved that every man, every animal, every living or non-living being, is only an individualised appearance of the Absolute Spirit, Brahman. He addresses all human beings, apparently high or low, rich or poor, cultured or uncultured, oppressing or oppressed, and exhorts them to be conscious of the presence of this blissful Reality in themselves and in all others, to be conscious of the identity of each and all, and to banish all ideas of separateness and smallness from their minds. Philosophers may not agree as to the strength of the logical arguments, by which Sankara has supported his thesis, but it cannot be denied that he has given to mankind the highest possible conception of life and the universe. *Sarvam Khalu idam Brahma*—all this is certainly the Absolute Spirit,—no conception of the universe can be loftier than this.

### *Know Thyself, Man*

Instead of emphasising *sorrow* and *sin* as Buddhism and Christianity have respectively done, Sankara stresses the eternally pure, good, beautiful and blissful reality of the human soul. He teaches man to think of himself and all other beings as essentially divine, as manifestations of the same Brahman. All sorrow and sin, all bondage and limitation, all desire and passion, are, Sankara teaches, born of ignorance,—ignorance about the true nature of the self and the world,—and can be destroyed by the power of

true knowledge. Know thyself and thou art at once free from all sorrow and sin, from all desire and bondage, from all pettiness and imperfection. Realise the essential divine character of your own self, and you will at once perceive the divinity of the whole universe. You will then see yourself in all and all in yourself, and there will be no room for discord and hostility, no difference between the individual good and the common good. True knowledge alone can drive out from the world all disunion and discord, all unhealthy competition, rivalry and war.

The Kingdom of Heaven,—the reign of perfect unity, peace, goodness and bliss,—is within us, is the central reality of this world. It is the truth of this apparently diversified war-ridden sorrowful world. All differences and hostilities and vices and miseries, individual and social, racial and national, political and economic, cultural and religious,—are the fruits, *not of the tree of Knowledge*, but of the tree of Ignorance. Some mysterious *Maya* is the mother of all these baseless differences. She has put a veil upon the essential nature of Truth and has made the soul self-forgetful. It is due to her influence that the human soul fails to see itself and the world in the true light, fails to realise the essential unity and spirituality of all existences. But, Sankara asserts, this *Maya* also is not a truly real entity. The Mother of all illusions is herself an illusion. She disappears with the appearance of true knowledge. The attainment of this true knowledge is the divine right of man.

Thus Sankara raises the dignity of man to a great height. The universal love and amity, the all-embracing sympathy and compassion, preached

by Bhagavan Buddha, should flow, according to the Acharya, spontaneously from the consciousness of the spiritual identity of each with all, from the deep conviction of every creature being the embodiment of the Spiritual Reality, Brahman.

### *Gospel of Acceptance*

In the field of religious discipline Sankara does not declare any crusade either against ritualism (as Buddhism did, or against idolatry or image-worship (as Islam so vehemently did), though these are obviously based on the sense of difference, from which he wants to emancipate the human mind. To him all forms of systematic religious discipline, prescribed by the scriptures and religious teachers of different sects, are really meant for progressively freeing the human mind from the moral impurities, intellectual prejudices, worldly desires and passions and other weaknesses, which stand in the way of its Self-realisation. If they appeal to the mind and heart of the masses and help them in rising to higher planes of experience, they need not be disturbed. Religious practices prescribed by the scriptures and the *sants* are based on a deep insight into the nature of men in general. People however have to be taught to look into their spiritual significance. Attention should be paid more to the reform of the inner spirit than to that of the outer forms.

Acharya Sankara, perhaps the greatest preacher of unitarianism and Absolutism in the world, instead of asking people to break the idols or to give up ritualistic practices, taught them to see and worship the same divine spirit in all forms and idols, the same self in all natural and artificial bodies, the same Infinite Eternal and Absolute Reality in all finite and tran-

aitory objects, and to realise their essential identity with the Universal Self. According to his philosophical religion there is nothing inconsistent or undignified in the ceremonial worship of any god or goddess, or saint because it is the same Infinite eternal Absolute Spirit that is the true self of all *names* and *forms*, of all gods and goddesses, all saints and heroes, all images and portraits, all living and non-living objects. The human mind has to train itself to see Brahman in all *names* and *forms* through the systematic practice of seeing and worshipping Him in the greater and more brilliant manifestations of Brahman. Sankara's teaching is—

see the same Brahman in yourself and in all things of the universe and worship Him in whatever names and forms you like.

Thus Sankara, instead of becoming the founder of a particular religious sect, laid the foundation of universal religion, which may throw very useful light on the tenets of all sectarian, communal or party religions. Swami Vivekananda with his extraordinary spiritual insight took his stand on the philosophy of Sankara, gave a most practical modern interpretation to his ideal of universal religion and brought it not only to the people of India but also of abroad in this their hour of need.

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### AMERICA WAS ANOTHER INDIA—AND NOW

A few years ago none of the American farmers, says an American Magazine, were raising enough food even for themselves; many were without a cow or even chickens and most of them were unskilled in modern ways of farming. Some were trying to dig a living from land that had been stripped of fertility and abandoned; others were tilling twenty-five or thirty acres, not enough to yield a livelihood. Their efforts were crippled by debt and mortgages, poor diet, poor health. Many were on relief. Few had credit. They were just like Indian farmers cowed down by debt and disease. And the Government was sleeping. But soon its eyes were opened.

Confronted with the job of doing away with the need for rural relief, the Farm Security Administration struck at the causes of failure. Small loans for stock and equipment were combined with on-the-farm train-

ing in practical, modern farm and house management methods. Neighbouring farmers were brought together so that they could divide the use and cost of machinery and pure-bred livestock. With the help of local doctors and dentists, group medical care was set up in many countries enabling families to get medical attention by paying annual fees pooling them to pay the group's bills.

By the end of 1941 when America got into war, families getting this help already were producing twice as much food for themselves as they produced before. With increased incomes from increased marketings, the families caught up on back debts, made payments on instalments not yet due; nearly ten lakhs of families receiving loans since 1935 had paid 92 per cent of the \$ 690,133,091 they had borrowed upto December 1, 1942.

Today America fights against soil erosion caused through action of water

by grassing of water-ways, broad-base terracing, etc., done through the U. S. Conservation Service. The U. S. Forest Service is fighting wind erosion by reforestation and such other means.

Recently the farmers gathered together. Henry Bates who had spent 22 months in a hospital after the last war, addressing them said:

Remember back four or five years ago all of us were down and almost out. The Government gave us help to get started again and encouragement to carry on. Today we are called on to give that same great government a lift by increasing production. I think I speak the sentiment of

everyone in this room when I say that we will more than do what is asked of us.

The Indian farmer knows his job and can 'deliver the goods' even as his American brother. But can he say like his American brother that the Government 'gave him help to start again and encouragement to carry on'. The Indian farmer is always called upon by the Government *to give* and not to take. It is not a question of the Indian farmer emulating the example of his American brother; but it is a question of the Indian Government emulating the example of the American government.

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## DYNAMIC HINDUISM

BY PROF. P. S. NAIDU, M.A., ALLAHABAD UNIVERSITY

### II

*In the February issue of this Journal we raised certain questions which touch the very heart of Hinduism. Certain suggestions will be made, in this concluding article, for finding suitable answers to those questions, and for understanding the spirit of our religion aright in these critical times. It must, however, be pointed out that each reader must answer the questions for himself in the light of such religious experience as God, in His infinite grace, may have vouchsafed to him.*

The questions which we raised may be considered under certain broad heads in order that we may keep our minds fixed on the essentials of Hinduism. The first of these heads relates to:

### *The Fundamental Roots of Religion*

It must be admitted at once that the inspiration for religious aspiration comes from God. Certain religions may appear to advanced minds to be crude and childish, but the longing for divine fellowship, and the deep-seated instinct which urges man on to seek and possess what

William James called 'The Divine More' are truly God-like in their origins. So no religion has any right to claim a monopoly of truth. And the beauty of Hinduism is that it has never made any such bigotted claim. The high-souled among the Christians too do not make such a claim. St. Paul has said 'who art thou that despisest thy brother.'<sup>1</sup> As Rev. Macnicol has put it, 'All religions, beautiful or deformed, are of one family, and spring from the same divine root in the human spirit.' Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna 'as the

<sup>1</sup> N. Macnicol: *Christianity and other Religions*, p. 5.

result of his realisation through all forms of discipline...was firmly convinced that all religions were true -- that every doctrinal system represented a path to God.' The Bhagavan realised the central truths of Islam and Christianity in his own person. After three days of practice he was able to realise the goal of the Islamic form of devotion. 'First of all he saw a radiant Person with a long beard and of grave appearance, and then his mind, passing through the realisation of the Brahman with attributes, was finally absorbed in the Brahman without attributes.' In the same way, the Bhagavan realised Christ in three days. 'On the fourth day, as he was walking in the Panchavati, he saw an extraordinary looking person of serene aspect approaching him with his gaze intently fixed on him ... Presently the figure drew near, and from the inmost recesses of Sri Ramakrishna's heart there went up the note, "This is the Christ ... " Then the Son of Man embraced Sri Ramakrishna and became merged in him.'" Now, while other religionists may grant the truth of our contention in theory, in practice they are intolerant of religious practices and religious faiths outside their own fold. Even Macnicol who asserts that the 'Christian has no right to adopt an attitude of superiority in regard to other religions', and who holds that 'no religion is the result of the unaided urge of men's minds after God', and that 'God's aid is present in them all,' suddenly turns round and says, 'But in one religion God's aid is present in especial abundance, namely, in that one which has at its centre Christ Jesus. This may strike us

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, (Advaita Ashrama, 1929) p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 288.

with surprise, but it is natural to religions other than Hinduism. The lack of tolerance is brought out in the attitude which various religions take towards conversion. The attitude of Hinduism may be best expressed in Gandhiji's words. 'I would not only not try' writes the Mahatma, 'to convert, but would not even secretly pray that any one should embrace my faith ... conversion and service go ill together'. Such an attitude is incomprehensible to the followers of other religions, and the secret of the difference is that Hinduism is built on *renunciation*, while other religions are *attached* to this world. That is a fundamental difference. So as the result of an impartial consideration of the roots of Hindu religion we find that *renunciation*, and *tolerance born of that renunciation* are two of its most outstanding characteristics.

### *The Uniqueness of Hindu Religion*

There is a fact of supreme importance to our understanding of Hinduism that should be noted at once. Other religions have flourished on a foundation of earthly power. They were supported by the crown and the sword, and were sometimes spread at the point of the lance and scimitar. Hinduism has flourished in spite of these earthly manifestations of might and force. There is an inexpressible vitality, a spark that cannot be quenched by persecution, and a fire that cannot be put out by any earthly power in the Heart of Hinduism. History testifies to its reality. Too long have we sought this secret vital principle in abstract formula and in theoretical teachings. Let us now attempt to get at the *living principle* in Hinduism by studying the life of a *living persona-*



lity. In other words let us, in a spirit of humility, approach and understand the secret of Hinduism in the earthly life of the God-man Sri Ramakrishna in whom the Spirit of God 'has found its full and perfect consummation and expression', and who shows us religion realised.

When we think of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, we are immediately confronted by the great mystery of avatarhood, for the Bhagavan was truly an *avatar* of God. The true meaning of avatarhood is given to us by the Great Vaishnava teacher, Sri Pilla Lokacharya in the opening verses of his *Sri Vacana Bhushanam*. 'The meaning of the Vedas' says Lokacharya, is elucidated by the Smritis, Itihasas and Puranas.' The *avatars*, by their divine life on earth, have dramatised and concretised the abstract truths of the Vedas. And according to the need of the age, and the capacity of the human beings who live in the age, these *avatars* teach, by their earthly life, the sublime truths of religion. The teachings of Sri Ramakrishna are suited to our age and our understanding.

Now there are two things that we should note in the life of the Bhagavan; firstly, the supreme lesson of the sacred life itself, and secondly the lesson imparted by his sacred words. The first part of Sri Ramakrishna's life was spent in intense and concentrated effort to realise God. When the realisation came, it was not continuous, and until he had the continuous vision of the Mother he never relaxed his efforts. Of the agony of his longing for the Mother, of the intense longing for the sweet divine communion, and of the great renunciation which was a prelude to this *tapasya*, we get vivid and graphic accounts in the *Gospel of Sri Rama-*

*krishna* published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore and the *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* published by the Advaita Asrama. And after his final realisation, the Bhagavan impressed on all his disciples and other true seekers after God, the need for *realisation* first, next and last. It is only after realisation that one may think of teaching, preaching or serving man. Hence the second great secret of vital dynamic Hinduism is the *realisation* of God. This is the lesson which Sri Ramakrishna taught and this is the lesson which our age needs.

### *The Vedas, the Upanishads, and Dynamic Hinduism*

It may be asked how Hinduism may be dynamic, if the Vedas and the Upanishads have set forth, once for all, the essentials of Hinduism? To my mind, there is no contradiction in the finality of our Holy Scriptures and the ever-progressive and dynamic nature of our religion. The Life of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna has shown that personal religious experience of the individual with its expansiveness and rediscovery of the eternal truth is thoroughly consistent with the absolute nature of vedic principles. Hinduism, it must be remembered is not a body of finished, and completed abstract principles. It is a living, dynamic faith, it is life, and so it is creative of ever new and fresh values suited to the spirit of the times. And it is the only religion which has proclaimed *Tatvam Asi*, Thou art that, thou art God, and which has inspired the seeker to assert *Aham Brahmasmi*. Sri Ramakrishna has shown how the spark of divinity in each individual should burst forth into a clear, brilliant light, a light which illumines without dazzling and how within the holy aura of that light each individual

should have *his own* vision of God, and realise his oneness with God. The third secret, then, that is revealed to us in Hinduism is the absolute *identity of each individual with God*, and the supreme need there is at the present day for realising in a concrete manner our identity with God-head.

### *Scriptures, Aids to Worship and other Religions*

The Hindu attitude to other religions has already been defined. It is one of liberal tolerance, and in the long run of assimilation. Provided renunciation of this world is accepted as a cardinal principle by any religion, Hinduism can easily find a place for such a religion within its fold. We know how Buddhism has been assimilated because of its insistence on ascetic holiness and annihilation of desires. Those religions that still stand outside the pale of Hinduism are bound to this world. Some day Hinduism will infuse into them the true spirit of God and then gather them up into its own fold.

It is in their attitude to the various aids to spiritual discipline and progress that Hinduism and other religions differ widely. In our religion there is provision for worship of idols, for worship without idols, and for final identification with Brahman when all worship ceases. The different stages in spiritual evolution are recognised, and provision is made for helping each aspirant according to his needs, and according to the level he has attained. Each soul is thus gradually taken up to the final stage where it realises the truth *Aham Brahmasmi*. Other religions which have not had the exalted Upanishadic vision are on the lower levels, and hence are intolerant of idol worship and religious rituals.

The uniqueness of Hindu religion comes out in an unexpected manner when we consider its attitude to the Holy Scriptures. In Islam and Christianity, Mohamad and Christ are the central figures respectively, and they are looked upon as incarnations. Yet the importance which they attach to the Quran and the Bible is such that the personalities of their respective Saviours *sometimes* recede into the background. The Muslim's and the Christian's adoration of the scriptures is, to my mind, something surprising. In Hinduism on the other hand, we find the *guru* exalted to the level of God-head. The scriptures can be understood only in the light of the revelation which comes to the aspirant through the initiation of the *guru*. So, the personality of the *guru* stands above the scriptures. This is brought out in a striking manner by the way in which Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna insisted on all aspirants after realisation taking initiation at the hands of a *guru*. Hinduism, it is generally believed, rests on abstract principles, enunciated in the Vedas or the Gita, but in very truth it rests on personal experience at the feet of a *guru*. Other religions claim to be founded in the lives of historical personalities, but they really rest on abstract principles contained in their respective scriptures. Here again we find the hidden source of the vitality and dynamism of our religion.

### *Some Practical Considerations*

It is now plain that unless the sublime truths of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and other Hindu scriptures are translated in terms of the aspirants' own experience, they will be merely so many lifeless words written on paper. Hinduism must reveal itself in the lives of the Hindus

and that it can be so revealed is evidenced by the sublime lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo, and others of that exalted order of holiness. When one touches even the fringes of the level reached by the Nitya Siddhas, one feels like dropping this mortal coil, and getting out of this world. But then, one must live out one's appointed time on the earth; and then the question arises how should a realised soul conduct himself during his enforced sojourn on this earth? One answer to the question was given by Jesus when

he said, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God, the things that are Gods'. A better answer is found in the exemplary life of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna himself. Our final answer would be this: 'Taste and see that the Lord is good'. Taste Hinduism first. What is the use of arguing about the sweetness of sugar. Taste and see that it is sweet. Taste Divine Realisation as understood by Hinduism, and all other questions will solve themselves. Therein lies the final secret of Dynamic Hinduism.

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## NO USE FLEEING THE WORLD

भयं प्रमत्तस्य वनेष्वपि स्या—

यतः स आस्ते सहस्रत्सपत्न ।

जितेन्द्रियस्यात्मरतेर्बुधस्य

गृहाश्रमः किन्तु करोत्यवद्यम् ॥

Some think that by fleeing their homes and the busy world and by running into the forest they will get peace. For the one who is forgetful of his inner Self (Atman) and who is in the meshes of Maya there is fear even in the forest. There is fear even in the forest: Not from the wild beasts but from the beasts within him, the six passions who are his inveterate enemies. But to the one who has mastered his senses, who has found Peace within and who has gained the Supreme wisdom no harm 'befalls even if he remains indoors. It is all a question of what one is and not where one stays.

# THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIA

BY SWAMI NIKHILANANDA

## II

An intangible spirit of unity pervades the three hundred and twenty millions of Hindus inhabiting that vast subcontinent. It is not apparent to foreigners, who see in India only a conglomeration of castés, religions, languages, dialects, and other barriers dividing one man from another. Life in India is not standardized. The Hindu mind wants to see unity in variety. To be sure, a growing political consciousness, insecure and unstable boundaries, common material interests, and other similar factors that have forged political unity in Europe and America, have not influenced the Hindu mind to any great extent. Therefore India is lacking in what the Western people call political unity. The introduction of universal education, the development of railways, automobiles, and radios, and so on, have helped in cementing the political unity of the Western nations. Then again, look at the size of India. It is equal to the whole of Europe minus Russia. The rulers of modern India have largely created and maintained divisions among the different groups of the Indians to preserve their own interests and consolidate their own power. The Hindu Moslem troubles are not religious but mainly political, though they have been given a religious veneer.

Indian unity is based upon common spiritual ideals. To the vast majority of Indians,—to the martial Sikhs, the intellectual Bengalis, the devotional Gujaratis, the astute Mahrattas, the

brave Rajputs, the orthodox Madrasis, whether living in the snow-peaked Himalayas, or in the picturesque plateau of the Deccan or in the dry lands of the Punjab or in the monsoon-soaked province of Bengal—the Vedas, the Gita, the Ganges, and the Gayatri are equally sacred. Their lives are influenced by the law of karma, the law of cause and effect, which gives them solace in times of adversity, resignation in times of crisis, calmness in pleasure and pain, and courage for the building of the future. In India life is moulded by philosophy and guided by religion. The vast majority of Indians believe in a Reality that transcends the senses and the mind and is the bed-rock of our existence. Our present life is only a link in the infinite chain of birth and death. These spiritual ideals are discussed by the pundits in the learned assemblies. The peasants sing of them while ploughing their lands. The boatmen sing of them while their boats drift along the peaceful river flanked by fields of rice and wheat. These spiritual ideas are the themes of the songs of the spinners as they ply their wheels. Religion and philosophy—happily joined in wedlock in India—are the warp and woof that make the beautiful fabric of Indian life.

The soul of a nation manifests itself through its national activities. The culture of a nation is the outer expression of its innermost soul. It

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Reproduced from the *Vedānta and the West*.

forms the nation's backbone and mission. All great nations have helped the growth of world civilization by the contribution of their respective cultures. Greece has enriched the world by its contribution in philosophy; Rome, by its contribution in law; England, by political theories; France, by aesthetics; Italy, by art; Germany, by pure science and music; China, by humanism; America, by technology and its application for the comforts of every day life. India's contribution, has always been in the realm of spirituality. The ideal man or national hero of India is a Krishna or a Rama, a prophet of religion. India wants to demonstrate not how much one must have to make life happy, but how little is really needed for a life of peace and joy. Religion has permeated all strata of Hindu society. Take the case of the two great epics of India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. These explain in concrete form, through the lives of kings and warriors the abstract philosophy of the Vedas. Take the case of the arts. You see the same effort to manifest the unknown and unknowable through the superb plastic masterpieces of Sanchi and Borobudur, the great temples begun by Titans and finished by jewellers, the Ajanta frescoes, the South Indian bronzes, the shrines of Orissa. All these works of art are but a delineation of religion in stone, marble, and metal. Take the case of the caste-system. The four castes with their different functions do not divide the Hindus but rather unify them by bringing before their minds the vision of a Cosmic Person representing the soul of India--the Brahmin forming Its head, the Kshatriya Its arms, the Vaisya Its belly, and the Sudra Its legs. Again, take

the four stages of life. First, the ascetic and austere student period, when the physical, mental, and spiritual energy is conserved. Second, the householder period, when a man marries, begets children, and fulfils his duties toward the state and the community to which he belongs. Third, the period of retirement, when the husband and wife after the birth of their grandchildren, retire from the active life of the world to devote their time to the contemplation of the eternal verities. Fourth, the life of the wandering monk, when a man frees himself from the bondage of attachment and becomes a spiritual teacher of men. Or take the case of the four aims that every man should try to realize in life to make it rich and complete. First, dharma or righteousness, which is the basis of the whole life. Second, artha or the acquisition of money through righteous means; for money is a mode of self-expression as long as one is conscious of physical needs. Third, karma, or the fulfilment of the various aesthetic desires that every sensitive soul possesses. Fourth, freedom or liberation, which is the natural culmination of all our striving. The four ideals are inter-connected. Their realization makes life rich and complete. Our righteousness, wealth, and aesthetic cravings must ultimately lead to the life of emancipation. Man cannot be satisfied by bread alone. The life of nature is the life of bondage. The life of Spirit alone gives freedom. Earthly experience opens up a vista for a supersensuous realization that is beyond time and space, that is unaffected by the law of causation, and that enables a man to realize his divine heritage.

In India all phases of life have been influenced by the spiritual ideal.

The source of the Hindu spiritual tradition is the Vedas. These sacred books have no conventional author. The truths recorded in the Vedas were discovered by certain pure souls known as rishis, or seers. Through self-control and contemplation they discovered supersensuous truths regarding the nature of God, the soul, the hereafter, and the relationship between man and his Creator. Four principal themes underlie the teachings of the Vedas. They are the divinity of the soul, the unity of existence, the harmony of religions, and the oneness of the Godhead. The culmination of a man's spiritual experience is in the realization of his identity with the Godhead: Thou art That, or I am He. The subject and object, the seer and seen, become one; the individual soul merges in the Universal Soul. All duality disappears. Truth alone exists. No experience can transcend this. The Vedas describe Truth both in its impersonal and its personal aspect. The principal Upanishads emphasize the Impersonal Truth; but the latter scriptures, known as Puranas, stress the Personal God; the Personal God is the highest manifestation of the Impersonal Truth in the relative world of time and space, as comprehended by the finite human mind. The Personal ultimately merges in the Impersonal, the name and the

sound in the ineffable Silence.

Yoga denotes union with the Godhead and also the paths leading to that union. The choice of the path depends upon one's taste and temperament. The path of disinterested action is for the active temperament, the path of discrimination and renunciation for the philosophical, the path of selfless love for the emotional, and the path of concentration and meditation for the mystical or psychic. But all paths lead to the one goal, namely, the realization of peace, knowledge, and blessedness. God is Truth, Good, Love and Beauty.

It is the law of the relative world that, in the course of time, even spiritual truths become distorted or forgotten. Righteousness is persecuted and wickedness prevails. In those critical times of human history the Divine Power manifests Itself on earth for the chastisement of the wicked and the vindication of the righteous. These divine manifestations are known as Avatars, or Prophets. Hinduism recognises Buddha, Christ, Mohammed as well as Krishna, Rama, Ramakrishna and others, as Prophets of God. There have been prophets in the past, and there will be prophets in the future. The Book of Revelation is not yet complete. God becomes man so that man may become God.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**Wayfarer's Words** BY MRS. RHYS DAVIDS, D. LITT., M.A. PUBLISHED BY LUZAC & CO., LONDON: IN 3 VOLS.

VOL. I, PP. VIII+371, RS. 3, (STIFF COVERS), RS. 4 (CLOTH BINDING).

VOL. II, PP. VII+348, RS. 3, (STIFF COVERS), RS. 4 (CLOTH BINDING).

VOL. III, PP. VIII+427, RS. 5, (STIFF COVERS).

The Wayfarer's journey is finished. She has been gathered up to her Lord. But what an inestimable heritage has she left behind her for the enjoyment of the faithful! For forty years there flowed from the pen of Mrs Rhys Davids inspired and illuminating writings on Buddhism. Her translations of original Pali texts, her writings on Buddhism—its psychology, its ethics and its spiritual foundations—and her works on the great founder of Buddhism are the most authentic and authoritative pronouncements in English that we have on the religion which moved millions of hearts in our own country and abroad. To this striking array of Mrs Rhys Davids' works on Buddhism are now added *three volumes* of her "many sporadic writings; articles and comments buried in periodicals and "Commemorative Volumes" which are not easily accessible to serious students of religion and philosophy. And together, these writings—the systematic treatises and the scattered essays—are meant to preach the same Gospel, and to carry out the same Mission.

There are two important facts relating to Buddhism which, according to Mrs Rhys Davids, need telling with emphasis for many a year to come; and they are (1) that Buddhism as we know it at the present day is very different from what it was at its beginning and (2) that the function of *Will* in man's religious quest is exceedingly important so far as Buddhism is concerned. In the thirty articles collected together in the First volume of the *Wayfarer's Words* these two points are stressed with great force and some repetition, because they have been unheeded. Let us take the first fact. The titles of many of the essays refer explicitly to the early stages of

Buddhism. [III. "The Man in Early Buddhism". X "Original Buddhism as a Philosophy of Life", XXVIII. "Was Original Buddhism Atheistic? XXIX "Original Buddhism and the Immortal".] These are fairly representative samples, and through all of them runs a thread of unity. All the chapters relating to early Buddhism (and some of them run into the other volumes too) present a systematic view of human personality, and its relation to the *More* and of man's immortality. "Does Buddhism believe in God, and the soul?" "What is the Buddhist view of Karma and rebirth?" "What is the Supreme Spiritual Ideal of Buddhism"—these and other equally significant questions have been answered in the volume under review with a surprising wealth of illustrations and with all the authority of a scholar confident of her hold on the original texts. Mrs Rhys Davids' contention is that in the original texts there is nowhere a denial of God and the soul. The relative silence concerning the Divine Self should not be misinterpreted as denial of eternal verities. Buddhism was concerned more with the *cognitive dynamism* of the human personality, and not with the *cognitive apprehension* of the identity of atman and Brahman. So, there is considerable talk about God-Becoming and not God-Being or Soul-Being. In explaining this concept of God-Becoming Mrs. Rhys Davids speaks of the *More* in many of the essays in all the three volumes. We are reminded of the *Divine More* which William James speaks of in his Pluralistic philosophy. This *More* is to be realised by the Will, and it is to this Will that Mrs. Rhys Davids turns her attention in many of the essays in this Volume."...in religion viewed as a life-quest, man's main factor is his Will. Without Will he can never learn to become according as he is taught. He needs...to "Will to do the Will" in knowing the true from the false. He needs to exercise Will in Wayfaring through the worlds."

The second volume contains thirty more of our author's "sporadic writings and lectures". Here Mrs Rhys Davids is con-

erned with her own views which differ from "current Southern Buddhist values and from "certain opinions of Western students of Buddhism." The concept of "More" is again in the forefront of all her expositions. There are two essays of great interest in this volume; (1) Buddha, "The Light of Asia" and (2) The So-called Eight fold Path, which in a sense contain the quintessence of Buddhism. "I do not expect," writes our learned author, "that Buddhists of South Asia will not cling tightly to their tidily categorised "Path" and refuse to accept the broader view of the way of worlds, the Road of Becoming .....Buddhists have lost the original outlook on life taught by their Great Man, that man by right of way is Wayfarer in the worlds, and that the Goal (*attha*) is "beyond the worlds," *sampaiyika* at their scriptures say." That is the idea that dominates many of the essays in this volume, and the author is in great earnest in driving the truth home into the minds of students of Buddhism.

Thirty essays constitute the body of the third volume which in many senses is unique and different from the first two volumes of the series. "Like its predecessors, Wayfarer's Words I and II, this volume is a collection of articles and reviews, lectures and addresses published or delivered by Mrs Rhys Davids over a number of years." Yet these thirty articles have a distinctive message for us. Buddhism, of course, figures prominently in these essays, but there are, in addition, "points about other ancient cults of no less interest for the history of religion in general." There are valuable contributions on Jainism, on Sakyamuni and Ramakrishna, on Samkhya logic and yoga, on Man and Invisible helpers and so forth. The learned writer feels that there is need for delving beneath superstructures in order to get at the living core of religious faith. Mrs Rhys Davids writing of her own conviction says..." not yet can we say, we shall never accept as true what coming helpers, coming "founders" may have to tell mankind as Gotama, Jesus, Mahomed told to men." That is the spirit in which she approaches the development of the religious aspirations in mankind. And the spirit is admirable and comes pat to the occasion.

We may not agree with some of the conclusions of Mrs Rhys Davids. For instance

when she writes, "Some think the "mystic" gets here and now, now and then, to the goal. They are wrong..... some think, the saint plunges at death into the Goal. They are wrong", we have the right to make a profound bow to the great lady and say "You, lady, are wrong. In spite of your long association with India, your mind is weighed down by your Western Samskaras." Yet, we must be profoundly grateful to the great lady. The three volumes under review are an invaluable contribution to the literature of Buddhism. "It is an inestimable benefit, especially to students of original and early Buddhism, to have the majority of these shorter writings by one of its ablest exponents brought together in book form." Not only students of Buddhism, but of comparative religion, of anthropology, of linguistics and of Semantics will find in these three volumes a rich mine of information, for scattered throughout the collection there are observations of great value on grammar, folk-lore, and early religious customs and beliefs. The exquisite essay on "Brahmacharya" (Vol. II p. 533) and that on "Buddhist Wheel and Way" (Vol. II p. 540) need only be cited as examples. And throughout there runs also another vein of thought of importance to the student of philosophy. It is the comparison between Buddhism and Hinduism which the author institutes in regard to certain ruling concepts in both religions. And all the essays are like beads strung on the thread of "Becoming" and "The More" which Bergson and James have familiarised us with, and which sound as sweet and recurrent refrains in the great song of Buddhism which Mrs. Rhys Davids' has composed. A sweet little poem, full of pathos, dedicated to Mrs Rhys Davids' son who died in the last war while serving as a pilot in the Royal Air Force, concludes the third and the last of the volumes of the Wayfarer's Words.

Messrs Luzac & Co. deserve our heartiest congratulations in bringing out these three exquisite volumes under the present difficult conditions. The paper used is good, the binding quite substantial and the type-face excellent. The volumes are moderately priced and should find a place on the shelves of all those who are interested in a comparative study of Indian Religions and Philosophy.

P. S. NAIDU.



**Sri Krishna and His Gospel:** BY  
YOGI SUDDHANANDA BHARATI. ANBU  
N I L A Y A M, RAMACHANDRAPURAM  
TRICHY DT. PRICE RE 1-8.

Still they came! Renderings of the mystic life and teachings of the Lord Sri Krishna—the perennial theme of Indian poets and philosophers, saints and story-tellers for the last 5000 years. Yogi Suddhananda is a rare blend of the poet, philosopher and devotee in one. So he may well aspire to walk in the footsteps of sages Vyasa and Suka who have immortalised the memory of the Lord. By his numerous works in Tamil and English, the author has won a place in the world of South Indian religious literature, to which this is a welcome addition.

The author's approach to the study is revealed in the opening chapter under the title: 'The Two Forces' wherein [we are told: "Rama the *Hero* and Krishna the *Yogin* are the two supreme idols of the Hindu nation. They are the two incarnate forces of India's spiritual dynamism. The one is the moral force and the other the spiritual force of the Eternal Dharma embodied in Mother India." Though brief, the study is illuminating and portrays in poetic language the manifold aspects of the *Poornavatar*. 'Tulsi'—the one act play at the close depicts the glory of devotion enshrined in *Rukmini*. The last two chapters give a gist of the gospel of the *Gita*. The printing and get up are good.

M. R. R.

**The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.**  
Part II: BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA.  
SRI AUROBINDO ASRAM, PONDICHERY.  
PRICE RE. 1-4.

This is the second of the series planned by the author to expound in easy and broad outline the many aspects of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. The contents are presented under three main heads: (1) Our ideal. (2) Lines of the descent of consciousness. (3) An aspect of Emergent Evolution. The book is sure to be of some help to those who find it very hard to digest the rather heavy fare of the original works of the Master. The treatment is as simple and lucid as the profound and highly abstract nature of the problems dealt with will permit. The printing and get up, as usual, leave nothing to be desired.

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We welcome the advent of our new contemporary, the *Advent*, devoted to the exposition of Indian wisdom according to Sri Aurobindo. It contains a number of articles from writers like Suddhananda Bharati, Dilip Kumar Roy, Anilbaran Roy, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar. etc. It also contains a note on the War from the pen of Sri Aurobindo, an extract from one of his private letters. Devotees of Aurobindo will find in this journal much that is elevating and entertaining.

### Swami Saswatananda Leaves for the Headquarters

Swami Saswatanandaji, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Madras, was presented with addresses by the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and friends of the Mission on the eve of his departure to the Headquarters at Calcutta where his services have been requisitioned. During the course of the last week functions were got up in his honour at Perambur, at George Town, at the Avvai Asram and at the Mambalam school where tributes were paid to his services in Madras.

The citizens of Mylapore convened a meeting on March 25th at the Ranade Hall to present him with a farewell address. Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar, Vice-Chancellor, Madras University, presided.

After the reading of messages by Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan, Mr. K. Swaminathan read the address and presented it to Swamiji in a costly ornamental casket. The address stated that the Swamiji has done justice to the high office of the president of the Math and Mission at Madras and referred to his simple interpretations of the spiritual message of Sri Ramakrishna and the social ideals of Swami Vivekananda.

Dr. B. B. Dey, Dr. D. S. Sarma, Dr. (Mrs.) Muthulakshmi Reddi and Prof. P. N. Srinivasachari also spoke.

Dr. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar said that he felt that at no time was there a greater necessity than now for the application in actual life of the ideals, principles and philosophies of the great teacher, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa as expounded by his great disciple, Swami Vivekananda. He hoped that it would be possible for Swami Saswatananda from the Headquarters of the Mission to use his energy, influence and power to see that the Mission spreads its activities over the whole of the country.

Swami Saswatananda, in his reply said that it was the ideal of Seva Dharma that the Ramakrishna Mission practised. He stressed the need for a comparative study of religions by everyone and pointed out that they could solve the Hindu-Muslim

problem by such a study which would remove fanaticism from their minds and broaden their outlook. He also expressed his grateful appreciation of the generous help the Math and Mission have received these years.

Swami Saswatananda left for Calcutta on the 27th evening by the Calcutta Mail.

### His Highness Prince Ravi Varma

We regret to report the passing away at Trichur on 20th March of His Highness Prince Ravi Varma Thampuram, the Elaya Raja (Heir Apparent) of Cochin.

His Highness was a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and had the opportunity of having intimate contacts with his direct disciples, especially with Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj, the second president of the Mission whose disciple he was. He was a good Sanskrit scholar and was much respected for the pious and religious life he led. He was a Rajarshi in the true sense of the term. Even during his last moments he had the consciousness of the Ideal and the name of the Lord was on his lips.

His Highness' eldest son is a senior and distinguished monk of the Ramakrishna Order and is now doing the Mission's work in the West.

In His Highness' death, the Mission loses a true friend and devotee. We pray for his soul's eternal solace in the Grace of Sri Ramakrishna.

### THE MISSION IN MAURITIUS

#### The Second Annual Report 30th Dec. '43

The work of the Mission in Mauritius has been progressing. The event of the year 1943 is the inauguration of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture on 21st March. The Institute held 150 classes for teaching Tamil, Hindi and Sanskrit from April to November. The Mission conducts four institutions: the monastery (with Shrine) a Library and Reading Room, a Dispensary and the Institute of Culture. A Maternity and Child Welfare Department were added in the course of the year.

The Dispensary treated 2,650 adults and 1,036 children during the year under report. The Branch intends to start Hindu Orphanages which will provide scope for expansion of the educational work. A Students' Home on a small scale also bids fair to spring up on the same premises.

The Management convey their sincere and heartfelt thanks to all those who have helped the work and contributed to its success in one way or other.

### SRI RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASRAM, SALEM

#### Report for 1943

Started in 1928, the Salem Asram has been engaging itself in preaching and humani-

tarian activities. A Bhagavad Gita Class, philanthropic and uplift work amongst the Harijans, a free Harijan Patasala, the Ramakrishna Centenary Memorial Library and Sri Ramakrishna Free Ayurvedic Dispensary are the activities of the Asram. From 5,123 which was the number of patients treated in 1934 it rose to 33,225 in 1943. Over and above these, the Asram engaged itself in relief work when occasions arose. The events of the year under review are the opening of the Guest house and Library Building—the block known as Tulsi Mandir—and the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Chicago Parliament under the presidentship of Swami Saswatananda, President, Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

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## A THIEF BECOMES A SADHU

A thief entered the palace of a King at the dead of night and overheard the King saying to the queen:—“I shall marry my daughter to one of those sadhus who are dwelling on the bank of the river.” The thief thought within himself:—“Well, here is luck for me; I will go and sit among the sadhus tomorrow in the guise of a sadhu and perchance I may succeed in getting the King's daughter.” The next day he did so, and when the King's officers came soliciting the sadhus to marry the King's daughter none of them consented; at last they came to this thief in the dress of a sadhu, and made the same proposal to him. The thief kept quiet. The officers went back and told the King that there was a young sadhu who might be influenced, to marry the princess, and that there was no other who would consent. The King was

obliged to go in person to the sadhu and entreat him earnestly to honour him by accepting the hand of his daughter. But the heart of the thief was changed at the King's going to him. He thought within himself: ‘I have assumed only the dress of a sadhu, and behold! the King himself comes to me with entreaties and prayers. Who can say what better things may not be in store for me if I become a real sadhu!’ These thoughts so strongly affected him that, instead of marrying under false pretences, he began to mend his ways from that very day and exerted himself to become a true sadhu. He did not marry at all, and ultimately became one of the most pious ascetics of the day. The counterfeiting of a good thing sometimes leads to unexpected good results.

—Sri Ramakrishna.

## SPIRITUALITY IS STRENGTH

BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

“I have objections to every form of teaching which inculcates weakness. This is the one question I put to every man, woman or child, when they are in physical, mental or spiritual training: Are you strong? Do you feel strength?—for I know it is truth alone that gives strength. I know that truth alone gives life, and nothing but going towards reality will make us strong, and none will reach truth until he is strong. Every system, therefore, which weakens the mind, makes one superstitious, makes one mope, makes one desire all sorts of wild impossibilities, mysteries and superstitions, I do not like, because its effect is dangerous. Such systems never bring any good; such things create morbidity in the mind, make it weak, so weak that in course of time it will be almost impossible to receive truth or live up to it. Strength, therefore, is the one thing needful. Strength is the medicine for the world's disease. Strength is the medicine which the poor must have, when tyrannized over by the rich. Strength is the medicine that the ignorant must have when oppressed by the learned; and it is the medicine that sinners must have, when tyrannized over by other sinners, and nothing gives such strength as this idea of Monism. Nothing makes us so moral as this idea of Monism. Nothing makes us work so well at our best and highest, as when all the responsibility is thrown upon our-

selves. I challenge everyone of you. How will you behave if I put a little baby in your hands? Your whole life will be changed for the moment; whatever you may be, you must become selfless for the time being. You will give up all your criminal ideas as soon as responsibility is thrown upon you; your whole character will change. So if the whole responsibility is thrown upon our own shoulders we shall be at our highest and best; when we have nobody to grope towards, no devil to lay our blame upon, no Personal God to carry our burdens, when we are alone responsible, then we shall rise to our highest and best. I am responsible for my fate, I am the bringer of good unto myself, I am the bringer of evil. I am the Pure and Blessed One. We must reject all thoughts that assert the contrary. This is the only way to reach the goal, to tell ourselves, and to tell everybody else, that we are divine. And as we go on repeating this, strength comes. He who falters at first will get stronger and stronger, and the voice will increase in volume until the truth takes possession of our hearts, and courses through our veins, and permeates our bodies. Delusion will vanish as the light becomes more and more effulgent, load after load of ignorance will vanish, and then will come a time, when all else has disappeared and the Sun alone shines.”



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Editors : Swami Saswatananda and Brahmachari Santa Chaitanya.

Publisher : Swami Advayananda. Printed by J. S. Vasan at the Kesari Printing Works,  
37, Sir Thyagaraya Road, Thyagarayanagar, Madras.