

THE VEDANTA KESARI

“ Let the lion of Vedanta roar.”

“ Let me tell you, strength, strength is what we want
And the first step in getting strength is to uphold
The Upanishads and believe that ‘ I am the Atman.’ ”

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

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A PRAYER

जपो जल्पः शिल्पं सकलमपि मुद्राविरचनं ।
गतिः प्रादक्षिण्यं भ्रमणमदनाद्याहुतविधिः ॥
प्रणामः संवेशः सुखमखिलमात्मार्पणदशा ।
सपर्यापर्यायस्तव भवतु यन्मे विलसितम् ॥

OH Mother, may all my speech, howsoever idle, be recitation of Mantra (Japa) ; may all the actions with my hand be the making of ritual gesture (Mudra) ; may all my walking be the pacing around (Thy image in worship) ; may all my eating and other functions be Homa rites ; may my act of sleeping be prostration before Thee ; may all my pleasures be an offering to the great Self. Whatsoever I do, may it be counted for the worship of Thee.

—ANANDA LAHARI BY SANKARACHARYA

EDITORIAL NOTES

HERE is a general belief, not only in India but also outside, that religion consists in quietude and passivity of meditation. Some foreigners, especially the Christian missionaries, maintain that Christianity holds a higher doctrine than Hinduism, inasmuch as the former sets forth the ideal of a dynamic life, whereas Hinduism, in their opinion, preaches quietude and inactivity.

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But nothing can be farther from the truth. No doubt the Hindus believe that the highest state of spiritual realization is one in which the consciousness of the cosmic process of the relative aspects of life is completely obliterated and which becomes manifest in the Absolute. In fact the infinity of the Divine Being is not the infinity of the aggregate of small parts of the universe, but the transcendental infinity which is beyond the play of time, space and causation. It is very difficult for the ordinary human mind to understand such a state, because mind works through time, space, and causation, and therefore cannot comprehend what is beyond them. Mind cannot jump out of itself. As it is constituted, it cannot therefore comprehend the infinity of God, and when it tries to do so, it understands it as the sum-total of the whole universe which in Sanskrit is called the *Virat Purusha*. There are very many logical theologians who do not accept God as the *Virat Purusha*. Therefore we have to accept, in consistency with logic as well as the experience of spiritual seers, that there is a state which is transcendental—beyond the limitations of the senses and mind. This is the real infinity of God and is what we call the *Para Brahman*. When man realises It, all activities of the relative existence will entirely vanish and we believe that that state is the highest to which man can aspire. Quietude or passivity does not connote the real state of the Supreme Being. The state of the Supreme Being is neither passive nor active, *Brahman* being the term applied to the substratum of all activity as well as all passivity.

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But the average man understands God as a Personal Being having the attributes of Omniscience, Omnipresence and

Omnipotence. If he is endowed with a slight metaphysical insight, he conceives of God as an Immanent Principle pervading the entire universe, that is, as the *Antaryamin* residing in every heart. When God is conceived of as a Personal Being, He is the creator, preserver, and destroyer. The ordinary human intellect can go so far, and this conception of God as the *Virat Purusha* which is the sum-total of the entire creation is quite natural to it. This universe is His body. Every minute *Jiva* or individual soul beginning from the smallest insect upto the highest and most developed man forms but a part of that great *Virat Purusha*. He is the Supreme God in whom we live and move and have our being. He is the Principle of Consciousness behind both quietude and intense activity. The Upanishads describe Him as such.

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Modern science tells us that there is not a single atom in the universe which is not moving. Whatever you perceive with your senses, whatever has been created, is the outcome of the vibration of the supreme vital energy. In fact, *Srishti* itself means this motion. Hence, if we view from the standpoint of the individual atoms, every one of them is intensely active. If the energy in every atom be liberated, this earth will be destroyed in no time. But if we view from the standpoint of the aggregate, we find that there is no motion. We see so many things around us as stationary but the atoms and molecules in them are in perpetual motion. A fruit falls from a tree to the earth : we perceive the fall because the motion of one thing can be perceived with reference to another. But the earth itself doesn't fall, for where can it fall ?

So also from the standpoint of Infinity, there is no activity. But from the standpoint of the individual, there is intense activity. This is a scientific truth and Vedanta also declares it. It is absurd to say that life is all activity, and equally absurd to say it is all passivity. Life is a harmony of activity and passivity, an equilibrium between these two.

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Molecules combine with molecules, atoms with atoms, and electrons with electrons. Whence comes the power for the atoms to combine with the atoms ? It is the outcome of the energy of God ; as Sri Bhagawan puts it :

सर्वयोनिषु कौन्तेय मूर्तेय सम्भवन्तियाः ।
तासां ब्रह्म महद्योनिरहं बीज प्रदःपिता ॥

“ Whatever forms are produced, O son of Kunti, in all the wombs, the Great Prakriti is their womb, I the seed-giving Father. ”

This universe is the expression of His power and His glory. Science has completely proved that it is the same energy that expresses itself in various forms. There is no difference between an atom, a man, this earth, the sun, the moon and the stars. God is creating, preserving and destroying. In course of time, every object disintegrates by the working of that same energy that has brought it into being. So the cosmic energy is incessantly working. Sri Krishna says :

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषुलोकेषु किञ्चन ।
नानवाप्तव्यवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥

“ I have, O Son of Pritha, no duty, nothing that I have not gained, and nothing that I have to gain, in the three worlds ; yet, I continue in action. ”

He is like the centre of a circle which is revolving. When we go from the centre towards the circumference, the motion becomes greater, the highest expression of motion being at the circumference. When we go from the circumference to the centre, less and less becomes the motion and in the geometrical centre there is perfect rest.

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The life of a religious man is a wonderful harmony between activity and passivity. It is absurd to say that man must incessantly work and equally foolish to say that he should entirely abstain from action. It is because the Christian missionaries do not know the secret of work that they believe Hinduism to uphold the doctrine of passivity. Life being movement, there is nothing in the universe which is perfectly inactive ; because, even considering from the standpoint of physical activity, inactivity means death. The activity of man in his body is demonstrated not only by its voluntary expressions but also by the involuntary expressions such as the circulation of the blood and the beating of the heart. When these stop, man dies.

Though activity means life, it has to be so manipulated and employed as to enable us to live in an efficient way. We have a certain amount of energy. If we want to perfect our life, that is, to realise its ideal, the best way is to manipulate and utilise our energy to the best advantage and in the most fitting way. This is exactly what is meant by Karma Yoga or the philosophy of work :

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उमे सुकृत दुष्कृते ।
तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसुकौशलम् ॥

“ Endued with this evenness of mind, one frees oneself in this life alike from vice and virtue. Devote thyself therefore to this Yoga. Yoga is the very dexterity of work. ”
By this Karma Yoga we can produce the best and highest results with the least exertion, and without any frittering away of energy. Scientists tell us that when a light burns, a large percentage of the materials that are utilised in producing it is wasted, and only a small portion expresses itself in the form of light. The best method of producing the light is by minimising the wastage so that maximum available energy may be converted into light. Similarly we possess a certain amount of energy physical and mental, and the best way of utilising it is to attain the maximum results with its help.

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All the desires of our life can be summed up in these three words—*infinite existence, infinite wisdom, and infinite bliss*, and we are all working directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, to fulfill them. However selfish may be the activities of a man, their motive power is his inner desire for infinite happiness, and the man who works in an adequate way gets a large proportion of it. The ordinary man lives in the physical world ; and the physical life and material knowledge and bliss become his goal. As we evolve and develop, our desires and enjoyments cease to be purely physical. The savage finds great pleasure in food or physical beauty. But a scientist or a mathematician, with a passion for intellectual knowledge, forgets himself and feels absorbed in his subject. The higher we evolve, the higher becomes our conception of happiness. Our progress towards the real goal of life will depend upon our making a conscious effort to reach it.

Every small insect or tiny creature is attempting to reach the state of infinite bliss. Every man, whatever be his country, race or religion, is propelled to move towards it by an inner urge divine. Life involves an adjustment between internal and external principles. Our life is determined by a constant struggle between the two. If the inner dominates over the external, we say life is evolving, and the reverse is retrogression.

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The more we understand the secret of the struggle and the proper manipulation of energy, the greater will be our evolution. We can know we are really evolving, not by our acquiring creature comforts nor by gaining any other objects, but by the elevation and purification of our inner life.

Modern western civilisation, in spite of great scientific culture, is not really worth the name. Have the people of the West progressed in life? No, their mind is restless. They have discovered a few secrets of external nature, but they have no control over their minds or internal nature. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna once remarked: "Napoleon could conquer the whole world, but he could not conquer his own mind!" It requires no great manifestation of physical and mental power in order to dominate over others. In the last war, the belligerents fought with each other like beasts. They are very little removed from the old savages. Swami Vivekananda remarked: "The average European is the same old Roman with the same Roman brutality in his veins." We see what an amount of discontent reigns in the hearts of Westerners.

Many experiments are being made for the securing of peace in the Western world: but they have proved a failure so far, because there is no stability inside, and stability is sought for outside. The external world is a whirlpool of change. The whole social structure in the West is built on shifting sand. There the people are still groping in the dark. They have only acquired power over the outside world.

And what amount of progress have we made in our own country? Our religion has become more or less a matter of conformity with certain general customs—, *Desacharas* and *Lokacharas*. Every province in India has its own customs

and a man is expected to follow them in the name of religion, of which the spirit has been almost choked under them.

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The West is madly active and in the midst of her action, her hurry and flurry, she loses all inner calmness, and her whole energy is utilised to attain worldly prosperity and pleasures. Many Westerners often bring their nerves to such a pitch of strenuous and unceasing activity and give so little respite to their mind that they find themselves unable to bear the resultant strain and even become lunatics. Peace of mind and serenity of soul are sacrificed at the altar of work and worldly happiness. In the East, in India, most of the people have taken to a life of drifting. As circumstances favour, we work a little for some time to satisfy the wants of our families, and spend the rest of our lives in passivity. If the West is too *Rajasic*, the East is too *Tamasic*. The real path lies between activity and passivity :

कर्मण्यकर्मयः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्मयः ।

सबुद्धिमान्मनुष्येषु सयुक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत् ॥

“ He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, he is intelligent among men, he is a yogi, and a doer of all action. ”

If, in the midst of a crowd in the busiest city in the world, you can feel as calm and peaceful as when placed in the midst of a solitary desert, you have become master of yourself; but even if you live in the solitude of the Himalayan caves and yet have no control over your mind, you are worse than the worst of slaves. Sri Krishna was the highest embodiment of this beautiful harmony between activity and serenity. Though placed in the midst of one of the greatest of battles ever fought, he soared so high to philosophical altitudes and spiritual eminences as to give out the great truths which have come to us through the *Gita*. Leaving aside the idea of His being a divine incarnation, and taking Him to be merely a free *Jiva*, one has to admit that He certainly deserves our highest veneration. If India is to rise and if the West is to preserve herself, it is by the emulation and worship of the ideal of Sri Krishna—the ideal of combination of yoga and action, of profound meditation and intense activity. Sri Krishna was intensely active and yet the very centre of calm and repose.

We should never yield for a moment to our passions and desires but pay the dear price of constant wakefulness for buying our freedom. Never for a moment should we hanker after the fruits of our work, or for individual or communal enjoyment. Even the highest patriotism or the deepest love for one's own country has to be sacrificed at the altar of spiritual freedom. For, even if we undergo physical torture or are willing to throw ourselves into the mouth of the roaring canon, there is a tinge of selfishness, attenuated though it be, which can bring about the reaction of misery. When a man feels within himself, "I am working for *my* nation, *my* country," he upholds a nationalism which is selfish like his love for his own family and sows the seed of that aggressive type of nationalism which is rooted in narrow individualism. The difference is only one of degree and not of kind. The real goal of life is forgotten, because selfishness is limitation and the individualisation of the ideal, and every individualisation is a negation of the ideal which is infinite bliss. But Karma Yoga requires us to do work without aspiring for the fruits thereof. One who desires for the fruits of action is a *kripāna*, i. e., one who is a slave to desires. And how can a slave expect eternal life which is not physical freedom but mental freedom from passions and desires, which comes from transcending our own little self. Our little self has to be sacrificed at the altar of the Universal Self ; we cannot forget our little self otherwise. This is why unselfishness is considered to be the finest fruit of spiritual life. Men like Buddha who can feel for even the little helpless crawling worm are perfect, because they have become one with the Universal Self. The philosophy of action or Karma Yoga tells us that every action of ours should be so done that it helps us in progressing towards the universal life. Who can give up desires? Only those who have mastery over their mind and keep it in perfect equanimity.

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The word "Yoga" is used in different senses. Yoga or communion with God is possible through Karma, Jnana, and Bhakti. To an average unsophisticated Hindu or non-Hindu mind, "Yoga" sounds as something supernatural, mysterious, and extraordinary. But Bhagawan Sri Krishna distinctly says in the Gita that every one can be a Yogi, and Yoga should

be the ideal of a Brahmacharin, a Grihastha, a Vanaprastha, or a Sannyasin. This was the ideal in ancient India.

If we can keep our mind in perfect serenity in the midst of pleasure or pain, good or evil, we can be Yogis. Nothing of the physical or mental torture, which is often associated by some persons with Yoga and its practice, is required to make us Yogis. If we can keep our mind in a balanced state, in perfect repose and calm, whatever be the circumstances under which we may be placed, if we can avoid elation of mind in success or depression in failure, we are Yogis, and have discovered the truth of life and attained the peace of soul which is the goal of all religions. Every one of us should cherish and practise the ideal of yoga, no matter whether we are a clerk, a merchant, a king, a patriot, or a Sannyasin, whether we are in the midst of a solitary Sahara or a busy city thronging with crowds of men. We must keep the mind perfectly tranquil in the midst of any kind of activity. We must discharge all our duties to the best of our power, and at the same time have the consciousness that all manifestations of energy come from God, and all our energy is a part of the cosmic energy or belongs to the Almighty. Whether we are a coolly removing basketfuls of mud and filth on yon road or a king commanding and ruling millions of subjects from his peacock throne, we must consecrate our life, our all, to Him who is the mover of this universe, and feel and know that all work is His and none else's. Should we take for ourselves the glory of our life and deeds, we will suffer. Had it been ours, how could we have fall or failure, disease or death? Do we desire for these? Is the energy that in its working keeps us awake for some time and asleep at other times, ours? Have we control over all our voluntary and involuntary activities? No. He breathing, the world lives; He working, the world moves; He existing, the world has its being. The energy therefore is not ours; it is the cosmic energy for which we are but so many conduits or channels to flow through to its Eternal Abode. Gloria in excelsis! All glory unto God! Unto none else, unto none else! Real *Saranagathi* or self-surrender to the Supreme Being is to say and feel "not I, not I, O God! but Thou, but Thou!" When we have such perfect self-surrender, His energy will flow fully through us. This is the real significance of *soul force*. It is Divine Energy that is

ruling so many myriads, not only of men, but also of planets and heavenly systems, and keeps perfect order, and It can have an easy unobstructed channel for It to flow through in a free and pure man. Such a man is a Yogi. The true meaning of Yoga consists in feeling our own littleness and the supreme grandeur of the Universal Being in whom we live, move, and have our being. And when the Divine Energy flows through us, we will have perfect peace and repose of mind, and become so many living and moving gods upon earth, though we may be intensely active. May God the source of all life and energy, enable us all to realise that state of illumination in this very life !

PESSIMISM AND LIFE'S IDEAL : THE HINDŪ OUT-LOOK AND A CHALLENGE

(With a criticism of Life and an interpretation of History)*

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THE word "Pessimism" comes from the Latin "Pessimus" which in English means "worst." According to the New English Dictionary, it was first used by Coleridge in one of his letters in 1794. The exact opposite of "Pessimism" is "Optimism" derived from the Latin "Optimus" which in English means "best". These two words are now on everybody's lips and under the influence of Western thought, we have arrived at the belief that Pessimism is bad philosophy, because it stands in the way of individual and national advancement, whereas Optimism is good as it is conducive to progress. Nor can we blame this view, for the word Pessimism is generally used in a condemnatory sense and its association, according to most Western writers, is on the whole with Atheism, for if Providence is beneficent and if teleological proof is at all a proof of the existence of God, then we cannot help characterising Pessimism as rank Atheism, though the fact remains that Pessimism is not necessarily atheistic any more than Optimism is theistic.

The religious and philosophical systems of India are called pessimistic by many Western scholars—Max Muller, it seems, has not used the term in a bad sense—for the simple reason that the fundamental principle of all these systems is that life is full of misery and the world, therefore, essentially an evil. That we have sunk so low in the scale of nations appears now to most of us to be due to our philosophy and religion and we have also come to entertain the belief that the so-called progress of the West is due to the fact that the Westerners think that life is worth living and *joie de vivre* is the basis of their existence and therefore their philosophy is preferable to ours. There are Western writers who hold that

*This is the author's own amplified English version of his Bengali article in the *Bharat-varsha* of Calcutta, Aswin, B. S. 1331. This will be continued in a few of the future issues.

the religion of our *Rig Veda* was healthy and optimistic, that the decline of this religion is ascribable to the doctrine of *Maya* that has made its way into the *Upanishads* or the *Jnana-kanda* of the *Vedas*, and that it is in Buddhism that the religion of India has reached its nadir of decadence, for the pessimism met with here is of the gloomiest description.

There is another thing noticeable in this connection. The Westerners are generally of opinion that Pessimism is enervating and is the 'philosophy of weakness, whereas Optimism is a robust creed. According to the famous psychologist, the late Professor William James, this opinion is false. He has called the pessimists 'tough-minded,' and 'tender-minded' is the epithet he has applied to the optimists. Still the general opinion is opposed to that of James. As for Indian Pessimism, the prevailing Western view finds one of its latest and most characteristic expressions in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. According to the author of the article on the subject in that monumental work, the Pessimism of India in spite of a certain philosophic basis is mainly environmental and temperamental in its origin and its baneful effect has been partly neutralised by the Bhakti-cult of the *Vaishnavas*, partly by the happy state of things, economic and political, brought about by the British Government established in the country and partly by the theistic movements initiated by the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj in the British period of our history. This categorical and confident assertion fairly takes our breath away.

There is another term we come across which is very recent in its origin and stands half-way between Optimism on the one hand and Pessimism on the other. This term is Meliorism. It was coined and first used by George Eliot, the novelist. Frederic Harrison, the friend of George Eliot and disciple of Comte called himself a Meliorist and the American philosopher, William James, also applied the term to himself. Now-a-days Meliorism seems to be the prevailing fashion in the philosophy of the West and the melioristic out-look and world-view appear to be most popular. The fact is, the out-and-out optimism of Leibnitz and the eighteenth-century Deists which is opposed to the stern realities of life and leads to self-complacency and selfish ease is quite untenable. The "optimistic sophistries of comfortable moles" cannot bear a moment's scrutiny. Schopenhauer is still unpopular, but

whatever flaw there may be in his Metaphysic, the arguments he has advanced to prove the essential evil and misery of the world are irrefragable. Even Eucken, the living philosopher of activism, admits that Schopenhauer convinces. The will to live, as ordinarily understood, must be eliminated altogether to make a higher life possible. The thoughtful men of the West now understand that optimism is a shallow affair and is the outcome of thoughtlessness or theological prejudice or both combined. But prejudice dies hard and this prejudice being also to a large extent due to the material prosperity of the Western world and hope of greater prosperity still, it is very difficult for even the best minds of the West to shake off its influence altogether. There is also the lurking fear of being called weak, should they declare in favour of pessimism, and thus we see that they have come to occupy the half-way house of Meliorism, the result of a compromise between optimism and pessimism. They admit the existence of evil in the world; they have the fairness not to ignore or explain away the problem of evil which has proved disastrous to so many systems, but they hold that the world is improving and human happiness increasing. They also believe that misery will go on declining and happiness increasing *ad infinitum* and it should be the aim of our life to increase the measure of happiness and reduce evil as far as possible, though it is not quite clear why, if happiness spontaneously increases as Topsy 'grewed,' we should put forth any effort at all to bring it about. They all believe in infinite forward rectilinear movement though they admit that there are occasional set-backs which, however, according to them, need not be seriously taken into account. According to all of them the imperfect world is becoming perfect and according to some the imperfect God is also getting perfect, for God is eternally realising himself. Even God is not above the law of mighty evolution—a very unedifying spectacle indeed! I do not remember to have seen the term Meliorist applied to Hegel on the one hand and Bergson on the other, but if we carefully examine their attitude towards life we cannot avoid the conclusion that both of them are meliorists in fact, their conflicting systems notwithstanding, for the doctrine of development is the distinctive feature of their philosophic systems, whatever their interpretation may be of development itself. As for the poet Browning, we are bound to call him a meliorist, for he really believes that the imperfect

man is getting perfect and so is the imperfect God. Then when we come to the evolutionists of the scientific world, the general trend of their belief in infinite rectilinear or forward movement strikes us as most pronounced, though, as I shall show later on, evolution supports no such conclusion. It will not be too much to say that the modern theistic and anti-theistic thinkers alike have been primarily influenced by the scientific evolutionists in their world-view and attitude towards life. Modern Christian theology has accepted from them the belief in the infinite possibility of the world's development and human progress and the theists of the Brahma Samaj of Bengal have followed suit, for they talk of the infinite progress of the soul contrary to the Hindu conception of *atman*, non-dualistic or dualistic.

When it is suggested by Europeans and Americans that our religion and philosophy are pessimistic—the latest suggestion is to be found in Lord Ronaldshay's "India—a Bird's-Eye View," a book which has been eulogistically noticed in all the leading periodicals of England—and that is why as a nation we have fallen so low, then cannot we promptly retort by saying : " Well, how about the religion which you profess ? We do not see anything but pessimism there. How do you characterise the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament and does not Jesus say in the New Testament that this world is a vale of sorrow which you must forego to follow him ? Does not he predict the impending dissolution of the world and does not he consign the wicked to the roaring fire of Eternal Hell ? Is not the burden of Thomas-a-Kempis' Imitation of Christ Vanity of Vanities—all is vanity and is it not a fact that Mediæval Europe was dotted all over with monasteries and nunneries to realise the ideal lived up to and preached by Jesus ?"

The Christians will have to say in reply that all this is true, no doubt, that Christ was undoubtedly the Man of Sorrow, but the most important message of Christ is that of salvation and heaven. Salvation, be it noted, is not the same thing as our *Mukti*. It means life in Heaven for the chosen few by the grace of Jesus after the crack of doom. This is Christian eschatology. Till the Judgment-day every one must lie in the darkness of the grave and who is to be saved is a matter of considerable uncertainty. " The Kingdom of God is within you " is perhaps the most important message of

Christ, but there is very little of this teaching in the Church-Christianity of the West.

Here an objection may be raised by the modern Christians of the Protestant Church. They claim that the correct interpretation of Christianity is that which they have put on the Bible. The depression and gloom of Mediævalism, they say, they have shaken off completely. The exegesis of their theology they claim to be beautifully optimistic ; for absolute renunciation, monastic life and ascetic ideal have no place in their scheme and they go even so far as to say that asceticism or absolute chastity with absolute poverty is an imperfect, perverse, selfish and erroneous ideal of life. It is evident that the current Protestant Christianity is the result of a compromise with Science and Evolution on the one hand and Hegelian philosophy on the other. The latest compromise I am aware of is that with the philosophy of charge and *elan vital* of Henri Bergson attempted by L. H. Miller in his book "Bergson and Religion" published in 1916. Neither Hegelian reason nor Bergsonian intuition supports the ascetic ideal of life though Christ like an Indian *Sannyasin* was an ascetic of ascetics. With what other philosophy Christianity will have yet to come to terms is in the womb of the future, but that it has come to a very sad pass goes without saying.

If it be said that Christianity cannot be called a pessimistic religion because it holds out the hope of salvation and heaven, then cannot we also at the same time say that no more is our religion pessimistic ? For, the *summum bonum* of our life is the total extinction of sorrow (*atyantink dukhanivritti*) or the endless bliss variously called *Moksha*, *Nirvana*, *Kaibalya* and *Apabarga* and this is a much higher and far more cheerful conception than the Christian idea of salvation, because *Mukti* is not meant for the few arbitrarily chosen but it is open to all *now and here* who, through Free will, will achieve perfect mastery over themselves, since a man's *Karma* is his alone and *Karma* is not inexorable Destiny. As for Heaven and Hell, a true Hindu renounces them both.

I do not propose to say anything in this paper about a hereafter or the life after death, for my subject is Pessimism and Pessimism is not an eschatological question but a view of the life lived on earth by the natural man. An optimist says that everything is best in this best possible world and the

will to live is therefore good ; whereas the Pessimist says that it is a very bad world, being based as it is on the will to live arising from desire (*basana*) which must be quelled, for all desire except that for liberation from the tyranny of the flesh and that for spiritual wisdom leads to nothing but bitter misery. The so-called joys of life are all fleeting—they are a delusion and a snare. Joys and sorrows follow each other in endless succession. They form a vicious circle we must get out of. How it is and how we have got into it we do not know, says the Hindu, but we do know how to get out of it. The Meliorist says that the world may not be the best possible world but it is not so bad after all and there is no harm in regulated desire and moderate enjoyment, for the world is becoming better and happier day after day. But if we ask him what he means by moderate enjoyment he will not be able to give a satisfactory answer, for what is moderate for one is not moderate for all.

The Christian explanation of life and the world may not be consistent with reason but so far as attitude towards life is concerned there is no difference between Hinduism and Christianity. They are equally pessimistic and pessimism leads to total renunciation which is the goal of Hinduism and Christianity alike. When, therefore, the current Protestant Christian theology, seeking support now from Hegel, Science and Evolution and then again from the philosophy of change and vital impulse of Bergson and indulging in melioristic hope and aspiration, deprecates the ideal of asceticism and attempts to reconcile “the world, the flesh and the devil” with the kingdom of Heaven of Christ, all that we can say is that it is not the Christianity of the Bible but a tissue of sophistries deliberately designed to suit a foregone conclusion. Nietzscheism is more honest than this sort of Christianity. If you are frank you will have to say with Swami Vivekananda, a keen observer of men and manners, that Europe became Protestant and shook off Christianity itself. If the Catholic dogma is unacceptable, reject it by all means but why reject the soul of Christianity, the only true ideal of life ?

KAMAKHYA NATH MITRA

(To be continued)

COSMOLOGY*

SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA

IN the first place, you must try to forget your old theological doctrines and to follow more in the footsteps of modern science. You will find, as I proceed, that the theories of Vedanta are confirmed by the truths arrived at by modern science and, wherever there is any anomaly, you will notice it is the modern science that errs and not the wisdom of the sages and philosophers of India.

First : Know that something cannot come out of nothing. For every effect there must be a cause, and the effect is but a reproduction of the cause. The whole of the effect must be in the cause in a potential form, as in the case of the tree. The tree is the effect of the seed. The whole of the tree must be in the seed to come out as a tree. There can be no developed substance which was not previously in the cause.

Then, again, there is no such thing as destruction. What is destruction ? Destruction is going back to the primary cause. As, for example, an earthen vessel, when it is destroyed, goes back to its cause—the earth. Therefore, there can be no beginning. There is the eternal chain of cause and effect—the seed coming out of the tree and the tree coming out of the seed and again going back to the seed. This is going on cyclically and periodically with this universe as a whole. We say the universe is destroyed when it goes back to its primary cause, and that there is the beginning of creation when from that cause the universe again comes out ; so there we affirm what is really the beginning of a cycle ; and thus it is going on, cyclically and periodically.

Now, again, there are two views on this point. One is that the whole universe goes back to its cause at one period of time. That there comes a time when the entire cosmos returns to its primal cause, and that is what is known as the dissolution of the universe. The other view is that the universe as a whole does not go back to its cause at the same period of time, that a part of the universe, say this solar system of ours, may go back to its cause, may be dissolved, but other systems may be existent ; that when the solar system goes

*Notes of a class talk at the Hindu Temple, San Francisco, U. S. A.

back to the cause there may be projected other systems. Professor Huxley speaks truly in his *Evolution and Ethics* of the manifestation of cosmic energy alternating between phases of potentiality (dissolution) and phases of explication (creation). "It may be," he says, "as Kant suggests—every cosmic magma predestined to evolve into a new world has been the no less predestined end of a vanished predecessor." This idea is also found in the Vedantic doctrine, when it says that there is no such thing as an absolutely first creation; the present universe is but one of a series of worlds which are past and of worlds which are yet to be.

Modern scientific research shows that the primal substance of this universe is not what has been known as scientific matter—that is, that which has mass, weight and inertia. Matter has been dematerialized, as it were, and reduced to something which is different from what is commonly known to us as matter—that which is perceived through our senses; and that substance is stated to be the ether in a state of constant motion. Now, Indian thought agrees with Western scientific speculation when it says that matter does not really (that is permanently) exist, but that there are certain forces which combine and recombine, producing the appearance of matter (what we sense and perceive), and that this matter is ultimately reducible to what is called ether. But it differs from modern science when the latter says that that ether is the ultimate substance. According to Indian thought, it may be the secondary or tertiary state, but ether is not the primordial substance itself. You must remember that at this point science has gone beyond its proper scope and method and has trespassed upon metaphysics when it theorises to the effect that the ultimate substance is the ether which in turn is made up of electrons. At this point, science has really entered into metaphysical speculation and we must examine this from the metaphysical standpoint. It says that ether is made up of electrons. Now, there are these air electrons floating in the ether and the ether is composed of these electrons, but the difficulty arises here—what fills the space between two electrons? If you say there is some still finer substance which fills up the interspace, the same question reappears, and then we fall into the logical fallacy of *regressus ad infinitum*—we do not arrive at any conclusion whatsoever. So, Indian thought recognises that there must be a primordial substance—the first cause from

which everything has come—molecules, electrons, atoms, force, thought, mind, intellect, gross matter and all their combinations. (It is startling to find the Indian sages declaring ages ago that mind is a subtle form of what is known to us as matter. And this is exactly what modern science is trying to prove—that mind is as much a product of the same substance as the body). There must be a primordial substance from which everything has come out and this substance is known to us as Nature (*Prakriti*) but the more scientific term for it is *Avyakrita* (undifferentiated Nature), the nature of which is described as the equilibrium of three forces : *Tamas*—attraction, *Rajas*—repulsion, and *Sattwa*—the balance of these two. Now, these three forces compose the primal substance—the *Avyakrita*, or the undifferentiated Nature ; and when these three forces are in equilibrium, there is no creation, no projection, no manifestation. (*Manifestation* would be the more philosophical term, not creation. A tree is not *created* from the seed but *manifested* from the seed). So, when there is this equilibrium, there is that undifferentiated mass—no manifestation, no projection. Then, when the balance of these three forces is disturbed, there is manifestation—the whole universe is evolved. The first manifestation is said to be the *Mahat*, or universal intelligence. Now, we have a mistaken idea of what intelligence is. We associate it with Spirit. But here the universal intelligence that is spoken of is not the Spirit. The Spirit is *Intelligence itself* and not what we see manifested in this universe. The thought or intelligence that is manifested in and through us is not *Intelligence itself*, because it is always associated with the brain and that we can understand as being something gross.

The manifestation after universal intelligence is the universal egoism. Universal egoism again splits itself into two varieties : the sense organs and the *tanmatras* (which really can be translated as “thatness.”) European philosophers have translated the word as “the generals of the particulars”. The idea is, we cannot perceive through our senses these *tanmatras*, but it is through and because of them, perception is possible. There is the flower. The flower has to come in contact in some manner with the sense of smell before we can smell it. Now, what comes in contact with the sense of smell is the *tanmatra* (thatness) of the flower. These *tanmatras* are five—touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing (the

finer materials of the gross) ; and these again are the five forces, which combine and recombine in different ways and produce this gross universe perceived through our senses ; and through the five senses this gross universe makes itself known to us in five ways as smell, touch, taste, hearing and sight. Thus we see that out of these *tanmatras* has been produced the gross. And every material object is a combination of these five *tanmatras*, only there is a variety in the combination. That is how the universe presents itself to us in different ways. As for instance, earth, which corresponds to the subtler *tanmatra* *smell*, is composed of 1|2 smell and 1|8 each of all the other four *tanmatras* ; water corresponds to the finer *tanmatra* *taste* and it is composed of 1|2 taste and 1|8 each of all the other four *tanmatras*—and so on. Thus the various elements have been formed by the different combination of these *tanmatras*. In this connection I can bring out another point. There may be other combinations, other universes than this universe of ours, and they might have been formed of these very *tanmatras*, but they have been combined and recombined in different ways and that is why we do not perceive them. These *tanmatras* by themselves cannot be seen, but the Yogis (those who have developed a fine power of perception) can see them.

What is true of the macrocosm is true of the microcosm. Our intelligence forms a part of the universal intelligence and that has manifested as this individual egoism. That again has come out in two varieties, the organs and *tanmatras* and the *tanmatras* again have formed this gross body.

But *Prakriti* is said to be insentient. And we have seen that when the equilibrium of the three forces, *Sattwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, which compose *Prakriti*, is lost, then alone does the manifestation of the universe result. But how is the equilibrium lost ? *Prakriti* by itself, which is insentient, cannot produce changes. So there must be some sentient Being behind who is the unwitting cause of changes in this universe. And that Being is known by Indian philosophers as the *Purusha*. Here again rise different schools of philosophy which give different explanations. We shall take up first the Sankhya point of view. According to the Sankhya school of thought there are two external substances, *Purusha*, or Spirit, and *Prakriti*, or matter. *Purusha* is changeless, the eternal witness, and because of its nearness to *Prakriti*, the

Prakriti changes and produces this manifold universe. Thus *Purusha* is not the real primary cause, but the unwitting cause of the universe.

The question arises in this connection : How can Spirit act on matter when they are two separate, unlike entities ? To which the Sankhya gives the reply by an analogy : There are the blind man and the lame man. The lame man can get on the shoulders of the blind man and together they can journey on. The blind man by himself cannot walk far, nor can the lame man. But when the lame man gets on the shoulders of the blind man, the blind man can easily reach the end of the journey. The *Purusha* is inactive, but sentient, and because of its nearness to *Prakriti*, *Prakriti* can act. An iron ball when put into the fire assumes the power of burning, but the burning power belongs to the fire and not to the ball. These are analogies and do not solve the real difficulty. For the *Purusha* or spirit is defined as Infinite, Omnipotent and Omnipresent. If that be so, then how can there be two substances ? The matter, if it has an independent and separate existence, will limit the infinitude of the Spirit.

Here Vedanta comes to the rescue. In Vedanta, again, there are two different standpoints and the problem is solved from these two standpoints which really do not contradict each other, but may be said to be the lower and the higher truth. As Swami Vivekananda used to say : " We never travel from untruth to truth, but from truth to higher truth, " and that is very true. Let us take up first the lower standpoint. We have the two substances, *Purusha*, or Spirit, and *Prakriti*, or cause of the universe. It is God that has become all this and really not two separate substances, but two in one.

The *Prakriti*, or what we call matter, is not really separate from the Spirit, but is the *Maya*, the Divine Power of God. As the burning power of fire cannot be separated from fire, so this power which manifests itself as this manifold universe cannot be separated from God to Whom the Power, or *Prakriti*, belongs. In one of the Upanishads we read, " As a spider projects out and takes in the thread ; as hairs grow out on man's body, so has this universe come out of Him. " Thus God becomes the efficient cause as well as the material cause of the universe. It is God that has become all this and there is nothing outside of or beyond Him. This view is also held by the Tantra philosophy which is another aspect of

Vedanta. And Hindus worship God, in the aspect of creative energy, as the Divine Mother. The *Maya*, or the creative energy, is the Divine Mother; and this energy is the energy of God. Thus *Purusha* and *Prakriti* represent the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God. They are not separate, but form the two aspects of the Absolute. The question may arise in this connection that if it is the Divine Mother Who has become all this, why is it we do not see the intelligence, the consciousness, present everywhere and in every object? For, is She not *Chinmayee*—Consciousness Herself? The answer is, it is not true that there is no consciousness present everywhere, even in what we call dead matter, but we do not see and feel its presence because of our crude way of observation. Western thought marked a sharp line of distinction between what is organic, or living, and what is inorganic, or dead. "An absolute gulf was created between the two—the greatest of all gulfs, namely, that between what is dead and what is alive. Organisation means more or less systematic arrangement of relatively separate parts in a whole suited to fulfil any sort of function. Organism in biology means a discrete body of which the essential constituent is living protoplasm. The term originally indicated the recognition of organisation as essential to life and as opposite to unorganised or dead matter. But recent researches of modern science have removed the gulf between organic and inorganic, living and non-living. All matter is now held to be in a state of organisation. It is said to be constituted of complicated structural elements, and the molecules and atoms are described in fact as miniature solar systems."* And so it has been said by Le Bon in his *Evolution of Matter*, "As soon as we lift the veil of appearances, matter so inert in its outward aspect is seen to possess an extremely complicated organisation and an intense life."

"Organisation exists in both cases, though more and more complex in what we call living substance. Consciousness is the essence of both, though so obscured in what is called inorganic matter that the latter is deemed unconscious. Yet, even here, science corrects crude observation. Thus irritability was supposed to be a fundamental property of living substance. It is, however, now known that 'non-living' matter reacts to external stimuli. Thus its reaction to acid is a

**Power as Life* by Sir John Woodroffe.

spasm. For knowledge in this direction we are indebted, as all know, to the experiments of the distinguished Indian scientist Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose. By taking as a basis the fact that the most general and delicate sign in life is the electric response, he has shown that this electric response is the reaction of an obscured form of consciousness in matter. He has thus shown by his ingenious experiments the fatigue of metals and its disappearance after rest and the action on these same metals of excitants, depressants and poisons."*

Thus the truths arrived at by the Upanishadic sages in their ecstatic vision is now proved and demonstrated by the modern science. Those of you who have read the life of Sri Ramakrishna, the great Master, will remember how he used to see consciousness present everywhere. He would say, "Divine Mother is peeping through Her veil, as it were, from everywhere, from every nook and corner."

Next we shall consider the subject from another standpoint. This is the monistic standpoint. This philosophy is based on the supersensuous or superconscious experience where all divergence or manifoldness has vanished like a wild dream and there lie in undifferentiated mass the experiencer, the experience and the experienced. There is but one existence and that is the Absolute, or Brahman, and that one *appears* as many because of our ignorance. In reality, the many, the universe, does not exist, but it is superimposed on the one Reality.

As I have already said, this philosophy is based on experience, on the supersensuous experience. There are four states of consciousness from which we experience the one truth. These four states are *Jagrat* (waking), *Swapna* (dreaming), *Sushupti* (dreamless sleep) and *Turiya* (the super-conscious). In our ordinary plane of consciousness, that is, in our waking state, we experience this sense-world; the universe is then super-imposed on the Truth—the Brahman, as in ignorance we mistake the rope for a snake. In the dream state the dream world is experienced. But we know that the dream state is a dream. It has no reality. But as long as we are dreaming, the dream world is real to us. When we wake up from the dream, then it is that we realise it was a dream. The waking state contradicts the dream state. And the waking

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state has a greater reality to us in our life than the dream state. In the dreamless sleep state, we do not experience anything, though there is the consciousness present. We know when we wake up that we had a sound sleep and had a good rest. If the consciousness had not been present, we would not have known that. Then there is the *Turiya* state, or the superconscious experience, where lie in undifferentiated mass the knower, the knowledge and the object of knowledge. There we experience one Absolute Existence. Brahman and Brahman alone exists. We experience the truth in its *Swarupa* or the *propria forma*. And that experience contradicts all other states of experience, and that has a greater reality than even our waking state, for there the purpose of life is achieved by the realisation of Absolute Existence, Absolute Knowledge and Absolute Bliss.

Thus the highest truth is that there is but one impartite Absolute Existence and there is no creation, no manifestation of the universe. The universe is all *Maya*, an illusion—a prolonged dream, as it were.

This can also be shown from the standpoint of metaphysical speculation. Let us take for granted that there are two substances—Spirit and Matter. Now, what is *matter*? The Thing-in-itself, as Kant says, is unknown and unknowable. Let us represent the Thing-in-itself as X. What is known to us as matter is really this X *plus* mind. And what is Spirit? Take the individual self. What knowledge have we of our own self? When I say I am Mr. So and so, I really do not know my real self. In this case also, the Thing-in-itself is unknown and unknowable. Let us represent this Spirit, the Thing-in-itself, as Y. Then what we know as Spirit is really Y *plus* mind. Thus our whole universe represents X *plus* mind and Y *plus* mind—X *plus* mind representing the external world and Y *plus* mind representing the internal world. And both X and Y are the unknown quantities. What makes them appear different? Time, space and causation. What are time, space and causation? They are the modes of the mind. It is really the mind that makes the difference between the external and the internal. Take away mind—what remains? X and Y. Both these are unknown quantities and both are *qualityless*. Had they possessed qualities, they would not remain unknown and unknowable. And when both are qualityless they must be identical. What

makes the difference between the one and the other ? The different qualities. And when both are qualityless they are identical. Hence X is equal to Y, that is, what you call matter is the same as Spirit. It is the Spirit and Spirit alone that exists and which *appears* to us, due to our ignorance, as this manifold universe. Know That and be free—that is the Ideal of Life.

SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA

SPIRITUAL REGENERATION*

SWAMI TRIGUNATITANANDA

A world of higher guidance, higher and higher life, greater and greater results—, such is God's world. The All-powerful is in every object and condition, and this world is a changing world, never stationary. We want things to be stationary, but change is a sign of improvement, a condition of growth.

We are talking of the place and conditions in which we are now, and change here is a main characteristic. If we do not change, we do not progress.

There are different processes or methods of change. Certain changes are not proper, but change does not mean going back. Even if unfavourable, that change must produce some good, if we but know how to receive it. We make a change when things are not satisfactory, and in order to have greater satisfaction, we must have greater change. Greater the change, physically, mentally, socially, greater the results.

Those who are the most ambitious make the greatest change ; they will always be up-and-doing—they will always have certain manners, customs, practices. The spiritual change is the highest change. Being spiritual is something extraordinary ; it doesn't mean undutiful, senseless, but beyond common sense. 'Spiritual' means 'higher, still higher.'

And in order to make spiritual change, we have to make everything spiritual. We are to begin with the body : our manners, taste, and everything else have to be changed. Spiritual life entails the least expenditure of time and energy to produce successful result, as opposed to worldliness which takes all time and energy and gives nothing in turn.

So we find out some means by which to save energy and time, and yet get sufficient result. It may be away from the ordinary course of life and may not be liked by others. But those who have great ambition for it, and are aware of the purpose of life, cannot but make great changes which may not be liked by others.

*From the notes of a lecture delivered by the Swami in the Hindu Temple, San Francisco, California, U S. A. The Swami was a direct disciple of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna. He was preaching Vedanta in America for twelve years, from 1903 to 1915.

They keep in mind their one object, and work on accordingly. They generate (not produce in an ordinary manner) a certain force ; to generate is to bring in a certain force ; to regenerate is to do it over again. We led our life so many years without satisfaction, so we begin again, make a thorough change ; that is regeneration.

Such a change is necessary for accomplishing great results. By the law of regeneration which is not only scriptural but also scientific, we are sure to progress. By ordinary methods we fail ; so we turn to the use of higher methods and to the making of complete change and it will be shown by the result.

Regeneration cannot manifest itself unless internal life is changed. It is in the life ; all ideas, all impressions, are to be changed. By the law of regeneration, a sick person can be well ; a poor person wealthy ; an unsuccessful one successful ; an ignorant one wise ; a useless person useful. Because it is not a material law, but a law of higher life, of ideas of greater and higher duty.

The mortal can be immortal, man can be god by regeneration ; earth can be changed into heaven by regeneration. But we have to generate the spiritual force, and we can do it if we fulfill the law. In worldly affairs one may not be successful, but in spiritual affairs he can do any and every thing.

The spiritual people can be worldly ; they know what worldliness is, more than even worldly people, through the law of regeneration. But they do not want to be worldly. Spiritually regenerated people are universal, never narrow or limited. Their power and vision are universal.

Regeneration in the beginning makes one appear negligent to the world ; but it is not really so. He is preparing to conquer and rule it. He knows more than others ; he is in the world, yet outside, for his vision is so large.

The law of regeneration is necessary for the poor and the ignorant. And he who is "poor in spirit" will be great. But if, from the beginning, we are so ignorant or foolish as to think we have learnt, and known enough, there is no road for us ; there is nothing but darkness.

But those who are ignorant and unwise, can go through spiritual discipline and get the result. But they will have to bear two things in mind : first, that they are of no use,

no value without regeneration ; secondly, that they cannot be of real value unless they realise the Truth.

We came ignorantly, live ignorantly and pass ignorantly. But for those who realize the higher Truth, their lives will be transformed into higher lives.

In order to be regenerated, we must go through a cleansing process of spiritual discipline, and take up those ideas which do not satisfy the world, but are above it. Then we can live a regenerated, spiritual life.

The spiritual life is not expensive, nor is it offensive to the world : it is most economical, most necessary for this world. In the arduous task of building up the spiritual life, there is no prescribed rule ; each person must follow his or her own method.

But even the severe discipline through which he passes will be made easy through perseverance and determination ; and perseverance and determination come from the amount of earnestness of the aspirant. If our object be great, great will be our determination.

Regeneration comes when all material means have been exhausted and have failed. A patient, about to pass away, is left to the mercy of God : he can never be saved in any way but the divine way. That is spiritual culture. It must be effective. If anything can be effective, it is spiritual.

Material things may succeed, but are not lasting ; failure will be coming in the wake of success. But in spiritual culture, even a little effort brings success ; it never fails, it is never lost. If, in the material world, there is success, how much greater should it be in the spiritual ! Spiritual methods cannot fail, cannot but bring in success, there will be no chance of failure. Spiritual success is simple, pure, perfect, infinite, unmixed.

So we must go through spiritual discipline in our life. Those who have any desire for spiritual life must try for regeneration. If immense be the mind-force which rises from control of material things, then how much more potent must be the spiritual force which originates from spiritual life.

That life which has passed through spiritual regeneration will last for ever. It is of the spirit, and not subject to destruction or decay. The law of physical regeneration is the law of physical change, but the law of spiritual regeneration brings about thorough change of human life.

By the law of change, a substance may lose its value : diamond is converted into charcoal, gold into ashes ; but we do not want that backward change. By spiritual regeneration charcoal is made a diamond, and ashes gold : the lower the higher.

The world would have been destroyed if there were not spiritual people who had discovered the law happiness and misery, and the higher laws of man's life. We have not to borrow from any source or depend upon the law of heredity or transmission, or upon teachers. Any ordinary man can rise to divinity on earth, if he chooses : that is man's regeneration. Shall we sanguinely hope we may follow the spiritual law and make our life more satisfactory and more useful to the world ?

The Law is in God and God in Law ; the All-intelligent, All-pervading God knows the desire of the heart of the earnest seeker of Truth, and will surely guide him. One who wants to have spiritual regeneration will be guided by the Law. Law is perfect justice. If we have faith, we can establish our relationship with God.

SWAMI TRIGUNATITANANDA

BUDDHA AS A LIGHT OF THE WORLD

SWAMI GHANANANDA

I

THOUGH a good deal of our information about Buddha and Buddhism has come down to us through traditions from generation to generation for the last twenty-five centuries, we owe the legacy of a correct knowledge of the historical facts to the earnest and sincere pioneers who have done their labour of love in history, in archæology, in iconography, and in literature. More avenues for research and study may open up in the future and more light may be thrown on the personality and teachings of Buddha and his movement. But one can confidently assert that any work done in the future can only augment the lustre of the Light of Asia, not diminish it but endow us with a better vision of its glory, and justify our calling Buddha not merely the Light of Asia but a Light of the World.

Buddha is indeed a leading Light of the World, a great Saviour of Humanity. There is a peculiar charm in his personality and teachings which casts a spell over all mankind ; there are particular elements in the religion he taught which appeal to all religions, all nations, all sects, and all men. He is accepted and followed not only in India, China, Tibet, Siam, Japan, Ceylon, and Central Asia, but also in Siberia and Swedish Lapland, and his influence is felt throughout the whole civilised world at the present day : his noble thoughts might have crossed the Atlantic and the Pacific and travelled over to the eastern and western shores of far-off America, had it been given to a Columbus to discover it earlier than it was. What makes Buddha such a saviour, such a messenger from on High ?

II

Should the history of human progress be graphically represented, it would be a picture of ebb and flow, or rise and fall. Progress after progress is like unto waves of the ocean. One wave rises and falls, and another continues the onward march. On the crest of the rising wave is the greatest man in the world at any time, indicating the highest level to which the progress of man can attain in his country. Christ, Zoroaster, Confucius, Mohammed, and other great personalities have appeared from time to time on the crest of wave after wave of human happiness and progress. They are the great Teachers of Mankind, its Guardian Angels, its Beacon Lights. Not the least amongst them is Gautama Buddha.

III

The Sage of Chelsea raised the question whether the history of a nation is made up of the lives of its heroes or of innumerable biographies. Whatever view one may take—whether that great heroes it is that mould a nation, direct its destinies, and pilot it to its haven, or that every man or woman forming a unit lays a brick in constructing the edifice of national life—, it is a fact that heroes or lesser men express a power of synthesis, of building up, and that there are bound to be differences in the degrees of expression of that power which is but one and one alone. This is true also of the sphere of spirituality. Sri Ramakrishna observed : “ As a large and powerful steamer moves swiftly over the waters, towing along flats and barges behind it—so, when a Saviour descends, He easily carries thousands to the Haven of Safety across the Ocean of Maya. The Avatara is the Sun of Divine Knowledge Whose light dispels the accumulated ignorance of ages.” All those who are looked upon as Incarnations of God, Messengers of Life or Prophets of Humanity are several embodiments of the highest spiritual power and worth in the world in their respective times. It is their unique power that confers a rare value and significance on the words which fall from their lips. Many a pundit reads out to-day the very same Gita which Sri Krishna of yore preached to the warrior Arjuna in the midst of the battle-field, but what a difference in the effect produced and the light thrown on the problems of life and death ! Many a clergyman reproduces the very same Sermon on the Mount which was preached by the Great One of Galilee, but what a contrast between the value of the utterance of the one and that of the reproduction of the other ! In one case, a marvellous power spoke, gave an impetus to society and society heard and moved ; in the other, there is no such power and the effect is next to nothing.

Buddha too possessed the stupendous power which has moved the world. He had such direct realisation of Truth, such adamant faith in himself and his message that, when he delivered the latter, it burst like a bomb-shell upon society, and created a thunder which still lives in its echo, and created a flash of lightning which still lives in its reflection.

As almost every man sees the existence of a principle in and through a personality, and almost invariably associates the highest wisdom and truth with their best and greatest embodiments, an Incarnation is worshipped as God Himself. This is the significance of the homage paid to Christ by a Christian, to Zoroaster by a Zoroastrian, to Rama, Krishna, and Ramakrishna by a Hindu, to Mohammed by a Muslim, and to Buddha by a Buddhist. We find that to-day more than a

third of the entire human race worship the great Gautama, though he himself abstained from preaching either the Personal God or the Impersonal Absolute, and though such worship means a violation of his own injunctions.

IV

Powerful as his message was, and granted to him as the stupendous spiritual conquest of humanity has been, his personality was the gentlest, sweetest, and kindest ever known to history.

He was compassion incarnate. It was compassion which made his mind sensitive to the sufferings of the world around him, induced him to give up his wife and child and father, wealth and kingdom and position, comforts and conveniences and luxuries, and go out in quest of Truth, realise It, and preach It to others. Speaking of the supreme importance of Truth, he told Channa, his charioteer :

“ Unto this I came

And not for thrones : the kingdom that I crave

Is more than many realms—for all things pass

To change and death. Bring me forth Kantaka ! ”

Again, casting a glance at his sleeping partner at the time of his leaving the palace :

“ Wife ! child ! father ! people ! ye must share

A little while the anguish of this hour

That light may break and all flesh learn the Law.

Now am I fixed, and now I will depart

Never to come again, till what I seek

Be found—if fervent search and strife avail. ”

How many of the world's princes and kings could think and speak likewise in the name of compassion or Truth for their subjects and all humanity ? And how many can think and speak in the same strain as Buddha to-day ? An Asoka or a Marcus Aurelius may approach him in gentleness and kindness, but not rival him : he stands unique for his renunciation, his love, his sweetness. Surely the presence of such a personality to-day would contribute a million times more towards creating peace and good will on earth than all the Conferences and Leagues of the World put together. It is Buddha's compassion and selflessness that give a profound human interest to his great renunciation and teaching.

V

The different Teachers who have appeared in different periods in different parts of the world have given different messages to men to suit their needs. Sri Krishna taught : Do your duty in whatever station you may be placed by circumstances, but be unattached. Don't

avoid work, for you are bound to do it by your very nature. Be unattached to the fruits thereof and offer them, whether they are good or bad, to the Lord ; nay, not only the fruits of your work, but your whole and entire self must you offer to your Lord, that is the highest religion. The Messenger of Nazareth preached : Be ready, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Do not delay a moment. Leave nothing for to-morrow. Get ready for that final event, which may overtake you immediately, even now. Mohammed was essentially a preacher of *Islam*—the religion of submission and dedication to God ; and also of equality, or brotherhood of man, the brotherhood of all Mussalmans. We therefore find this equality practised more in the religion of Islam than in any other religion. “ The Sultan of Turkey may buy a Negro from the mart of Africa, and bring him in chains to Turkey ; but, should he become a Mohammedan and have sufficient merit and abilities, he might even marry the daughter of the Sultan.” And Buddha preached : “ Root out selfishness. Your wife, your child, your parents, your possessions—all these make you selfish. Selfishness is a form of desire, kill it, and put out your desires. Everything in the world is momentary and life a misery. Be free by rooting out selfishness by giving up desires.”

The strong ethical note in the message of Buddha has endeared him to the whole world more than anything else, and as all the nations of to-day can preserve themselves only by being ethical, good and considerate to each other, his message will be a great boon to them and his personality a source of constant inspiration. Therefore it is that harmlessness, goodness, purity, and selflessness are warmly appreciated by men at the present day, whether they express themselves through politics, social life or international relationships. Will the world respond to Buddha more adequately than it is doing to-day ? Will it move more towards the direction of this Light ?



DRAVIDIAN INDIA*

It was for long the fashion to give credit to all that is best in the ancient Indian civilization to the Indo-Aryans and consider the part played by Dravidian culture and civilization as almost negligible. This is probably to be accounted for by the paucity of materials in the past with which to reconstruct the history of Dravidian India as well as a tendency on the part of scholars to give an undue and preponderant importance to the study of Sanskrit and the Indo-Aryan civilization. In recent years, however, thanks to the researches of scholars in the field of archæology and the discoveries brought to light, the high antiquity and value of the Dravidian civilization is slowly being recognised, though the last word on the subject has not yet been said. That if the Indo-Aryan civilization had something to give, it had equally something to take from the Dravidian civilization, that the present Hindu civilization is the resultant of such an intermixture and not due to any one element alone, as it has been claimed to be all along, and that the Dravidians possessed an independent and original civilization and culture of their own long before the Aryans set foot on India,—these and other things Mr. T. R. Sessa Iyengar, M. A., M. R. A. S., F. R. H. S., Assistant Professor of History, Pachaiyappa's College, Madras, has endeavoured to prove in his volume on *Dravidian India*.

The first chapter deals with the date of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and with the political condition of South India during the epic periods. The author discusses the various theories as to the origin of the Indo-Aryan epics and eventually falls in with the opinion of Prof. Macdonnell as the most approximate one. According to Prof. Macdonnell, there are three different stages in the growth and development of the Mahabharata, the first belonging to the 5th century B. C., the second roughly to the 3rd century B. C., and the third stage roughly to the 1st century B. C., while in the case of the Ramayana there are two stages, the first belonging roughly to the 6th century B. C., when Valmiki worked up the current legends and tales into a single homogeneous production, and the second approximately to the 3rd century B. C., when additions were made to the original poem. The author here rightly deprecates the attempt of scholars to turn to these two epics to find materials for the reconstruction of ancient South Indian History, since the periods depicted

* Gleaned from the Indian Social Reformer,

in them are more modern than the student of South Indian history will hope to find, and remarks that the future historian of ancient South India will do well to seek for his material in the numismatic, epigraphic, literary, linguistic, traditional and archæological records of the Dravidian people rather than in the epics of Aryan India.

The second chapter is devoted to a discussion of the origin of the Dravidians. Of the many theories on this highly interesting subject, which the author discusses at length, the two that stand out pre-eminently are the theory of the Mediterranean origin and that of the indigenous origin. The upholders of the former theory maintain, on the basis of the recent archæological discoveries at Harappa in the Punjab and at Mohenjo-daro in Sind, that the original home of the Dravidians should have been the Mediterranean, because the Dravidian civilization of India bears striking resemblance to the culture developed in the Mediterranean area, while the advocates of the latter theory hold that the Dravidians are an indigenous race who had been living from immemorial times in South India. Mr. Sesha Iyengar, however, accepts the last theory as the correct one and as being in accord with popular tradition.

In the third chapter the author deals with the glories and achievements of the Dravidians and shows how the Dravidians had already developed a civilization of their own, long before the Aryan civilization was transplanted in their midst, and had established their title to greatness and glory in the field of commerce, literature and social organisations, etc. The author here corrects the wrong impression, generally prevalent, that Tamil is derived from the classical Sanskrit and proves that the Tamil language has an originality and a singularity of its own, independent of Sanskrit, as typified in the three immortal Tamil works of *Tolkappiyam*, *Silappathikaram* and the *Kural*, and that, though it has no doubt been influenced by Sanskrit so far as its vocabulary is concerned, the Dravidian dialects, in their turn, affected the sounds, the structure, the idiom and the vocabulary of Sanskrit. The last chapter which treats of the ancient South Indian polity under three distinct periods known as the Pre-historic period (from the earliest times up to 1000 B. C.), the Semi-historic period (1000 to 100 B. C.), and the Historic period (100 B. C. to 400 A. D.), throws a flood of light on the political and social conditions of South India during those periods.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

BHARATHA NIDHI [A Malayalam monthly : Published by P. Krishnan Nampyathiri, B. A. (HONS.), Vydika Karyalayam, Chavara, Travancore. Subscription Rs. 2-8-0 ; for students Rs. 2].

It was the idea of the Swami Vivekananda that, if India is to retain her spirituality and the Indian masses are to be raised and liberated from the shackles of priesthood, all the grand ideas of the Vedas should be thrown broadcast among the masses. Mr. P. Krishnan Nampyathiri, B. A. (HONS.) with a desire to carry out this idea of the Swamiji has begun the publication of the translation of the Rig Veda Samhitha in Malayalam through his newly started Malayalam monthly *Bharatha Nidhi* the first two issues of which have been sent to us for review. The publication contains the text of the Vedas, with direct translations in prose and notes based on the great commentators. From the third issue Patanjala Yoga-Sutras, with commentaries based on five commentators, will also be included. It is highly gratifying to find that a Kerala Brahmin himself has come forward to throw open the treasure of the Vedas to the masses of that caste-ridden province. We wish our young contemporary every success.

E. S. MONTAGU—A STUDY IN INDIAN POLITY (G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras. Price 8 as.).

The late Mr. Montagu, the joint author of the Indian Constitution along with Lord Chelmsford, has of late been very much in the public eye. This brilliant man, at the time he brought into being the Indian Constitution was subjected to rather severe criticism from those who should have known better and these have now been given the opportunity to properly estimate the worth of the great man. Messrs. G. A. Natesan & Co, the well known publishers of Madras, have in the short study before us rendered the task of appreciating the man at his worth all the easier. The publication is very timely just now when Indians of all shades of opinion are seriously considering the question of further constitutional advance. We heartily welcome the publication to the ranks of Indian political literature.

SREE KRISHNA'S MESSAGES AND REVELATIONS, by Baba Bharati. (G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras. Price 8 as.).

At the request of an American disciple of the Hindu Sannyasin Baba Bharati, who did so much to familiarise the American public with the great teachings of Sree Krishna, Messrs. G. A. Natesan & Co. have reprinted from the Swami's bigger book entitled *Sree Krishna* the chapter entitled "Messages and Revelations." Those who are familiar with the author's inspiring works will welcome this pocket-book of messages and revelations.

NEWS AND REPORTS

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, MYSORE.

Srimat Swami Sharvanandaji started for Mercara from Madras on the 26th of May last, at the invitation of the Vedanta Society, Mercara, Coorg, where he delivered a series of stimulating lectures and created great enthusiasm and interest among the people. From Coorg, he was invited to Mysore where also he delivered a series of lectures. At the request of the provisional local committee with Mr. Dharmarakshaka Banumayya as its president, Swami Sharvanandaji opened the Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama at Dewan's Road in Mysore on the 11th of June last. Srimat Swami Siddheswarananda has been placed in temporary charge of the new Ashrama and receives very substantial assistance from Srimat Swami Srivasananda who has been doing valuable service in several parts of the Mysore State by constant touring and lecturing for the past so many months.

Swami Sharvanandaji returned to Madras after his lecturing tour on the 18th June last.

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SRI RAMAKRISHNA MISSION STUDENTS' HOME, MYLAPORE, MADRAS.

The report of the working of the highly useful institution for 1924 is a record of very satisfactory progress. The most important feature of the year was the erection of a separate block of buildings for the Residential High School at a cost of nearly Rs. 1,25,000, which was rendered possible by the munificent help rendered by the Nattukottai Nagarathar Community. At the beginning of the year there were 109 boarders, the strength at the end of the year having been 125. The students were drawn from almost every district of the Presidency and represented all classes of the Hindu community. The ideal aimed at in the institution is to create an atmosphere where study is not divorced from practical life. Teachers and pupils are encouraged to take a live interest in the well-being and management of the institution and work together in close and harmonious relations. Particular stress is laid on the building up of character on the enduring basis of religion.

Pupils who fail to get through successfully in the ordinary course of studies are given training in handicrafts and an attempt is being made to give a *vocational bias* to the ordinary curriculum of the school. And to this end, carpentry, rattan work, knitting, tailoring, weaving and smithy are taught all boys undergoing general instruction in the school at stated hours. The management contemplate to further extend this side of their activity by erecting and scientifically equipping a workshop fitted with a lathe and electric power and it is hoped that their anticipations will soon be realised.

Srimat Swami Saswatananda accepted the Wardenship of the Ramakrishna Student's Home. The swami was doing splendid service along

with other workers of the Mission in the recent South Indian Flood Relief.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA, ALLAHABAD.

The report of the Sevashrama for 1924, which we have just received, shows that the institution continues to do the same excellent work which it has been ungrudgingly and in the spirit of service doing for the last fourteen years, in helping the poor and relieving the sick. During the year under notice, 16,749 sick poor were treated in the out-door dispensary attached to the institution, and they represented all the great communities—Hindus, Muhammadans, and Christians. The Mission has been working with quite inadequate means to cope with an ever increasing amount of disease in the capital city of an important province which is also a great centre of pilgrimage. The Mission has just a small building of its own where its stock of medicine are kept for distribution. Through the generous help of the public the Mission has been able to acquire a small plot of ground on which it is proposed to erect a small hospital. Even this, it is estimated, will cost approximately Rs. 10,000 but it is sincerely to be hoped that the appeal of the Mission which has been doing work in a purely unsectarian spirit and without distinction of caste, creed or colour will meet with generous response.

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION CHARITABLE DISPENSARY, BELUR.

We have great pleasure in reviewing the annual report of the Ramakrishna Mission Charitable Dispensary, Belur, Howrah, for the year 1924. For the last few years it is rendering help not only to the people of Belur but also to those of Sakoa, Uttarapara, Sreerampur, Ramrajatola, Baranagore, etc. Last year the number of patients from all castes and communities was 9,979 of whom 3,997 were new cases and the rest old ones. As Belur and other places in the neighbourhood are infested with a virulent type of malaria, regular and systematic measures were taken against it by some young and energetic men of Belur and we are glad that the attack of malaria was far less than in previous years, which will be seen from the fact that in 1923 there were 1,812 cases of malaria, whereas during the year under report we had only 1,371 cases for treatment. For the last few years, the Dispensary could not make any arrangement for treatment of Kala-azar patients. Last year a doctor Sannyasin of the Mission commenced giving two injections regularly every week. The result was fairly satisfactory. The number of patients treated was 33. Generally the patients are given medicines for two days at a time and if necessary diet and pecuniary help are also given them. We render our heartfelt thanks to the doctors who helped the dispensary with their advice in time of need and to the donors for their contributions in some shape or other.

The management of the Charitable Dispensary thank one and all those who co-operated with their work by giving either money or medicines, etc. They express their best thanks to Messrs. B. K. Paul & Co.,

who supplied them with the general stock of medicines as well as those articles which were required from time to time for the dispensary. As the Dispensary is a Charitable institution, which has been serving thousands of men and women in times of distress, any help in the shape of money, medicine or the like will be thankfully received and acknowledged. We fervently hope this appeal for help which the institution so richly deserves will meet with an adequate response. All contributions can be sent to :

The President, Ramakrishna Mission, Belur, (Howrah).

The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Mylapore, Madras, sends us the following statement of accounts of the South Indian Flood Relief work, after publication of the Flood Relief Report :

Date	Particulars	Receipts			Disbursements	
1925	Opening Balance ...	12,733	3	2		
Jany. 28	Amount reserved for printing charges reccredited ...	150	0	0		
	Amount received from Head Quarters for trainage to workers. ...	160	0	0		
Feby. 26	Subscription from Parthasarathy Swami Sabha ...	30	0	0		
May. 1	Value of Gold received from V. N. Swami ...	44	13	0		
May. 4.	Value of 2 unused cheque leaves ...	0	2	0		
Cheque No. C051994	Amount remitted to Head Quarters including insurance charges ...				160	7 0
„ 995	Postage etc., for sending reports, cost of paper & wrapper & miscellaneous ...				72	12 6
„ 996	Printing charges ...				60	10 0
„ 997	Auditor's Fees ...				35	0 0
	Total.	13,118	2	2	328	13 6
	Closing balance				12,789	4 8*
	Grand Total.	13,118	2	2	13,118	2 2

* Remitted to Head Quarters.

Audited and found correct

C. RAMASWAMI IYENGAR,
Secretary.

K. R. SUBRAMANIPILLAI A, L. A. A
Certified Accountant & Auditor.

The 90th birthday anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated on March 1st with usual fervour and devotion at the Hindu Temple, San Francisco, California. The morning service at 11 was conducted by Swami Prakashananda. It opened with a harmony of Sanskrit chants led by the Swami accompanied by Mrs. L. Burnham and Mrs. T. J. Allan, after which the Swami gave benediction, which was followed by a soul stirring song to the Divine Mother translated from Bengali by the Swami for the occasion and sung by Mrs. Allan with organ accompaniment. The Swami spoke on "Sri Ramakrishna and the Universality of His Message." His universal love, His all-inclusiveness and harmony of religious faiths were the dominant note of the discourse. The service ended with another song especially adapted for the occasion, followed by benediction. The evening service at 8 o'clock was conducted by Swami Prabhavananda, the harmony of chants and the same song opened the service. "Sri Ramakrishna, the Fulfilment of the Age" was the theme of the evening lecture. Sri Ramakrishna came "not to destroy but to fulfil." His life, the life that had preceded Him, nay, Sri Ramakrishna is the consummation of all prophets.

The death of Desabandhu C. R. Das has deprived India of one of her most glorious sons in a critical period of her history. If Mahatma Gandhi is one of the highest embodiments of her *Brahmana* ideal, the Desabandhu was one of the highest incarnations of her *Kshatriya* spirit.
