

# 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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VOLUME XIV]

JULY 1927

[NUMBER 3

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## PRAYER.

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विधानी धर्माणां त्वमसि सकलान्नायजननी  
त्वमर्थानां मूलं धनदानमनीयाधिकमले ।  
त्वमादिः कामानां जनानि कृतकंदर्पविजये  
सत्तां भक्तेर्वीजं त्वमसि परमब्रह्महिथी ॥  
अथः स्पर्शं लभं सपदि लभते हेमपदवीं  
यथा रथ्यापाथः शुचि भवति गंगौघामिलितम् ।  
तथा तत्तत्पपैरतिमलिनमंतर्मम यदि  
त्यपि प्रेम्णा सकं कथमिव न जायेत विमलम् ॥

Thou art the Mother of all scriptures and the regulator of all religious paths. Thou art the root of all wealth, and Thy lotus feet are worshipped even by the giver of wealth. O Mother! Thou art the primal cause of all desires. Victress of passions, Thou art the seed of devotion for the good. Thou art the consort of the Great Brahman.

Iron touched by the touchstone becomes at once gold; water of the road being mixed with that of the Ganges becomes pure. In like manner, will not my heart, greatly soiled though it be by many sins, become pure if attached with devotion to Thee?

SANKARACHARYA,

## SPIRITUAL TALKS OF SWAMI BRAHMANANDA

*(At the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashram, Kankhal, Hardwar)*

**T**HIS place is very sacred. Here it is not difficult to attain concentration of the mind. The very atmosphere is pure. The holy Ganges and the majestic Himalayas naturally induce the mind to become calm and meditative. The eternal sound of Omkara can be heard here. Having come to this place you must make the best use of these advantages. It will be really unfortunate if you spend away your time in sleep and idleness. Far better to give up your body in this place while practising meditation and austerities.

Human birth is for the attainment of wisdom and devotion and not for living and procreating like brutes. God is most manifest in the human body; try to grasp and realise this. Have you not heard what severe austerities the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna used to perform to realise the Truth? They all saw in Sri Ramakrishna a blazing fire of spirituality, and hence could do so much. It may not be possible for you to act like them. Swamiji gave away his very life for building up this organisation only with a view to give facilities to you all in your spiritual Sadhana. Try to realise the great love that Swamiji bore for you. In fact, he cut short his life by overwork out of his infinite love for you all. Don't be ungrateful to him. He had a great faith in Bengal. To you, young men of Bengal, Swamiji has left the charge of his mission as a sacred trust. Remain true and loyal to him. Sri Ramakrishna manifested himself to the world through Swami Vivekananda, and gave his message through him. Sri Ramakrishna is too great for the ordinary mind to understand. It is therefore that Swamiji has placed Sri Ramakrishna

and his ideals before the world in such a way as might be understood by the ordinary people. All blessed souls will have to come under his banner.

Read Swamiji's works carefully. And whenever you don't understand any point ask S.—and others to explain it. Swamiji has preached Sri Ramakrishna's ideals in a form intelligible to all. It is madness to try to understand Sri Ramakrishna except in the light of Swamiji's teachings. Read again and again the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji's works, and plunge yourselves in meditation. If you cannot fix your mind now, you will have to repent of it hereafter. This is the best part of your life. Make good use of it. Once you get yourself well established in the spiritual life there is no fear for you. Then you can turn your mind to any direction you like. Like a trained horse bring your mind under control. When this is done a good advance has been made. But take care—let not your mind swerve from the straight path even by an inch. When it wants to run astray curb it by all means.

Beginners should have a routine for spiritual practices with fixed hours for japam, meditation and study. With firm determination tell your mind, "Whether you like it or not, these rules must be followed." After sometime a habit will be formed, and it will be painful to remain without meditation. When such a state is attained it means you are progressing towards the ideal. Know that you are nearing God when you feel as restless for His vision as a hungry and sleepless man feels for food and sleep.

First get a taste of the Divine Bliss and become immortal. Then come what may, whether you are cast away in the street or placed on a throne it will be all the same to you. When the iron is turned into gold by the touch of the Philosopher's Stone, it does not matter whether it is kept in a safe or is buried in the ground,

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "Have the knowledge of Advaita in your pocket and act as you please." After attaining the knowledge of the Absolute or supreme devotion to the Lord, whatever work you may do will not bind you.

Religious life is full of obstacles. The Divine Mother does not easily release men from the bonds of Her Maya. To obtain Her grace one should pray with a devout and yearning heart. You have the whole bundle of Samskaras (tendencies) acquired in previous lives to overcome, and even in this life some new Samskaras are being formed and added. All your life you must be prepared to fight these Samskaras. The more you resist them, the stronger do they become. If in the midst of defeats and disappointments you can stick to your path, you will surely reach the goal.

There are two tendencies in human nature, good and bad. The former tends towards renunciation and the latter towards enjoyments. There is a constant warfare between the two. The success or otherwise of the one over the other determines the nature of man.

Finding innumerable means of enjoyments in this world men become so much attached to them that they forget that there is another side of the picture. They think, "No one can be sure of the future; so why should we not enjoy what we have at present? No body knows whether God can be realised or not, whether Eternal Bliss is possible or not. But to enjoy the world is within our reach. Why should we therefore give it up?" Consequently they rush headlong into enjoyments. But when bitter experiences teach them that enjoyments bring only pain and misery and not peace and happiness, they cry with disappointment when it is too late, "Alas, what have we done!" By following an unbridled life of enjoyment men become slaves of the senses.

## EDITORIAL NOTES

### Misunderstanding of Sankara.

Sri Sankaracharya—the great monistic philosopher and commentator—ushered in a new era in the religious history of India. He was the guiding spirit of the Hindu renaissance that followed the decline of Buddhism in the land of its birth. If the calculations of scholars are correct, twelve long centuries have elapsed since his advent and “spiritual conquest.” But the influence exerted by his philosophy, instead of diminishing, has been growing with the march of time. In the past Sankara had a greater following in India than any other Indian philosopher. And in modern times his system is gaining new adherents not only in India but also in foreign lands. It has won the great admiration of many Western scholars who have striven their best to popularise it in countries beyond the seas. And since the inauguration of the Vedanta movement in the West by Swami Vivekananda, Sankara has come to be the most widely known and highly honoured among the propounders of the Vedantic systems. But at the same time he has been unfortunately the most misunderstood of the Hindu philosophers, ancient or modern.

### Buddha and Sankara.

If the task of Lord Buddha was to fulfil the Upanishadic faith, that of Sri Sankaracharya was to fulfil Buddhism in return. As such it is no wonder that the great teacher of monistic Vedanta has been called a crypto-Buddhist by sectarian writers and preachers. This misrepresentation of Sankara is by no means a new thing. The Padma Purana—a Vaishnava scripture—goes so far as to make God Siva himself declare—“Under the guise of a Brahmin (Sankara) I myself have taught in this iron age the false doctrine of Maya which is only

Buddhism in disguise. This extensive, non-vedic, deceptive doctrine has been propounded by me with a view to destroy all beings." The passage is an example of how bigotry and fanaticism can manufacture myths and fables in order to discredit the teacher of an opposite school of thought. It also reminds one of the misconception which the "crypto-Buddhist"—Sankara himself entertained about the original Buddha and his teachings. Sankara mistook Buddhism for the atheistic schools of philosophy in the mazes of which the original sublime teachings of the Enlightened One were completely lost. And like others of his time, he ascribed the opposite systems of Buddhistic thought to Lord Buddha himself. That is the reason why he wrote in his refutation of Buddhism—"Sugata or Buddha shows his delirious inconsistency by propounding contradictory philosophies; or the object of his doing this was to delude people by means of mutually opposite doctrines." This is a clear case of misunderstanding. But whatever may be its cause, the great point of difference between later Buddhism and Vedanta was with regard to the belief in the ultimate Reality, as Sankara clearly states—"Buddhism wears a semblance to the Advaita, but it is not that absolutism which is the pivot of the Vedanta Philosophy." Both the original Buddhism and the Advaita Vedanta had for their background the teachings of the Upanishads which hold up the realisation of the Truth beyond all thought and speech as the highest goal of life. But later Buddhism forgot this transcendental Reality and degenerated into nihilism. This was the chief reason why it was re-absorbed and supplanted by the Vedanta which has ever remained the crown and glory of the Vedic religion and philosophy.

### The Truth about the World.

Sankara was not a mere speculator. He was primarily a seer of the highest type, who realised the Truth

with his unerring intuitive vision. His system of philosophy, unmatched for its metaphysical depth and logical subtlety, was therefore based on his direct experience of the Reality. He spoke of things as he saw and not as he imagined. When he declares "In reality there is no second; if there be any, it is nothing but the superimposition of nescience," he refers to the state of realisation described by him in detail in the Vivekachudamani—"My mind has vanished, and all its activities have melted away, by realising the identity of Brahman and the self." Just as individuality ceases to exist with the dawn of knowledge, so also the world. And Sankara exclaims with wonder—"Where has the universe gone, by whom has it been removed and where has it merged? It was just now seen by me, and has it really ceased to exist? It is indeed strange!" Again, when he comes down from the domain of the noumenon, he perceives the world with all its diversity; not as a reality but as a phenomenon having the Real as its background. By the vast majority of mankind, not blessed with the vision of the Truth, the world is, however, seen to be the only reality. Sankara—the synthetic philosopher—takes note of all these three "visions" seen from three different standpoints. If the world is real why does it cease to exist in the state of Samadhi? If it is really non-existent why does it appear to be present in another state of consciousness? Again, where does it come from? And what is its basis? Says the commentator—"This world with its manifold objects of enjoyment, enjoyer and so on has no existence apart from Brahman. By that element of plurality which is the fiction of nescience, which is characterised by name and form, which is not to be defined either as existing or non-existing, Brahman becomes the basis of this entire apparent world with its multifarious; changes; while in its true and real nature it remains unchanged at the same time, lifted above the phenomenal universe."

### Nature of Maya.

The devotee calls the universe the Leela or the sport of the Lord. To put it in plain words, he does not know what it is. The Jnani again speaks of it as a product of Maya—the inscrutable power of the Lord. He too frankly acknowledges that he cannot comprehend its nature. The agnostic philosopher, Herbert Spencer, means much the same thing when he says—“We are obliged to regard every phenomenon as a manifestation of some Power by which we are acted upon....But the criticisms of science teach us that the power is incomprehensible.” Indeed, the nature of this Power—the Divine Maya—is beyond human comprehension. Why and how does it produce a world so full of contradictions—of good and evil, happiness and misery, life and death? And why and how again, does it melt away with all its creation at the dawn of knowledge? None has been able to solve the mystery. But still there comes a time when it ceases to be, when the question of its existence or non-existence does not arise at all. As Sankara observes—“Maya is neither existent nor non-existent, nor partakes of both characters. She is the most wonderful and cannot be described in words. She can be destroyed by the realisation of the pure Brahman, the One without a second, just as the mistaken idea of a snake is removed by the discrimination of the rope.” Thus although we cannot know the nature of this illusive Maya, we can however transcend it. And beyond it, says Swami Vivekananda,

“There is but one,—the Free—the Knower—Self!  
 Without a name, without a form or stain.  
 In Him is Maya, dreaming all this dream.  
 The witness, He appears as nature, Soul.”

### Brahman—the Absolute Reality.

To Sankara, as it was to the Upanishadic seers, Advaita is an experience. As the result of the strictest ethical culture and spiritual practice, the aspirant



develops a new sense—the faculty of intuition latent in him. And with its help he sees the Truth as it is. Herbert Spencer is quite right when he says with Kant that nothing can be known in its ultimate nature, and that the Absolute Reality can never be perceived as It is, through the limitations of time, space and causation, which go to make up the structure of the mind—the chief instrument of empirical knowledge. But speculative philosophers know nothing of the higher faculties which reveal the glory of the Self, and which the Upanishads speak of in the clearest terms—“The All-pervading Purusha who is devoid of all distinctive marks, and knowing whom (every) one is emancipated and attains to immortality, can never be reached by speech nor even by the mind. He is revealed through intuition to the purified intellect.” Like a clean mirror the purified intellect reflects the light of the Atman. But there is also a higher state “when the senses lie still with the mind, and even the intellect works not,” when the individual is merged in the Universal which, according to Sankara, is “the Supreme Principle wherein there is no differentiation of knower, knowledge and known, and which is infinite, transcendent and the essence of Absolute Knowledge.” To call this experience a void or negation, and to brand Sankara as a nihilist is to misunderstand him and his philosophy altogether. If he is a nihilist why does he take immense pains to refute the soulless philosophies of Buddhism or the atheistic system of the Sankhya? Why again should he be so very particular about proving that the one omnipresent Being underlies all phenomenal things, and that “Brahman alone is real, the world is unreal and the individual is no other than Brahman Itself?” The idea of “nothingness” does not enter into Sankara’s conception of the Ultimate Reality. His denial of individuality and multiplicity is “a denial made on behalf of a deeper Yes.”

### Sankara and Practical Life.

Sankara is no dreaming idealist. He is a practical philosopher—one of the most compassionate world-teachers who “having themselves crossed this dreadful ocean of birth and death, help others also to cross the same without any selfish motive whatsoever.” If Sankara is very enthusiastic about speaking of the One without a second, he is also anxious to help others to realise It through the necessary spiritual culture. Superficial critics when they accuse Sankara of teaching anybody and everybody the “baneful” doctrine of the identity of soul with God, fail to note that the great philosopher is not prepared to allow a person to inquire into the mysteries of Brahman and follow the practice of Advaita, unless he has qualified himself for it by previously passing through a rigorous ethical and mental training. Like a true teacher he comes down to the mental plane of the student who believes in the reality of the soul and the universe, and insists on his scrupulously following the path of duty. Says Sankara—“So long as a person has not reached the true knowledge of the unity of the Self, it does not enter his mind that the world is untrue. Hence there is no reason why the ordinary course of secular and religious activity should not go on undisturbed.” “If you think that works lead to bondage and must therefore be avoided, that is wrong.” “Works are means to knowledge; hence one must exert oneself rigorously for these means.”

### The Path of Worship

The highest knowledge may be attained not only through the path of Jnana or analysis and discrimination but also through the path of Bhakti or devotion. With the sages of the Upanishads Sankara fully recognises the utility of Upasana or worship. His own life is a remarkable blending of Jnana and Bhakti though both of these have the realisation of the Unity as their ultimate

goal. If as a philosopher he speaks of the Absolute of the Advaita Vedanta, as a devotee he believes in the necessity of worshipping Brahman in His personal aspect. Like his Jnana, his Bhakti is of a very refined kind. And according to him the goal of both of these is a complete merging of the individual in the Universal, of the worshipper in the Godhead. "Some say, 'Lord ! I am Thine.' Others say, 'I am Thyself.' In spite of this slight difference the goal of both is the same." With the vision of a mystic Sankara recognises the great psychological fact that man wants to take refuge in an Almighty Being who can save him from the troubles and tribulations of life. Even the agnostic recognises this fact when he cries out in despair, "O God, if there be a God, save my soul if I have a soul !"

#### Sankara's Conception of the Deity

Personal God is a spiritual necessity with almost all religious men. But even this is too high for the common people who can begin their religious life only with the worship of symbols. It was out of this consideration that Sankara introduced Panchopasana or the worship of the five chief gods of popular Hinduism,—Siva, Sakti, Vishnu, Ganapati and Surya which, however, he looked upon as different phases of the same Godhead. Unlike the sectarian teachers, Sankara did not institute the worship of a particular god or goddess to the exclusion of others. True to the spirit of the Upanishads which he followed with a greater devotion than any other commentator, he held that each form of worship, if conducted in right spirit, has the power to elevate man, purify his understanding, and enable him to follow higher and higher ideals and courses of spiritual practice until he attains the *summum bonum* of life. Endowed with a universal spirit and a synthetic mind, the great teacher of Advaita could not make any invidious distinction between one god and another, but saw the

same undivided and indivisible Absolute at the back of each. Of Siva he sings—"Salutation to Thee, O the All-pervading Being whose form is the universe! Salutation to Thee who art of the nature of Knowledge and Bliss! Salutation to Thee who art known by the highest knowledge revealed in the scriptures!" Addressing the Divine Mother he says, "Thou supportest all beings, visible and invisible. Thou art the source of the light of wisdom. Thou givest us the power to understand the truths of the scriptures. Thou art the opener of the panels of the door of liberation. O Thou the abode of mercy, grant me Thy mercy!" Again to Vishnu he prays—"O Vishnu remove my egoism, calm my mind, control my attachment for the sense-objects, expand my love for all beings and save me from the ocean of worldly existence! Just as the waves merge themselves in the ocean, and not the ocean in the waves, so, Oh Lord, when all distinctions are removed, it is I that lose myself in Thee, and never Thou in me." Thus the system of monism as propounded by Sankara is both philosophy and religion. And the great lesson that we learn from a study of the life and works of the illustrious teacher is, as Prof. MaxMuller holds, "that there can be nothing phenomenal without something that is real, and that goodness and virtue, faith and works, are necessary as a preparation, nay as a *sine qua non*, for the attainment of the highest knowledge which brings the soul back to its source and to its home, and restores it to its true nature, to its true Selfhood in Brahman."

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## CONCEPT OF THE SELF \*

*By Swami Sharvananda.*

Though the Rig-Veda often speaks of man's attaining to different heavens by offering worship and oblations to different gods, the theory of Atman as a pure intelligent Being is not found fully developed therein. The utmost we can find there is the belief in a super-physical entity surviving the disruption of the body after death. For example in Mandal I, 164, it is distinctly stated that there are two entities in man, two birds of golden plumage on the same tree, one enjoying its fruits and the other an unconcerned witness. In Mandal X, again, a young soul's journey to higher and still higher heavens through the prayers of relatives is recorded—an incident reminiscent of the later story of Nachiketas. Beyond this and similar ideas, we find in the Rig-Veda and other Vedic texts no clear mention of the Atman. But the Upanishads and the Aranyakas are replete with disquisitions on Its nature.

The first mention made of the individual soul, later known as Jivatman, is found in the *Chhandogya Upanishad* which, while dwelling on the story of creation and the will of the one Supreme Being to become the many, says, अनेन जीवेन आत्मना अनुप्रविश्य नामरूपे व्याकरवाणि, "Well, may I enter into creation by means of this Living Self (Jivatman) and shall appear under different names and forms." The Jivatman is here considered essentially as a principle of intelligence and consciousness. Hence the earliest idea held about the Jivatman was as an intelligent entity, entirely separate from the corporeal body. Further, the ancient seers always made a clear distinction between the Atman and the mind, though it is difficult to-day to

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\* Notes of a lecture delivered in Mysore.

unravel the tangled thread of thought which caused this differentiation to arise. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* we find passages where the mind is called Atman and is said to see everything, to move all the senses and organs ; but even there, every statement clearly recognises the distinction between the mind and the Vijnana Atman (intelligent Self). The *Kena Upanishad* declares : "That which the mind cannot comprehend, know That as Atman." And the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, again, while noting the Antaryamitwa (immanence) of the Atman, emphasises that It controls the Manas (mind) though the Manas does not know It.

How did the Upanishadic seers avoid a confusion which has perplexed and misled many a modern thinker of the West ? The main reason, of course, was that they discovered the higher truths about the inner reality of man, not so much through intellectual effort as through introspection and intuition. By this process they easily felt that the Manas was as much a material object as the body, and hence not of the same stuff as the Atman. Again, the perception of changes produced in the mind by age or disease convinced them that the mind belonged to the domain of creation and was therefore distinct from the Self. The condition of man during deep sleep when the mind ceases to function, although the Jiva continues to exist, also considerably helped them in arriving at the true conception of the Atman.

The *Katha Upanishad* speaks of the Jivatman as being united with all the different senses, the mind and the body. It is, no doubt, the Bhokta or enjoyer and also the Karta or doer of actions. But it is also distinctly affirmed that these aspects are quite different from It, being created by It for Its activity and enjoyed by It through the traditional nineteen instruments including the sensory and the motor organs, the volitional and intellectual faculties of the mind, memory and the ego.

Again, the Jiva is conceived of as having five Kosas (Sheaths) enumerated in regular order in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*. It is also elsewhere said to possess three kinds of Sarira or body—gross, subtle and causal. And in the *Mandukya Upanishad* it is clearly and definitely mentioned that the Jiva passes through three states of consciousness. The Jiva is therein called Vaisvanara during the awakened state, and is described as Bahi-Prajna, i. e., having the consciousness of the external world. In the Swapna (dream) state the Jiva is called Taijasa, formed of light—and also Antah-Prajna, having the consciousness of its internal impressions only, from which it creates various objects for its enjoyment. In Sushupti or deep sleep, the Upanishad calls the Jiva, Prajna; for there remains nothing except a flicker of knowledge. While formerly there were awareness and things to be aware of, now all this multiplicity has disappeared. The Jiva exists “in the form of bliss only” without creation or enjoyment, without change, individuality or differentiation, and verily it goes back to itself: स्ंहि अपीतो भवति ।

The philosophers of India took into consideration the experiences of men in these three states of consciousness, which they accepted as true fundamentals. They also recognised a state where all concepts of external existence, of space and time were negated, and the consciousness of the Real alone dwelt. This is called the Turiya (lit. fourth) state where Chaitanya remains in itself. Consciousness is not a satisfactory synonym for Chaitanya; for the English word includes the concept of awareness, which implies something to be aware of. But Chaitanya is the pure principle of intelligence, apart from the faculty of mind or intellect. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says: आत्मन्येषात्मानं पश्यति—In the Turiya state the Atman realises its true nature which is Intelligence Itself.

Among the Indian philosophers there are different conceptions about the relationship between the Jiva or the individual soul and Iswara, the Supreme Soul. Some say that after creation, both remain separate, the difference being regarded by one party as Swajatiya (as between the members of the same species) and by another as Vijatiya (as between the members of different species). To others, again, both belong to the same organism, the difference being one of Swagatha (as between Anu and Vibhu—parts and whole). All souls are but different members of the same Cosmic Entity. Jiva and Jagat (world) are the qualities of God. And finally others assert that both the Jiva and Iswara are essentially the same, however distinct the appearances may be. Many passages for supporting all these theories can be easily found in the Upanishads. The Dualists have the illustration of the two birds with golden plumage though the birds are very probably meant by the context to be Antahkarana (internal organ) and the Jiva. In the *Katha Upanishad* the expression *Chhayatapayoriva* (like shade and light) is used to exemplify the relation thus supporting the *Pratibimbavadins* who maintain that the Jiva is a reflection of Iswara. The Visishtadwaitic conception of the Jiva as a part of Iswara is suggested by the idea of Antaryyamin—the Spirit immanent in the Jiva and Jagat, which are regarded as the body of God. But no passages can be met with in the whole field of the Upanishadic literature, which support the theory that in the Paramarthika state, in the Turiya level of consciousness, Iswara is distinct from the Jiva. On the other hand, there are numerous positive statements of unity : सोऽहमस्मि (I am He) ; ब्रह्मविद् ब्रह्मैव भवति (Verily, the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman Itself) ; तत्त्वमसि (Thou art That) ; नेति नेति आत्मा (Not this, not this is the Atman) ; सदेव इदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयं (Verily, in the beginning this one Being alone



existed without a second). The many-ness is only an appearance ; and the Jiva is no other than Iswara.

All this variety of arguments and view-points are found in the Upanishads, since they are the records of the spiritual thoughts and experiences of several ages and sages. They represent but different angles of vision and levels of experience. They can all be easily reconciled as but distinct stages in a gradual evolution of the Spirit towards One Infinity. Differences are inevitable and even necessary in the *Vyavaharika* stages of struggle, but in the *Paramarthika* level of consciousness, the Upanishads have declared the doctrine of Tattvamasi (Thou art That) in a most uncontroversial and unimpeachable manner. After all, as Mahavira said, in the physical plane of consciousness, we are all Upasakas, the servants of God ; in the psychic state we feel *aś* parts of the Lord, and in the heights of spiritual realisation, we all become one with Him who is the soul of all beings, who though One appears as the many.

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## M Y S T I C I S M .

*By T. S. Avinashilingam, B.A., B.L.*

Mysticism is a word very difficult to define. It has been described by an English author as 'one of the most abused words in the English language,' 'used in different and mutually exclusive senses by Religion, Poetry and Philosophy' and 'claimed as an excuse for every kind of occultism, for dilute transcendentalism, vapid symbolism, religious and aesthetic sentimentality and bad metaphysics,' while in reality 'it is the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order.'

In the popular mind, mysticism has always been associated with magic, producing in its initiates powers unknown to ordinary men. Its association with magic has given it a bad odour ; and this mistaking one for the other is nothing to be wondered at, as a study of both shows that all through they have used the same language, instruments and methods. Hence it is that so much of

what is real magic is described popularly as mysticism. While one set of people class it with the miraculous, another set, the so-called scientists look upon it as nothing more than a state of self-induced sleep or hypnotic trance.

No doubt the highest mystical experience and the deep sleep state have something in common in outward appearance. In both the states, the body loses all consciousness of the external world and the mind is turned inward. But we must remember this great truth of nature, that extremes look very much alike. When there is no light, nothing is visible to us ; and when there is too much of light, then also nothing is seen. When we are stationary and when we are moving at a very high speed, in both cases, we have the same feeling of stillness. In the same way, Samadhi and sleep being at extreme ends of consciousness, look very much alike. While the former is the manifestation of the highest Satva, the latter is the effect of the deepest Tamas. In Samadhi, the mind in its activity loses itself in the ideal ; in sleep the mind is suppressed without any activity ; one is a state of bliss and the other, a state of ignorance. As the Swami Vivekananda tersely puts it, " a fool enters into Samadhi and comes out a sage ; whereas from sleep he returns a fool as before."

As for the resemblance between the mystic state and the hypnotic trance, it is most superficial. They are different in their origin, experience and consequence. The mystic experience is the result of concentrated effort at attaining to a particular plane of consciousness, and is followed by experiences of that consciousness. It is not a blank or a void but an ineffable bliss that is felt in that state. On the other hand, hypnotism is the result of a weak mind yielding to the superimposition of the will of a stronger personality. The man under a hypnotic trance does not experience anything definite. He comes out of it forgetful of all that happened while the trance lasted. Only he feels weaker than before. Karl Kellsur, a great European scholar, writes after a deep study and careful observation: " Through the mastery that the yogi (mystic) attains over his thoughts and his body, he grows into a character ; by the subjection of his impulses and propensities to his will, he becomes a 'personality' hard to be influenced by others, and thus almost the opposite of what we usually understand by the words 'medium' or 'psychic object.' "

Thus it is clear that true mysticism is not the working of an abnormal mind or a diseased brain. It represents, on the other

hand, the climax of human consciousness wherein all problems are solved, and where doubts give place to conviction, darkness to light, and misery to bliss. In its pure form, it is the science of the Ultimate, 'the science of union with the Absolute'. And the true mystic is one who attains to this union, not the one who merely talks about it.

Looking about us, we find that diversity is the law of nature. In the animal world, in the vegetable world and in the mineral world, what varieties prevail! And in the human kind how many classes, how many groups, how many grades! Some are too lazy even to enjoy their senses, while others are solely engrossed in them. Some are devoted to intellectual pursuits while there exist as the very salt of the earth a few who deny themselves the world that they may find the Reality behind the all. This last class of people are not satisfied with the work-a-day world, the world of sense perceptions. They are tormented by the unknowable; they ache for the first principles and demand a background to the shadow-show of things. Nor are they satisfied with the world of the objective idealist, however sublime may be his universe of ideas reflecting the 'dream of its creator.' They surrender themselves in absolute love to the One behind the all and press forward through thick and thin seeking 'union with the beloved object.' Thus the mystic always lives at a level of experience different from that of ordinary people. To such a man, philosophy becomes a statement of facts actually perceived through an illumined consciousness. Ethics and metaphysics which to the common man are merely academical and intellectual are to him a great motive power for the awakening of the spiritual faculties. His experiences are not hallucinations of the mind or the intellect; on the other hand, 'it is a seeing, a hearing, a touching, a tasting, in fact a complete consciousness of reality.' Truth appears to him 'not in the subjectivity of a highly developed intellectualism only; it objectifies itself in his intense search for truth.' To him truth is as much a reality as the physical world seems to us. The fact that it is beyond the reach of the ordinary mind is put forward generally as an argument against the veracity of the mystic insight.

To-day we are progressing by leaps and bounds in the world of science. Should we deny the great truths discovered by Dr. Bose or Einstein simply because they cannot be perceived by our unrefined senses, or even while aided by the ordinary instruments for sense perception? Just as the masters of science have devel-

oped, ultra-sensitive instruments for probing into the world of sense, a Kabir or a Christ perfected the methods of attaining to a supersensuous vision. They were not content to be passive or theoretical, but they were intensely active and practical. It was not with them a mere running after supersensible knowledge. They realised the Highest Bliss being non-individualistic; they advanced with a firm faith in a loving God, and a personal self capable of communion with Him. Their glimpse of the Reality gave for them a complete system of life. Their aims were wholly transcendental and spiritual. They drew their whole being onward, always under the guidance of the heart. They attained to a state of union with the One, 'not merely as an attitude of the mind and heart but as a form of organic life.' They ask you whether you have the proper faith, strength and steadfastness to struggle on towards the goal undauntedly. If you have these traits, surely, you also can attain to the height of their vision.

Their experiences are not unique; they form the common stock of all mystics at all times and places. They have contributed not a little to the advancement of true civilisation and to the progress of the moral and religious ideas of the world. In spite of the differences of race, language and climate, we find a golden thread of unity running through the experiences of all these great men. Whether we look at the Rishis of Bharatavarsha or the Medieval Saints of Europe or the Sufis of ancient Persia, their teachings are in essence the same, as Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna put it, 'even as all jackals make the same cry'.

A study of the lives of these great men reveals certain distinguishing traits which mark them out from others. We note that their knowledge is not of this world, i.e., of the body and the senses. They raise themselves by a resolute, persistent and almost superhuman effort to a plane of intuitive knowledge and enlightenment. They elevate their mind by a process of constant and concentrated meditation to states, normally inconceivable, where the soul unfolds its immense possibilities. Advancing further, they come face to face with the innermost reality. The mightiest objective things are lost in the final consciousness, where 'man stands in the borderland of reality, gazing across the shoreless ocean of the Soul. The immediate consequence of such an experience is an inexpressible joy. The seers of the Upanishads declare again and again the same idea :—

यता वाचो निवर्तन्ते । अप्राप्य मनसा सह ।

आनन्दं ब्रह्मणोविद्वान् । न विभेति कदाचनेति ॥

'He fears not at any time who knows that bliss of Brahman without reaching which speech turns back with the mind.

The Christian mystics like Saint Teresa declare that such joy is beyond thought or speech and the Sufis echo the same experience. In that joy, the enjoyer loses his personality and in the intensity of the beatific vision, the body and the senses are forgotten. As a consequence, the mystic begins to see things in a new light. To them, objects of the material world lose their charm. He sees the vanity of all earthly possessions, and is no longer enamoured of the pleasures the senses can afford. Women and wealth, name and fame cease to attract him. Recognising the impermanence and unreality of this world he is no more attached to them. He directs his whole life towards the Eternal and Only Reality.

Now it may be asked, "What is the result of all mystic thought?" It brings about, says the mystic, the realisation of the transcendental unity of the universe. As the mystic evolves into higher and higher states of consciousness, he sees more and more clearly the true nature of things. Purified and ennobled by Shraddha (faith), Viveka (discrimination) and Vairagya (dispassion), he perceives the realities of life. The average mystic looks upon and worships the ideal as something outside his own self. But the most exalted ones, those blessed with the illumination of final realisation, transcend this idea of objective form. They lose their personality and become one with the Supreme Spirit. Thus it was that the great Rishis declared *Tat twam asi* (Thou art That); *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman); and *Sivoham* (I am Siva). It was with the same significance that Christ spoke, when he said, 'I and my Father are one'; and the Sufi mystic Mansur of the 10th century exclaimed 'I am the Truth.' Saints have again and again tried to describe thus the Indescribable.

'Quelling all doubts and misgivings, stopping the oscillations of the mind, exhausting the momentum of past action; stilling the body, calming the mind and drowning the ego, descends the sweet joy of Brahman in that superconscious state. Space disappears into nothingness, time is swallowed into eternity and tremendous bursting of effulgence annihilates the oppressive darkness of sense and thought. The world with its myriad bodies melts away—even thought is hushed into silence—and only Existence is.'

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# THE APOCALYPSE UNVEILED

*By Swami Prabhavananda*

Before we begin the actual study of this, the most mystical of the books of the Bible, a few words regarding Jesus the Christ spoken of there, will not be out of place. The writer of the book as well as the writer of the Gospel of St. John, has identified Jesus Christ with the Logos—the Word—or the Son of God.

What is this Logos? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." † Thus this Word is one with God. Philip of Alexandria, a Jewish thinker, has defined the word "Logos" as the "perfect type" of expression in the mind of God. According to Plato, before Creation, the perfect type of everything was in the mind of God. The Universe was the outer and visible expression of God. Before man was created, the first expression (or thought), the 'ideal man' was in the mind of the Creator. This 'thought' was the Logos, the only begotten Son of God.

The *Word* or *Son of God*, which has been identified with Jesus Christ (for in Him has that perfect type been expressed) stands for the Higher Self, or what is called in Vedanta, the Divine Spirit. This Higher Self is allegorically said to be dead and then restored to life. Jesus Christ is said to be dead, then resurrected. When the Spirit is encased in the sheaths of ignorance—physical, subtle and causal—and is identified with these, it is said to be dead; but when the knowledge of its true nature is gained, it is resurrected—becomes alive. Plato has expressed this idea thus: "Some say that the body is the tomb of the soul, which may be considered as buried in our present life." We also find the same idea in the prologue of the book: "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all

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\* At the earnest request of some students of the Vedanta Society of Portland Oregon, U. S. A. to explain the Christian Bible, the Swami has taken up "The Revelation of St. John the Divine"—the last and the most misunderstood book of the New Testament—for his Thursday meditation class. His interpretation of the "Revelation" the Greek word for which is Apocalypse, has created a keen interest among the students, and will, we hope, be of interest to our readers. The introduction appeared in our issue of April, 1927.

† John, 1: 1.

kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." \* The "clouds" referred to here are the Auric forces. The "eye" which shall see him, is the noetic center—the intuitive mind—; "they" which pierced him are the sense perceptions and "all kindreds of the earth shall wail" because they will no longer have any power over him.

In the following verse of the book, we find it plainly stated that God alone exists. He *alone* is the Truth. †

John—who represents the re-incarnating self or the individualized spirit (man)—has first to stay on the Island of Patmos before he receives initiation into the higher mysteries. ‡

The searcher of the Truth must be alone before any vision or revelation can come to him. Above all he desires solitude. In the yearning for the Highest, all desire for the pleasures of the senses leaves him, as does also the inner higher bliss; for the time, life becomes dry and barren . . . hence "Island"—isolation.

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great Voice as of a trumpet." §

When through the practice of deep meditation one attains to the state which is known in Yoga as *Kumbhak* (when the breath is suspended altogether), the first spiritual vision opens up. In this state, or Spirit, John saw: "one like unto the Son of man," and describes His features. This is the vision of John's own spiritual body (Sukshma Sarira). As the vision unfolds, John hears this Man (his own self) sending messages to "seven churches which are in Asia." ¶ What are the seven churches in Asia? Taken literally as seven churches existing in different cities of Asia, the messages are meaningless and purposeless.

The seven churches are said to be in Asia. Asia is the native land of John and therefore represents the body—the homeland of the soul. The Greek word *ekklēsia*—church—meaning an assembly or group of people, applies in the allegory to the nervous plexus or ganglion, which are seven in number. The seven stars (planets)

\* Rev. 1: 7.

† Ibid. 1: 9.

§ Ibid. 1: 10.

‡ Ibid. 1: 8.

¶ Ibid. 1: 11.

are the chief divinities—Mikael, Gabriel, etc.—representing the seven aspects of the Logos. \* The 'seven churches' (groups), named for seven Asian cities, each noted for some particular characteristic, fits in exactly in the allegory with the seven *Chakras* or centers in the body. Now for the first time comes the knowledge that these centers have to be conquered in order that the soul may win to the Highest.

These centers or *Chakras* in the body are :—(1) *Muladhar*—Sacral ganglion—Ephesus, a city celebrated for its great temple of Diana, the "many-breasted Mother". The *Kundalini* or the *Speirema* (the regenerative force) which is also spoken as Divine Mother in Hindu symbology, resides in that center of the body. (2) *Swadhisthan*—Prostatic ganglion—Smyrna noted for its figs. The Fig is a phallic symbol. (3) *Manipur*—Epigastric ganglion (solar plexus)—Pergamos, noted for its temple of Aesculapius, to which the people resorted for the healing of the diseases of the body. This particular center, the solar plexus is the seat of the psychic force used in all sorts of mental or psychic healing. (4) *Anahata*—Cardiac ganglion—Thyatira, a city celebrated for the manufacture of scarlet dyes—(allegorically suggesting the blood and the circulatory system in the heart). (5) *Vishuddha*—Laryngeal ganglion—Sardis—a name which suggests a flesh-coloured stone. The Allegory refers undoubtedly to the center in the throat—aluding to the laryngeal protuberance. (6) *Ajna*—Canvernous ganglion—Philadelphia, this city is repeatedly destroyed by earthquakes. Reference is here made to the sixth center. When the *Kundalini* rises to that center, the whole earth shakes, as it were—the world—consciousness vanishes. (7) *Sahasrara*—Conarium or Pineal ganglion—Laodica, a city noted for its "Phrygian powder" which is said to be a remedy for all sore or weak eyes. When the *Kundalini* rises to that center in the brain, there is full illumination and supreme wisdom. The third eye of knowledge is healed or restored to sight.

(To be continued)



## SARADAMANI DEVI \*

*By Ramananda Chatterjee*

The Hindu scriptures praise both householders and monks ; and they justly hold that the life of the householders is the basis of the other orders of life. It is not that either all monks or all householders should be praised or blamed. It is the God-given powers and tendencies of the mind that determine the kind of life God wants a man to lead and the works He wills him to accomplish. One's satisfaction or dissatisfaction arises from the consideration whether he is living up or not to the ideal of the life he has chosen for himself. We cannot judge a man's worth or success by the mere name or form of his life or the relative superiority of the life of the householder or the monk without reference to the individuals that live those lives.

It is generally found that the Sannyasins are either not married at all, or if married, they sever all relations with their wives, renounce them and leave their homes. Paramahansa Ramakrishna was a Sannyasin, but he married at the age of twenty-four.† His marriage did not take place when he had not arrived at the age of discretion or against his will. In fact it had his full approval, and it is recorded in his life that the choice of his bride was made under his own guidance. It is true that he did not live with her like an ordinary householder and in any physical relations ; but neither did he forsake her, but rather kept her near him and made her his true help-mate by affectionate instructions and personal example. This is one of the specialities of Ramakrishna's life.

But Ramakrishna alone was not unique. His wife Saradamani Devi also shared this quality. May be that Ramakrishna himself taught and trained her, but the pupil also must have had the capacity to assimilate and avail herself of the teaching. All pupils of the same teacher do not turn out good and wise; we cannot make as fine ornaments of a lump of clay as of gold.

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\* Better known as the "Holy Mother" to the followers of Sri Ramakrishna. The article is abridged from the *Modern Review* for June, 1927. It is a translation of a Bengali article.

Ed. V. K.

† Of course years before his initiation into the monastic life.

Ed. V. K.

The lay name of Ramakrishna was Gadadhar. "His affectionate mother and elder brother decided to have him married to a suitable bride, hoping to cure him thereby of his extreme \* indifference to the world and constant mental unsettlement." "They held their council in secret; for they feared that if Gadadhar came to know of their decision, he was sure to protest against it. But the intelligent Gadadhar found it out in no time. He did not, however, raise any objection. He rather took it as great fun, like a child enjoying a festival."

Messengers were sent about to find a suitable bride, but they returned disappointed. It was then that Gadadhar suggested the daughter of Ramchandra Mukherji of Jayrambati in the Bankura District. His mother and brother sent a man to inquire who brought hopeful news, and soon all negotiations were over.

Accordingly in the latter part of the month of Baishakh of the Bengali year 1266, Gadadhar duly married the five-year-old daughter of Ramchandra Mukherji. Gadadhar had by then completed his twenty-third year and stepped into the twenty-fourth.

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Saradamani Devi had seen her husband but once after her marriage, when she was in her seventh year. About six years after that, when she was thirteen years old, she was taken to her husband's house at Kamarpukur, where she stayed for a month. But Ramakrishna was then living at Dakshineswar and she could not meet him. She lived for another six weeks at Kamarpukur about six months later. But then also she did not see her husband. And then, three or four months after, the word came that Ramakrishna had come home and she had been sent for. She was now thirteen years and six or seven months old.

Ramakrishna now set himself to the fulfilment of a noble duty. He did not care whether his wife came to him or not. But when she did come to Kamarpukur he engaged himself earnestly in her education and welfare. "His great teacher, Tota Puri, knowing him to be married, had said, 'It does not matter. He alone is truly established in *Brahman*, whose dispassion, discrimination and wisdom are not in any way impaired even in the company of his wife. He alone has attained true knowledge of *Brahman*, who can look on

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\* All passages in this article which are within marks of quotation are taken from the Bengali book named *Ramakrishna-Iti-prasanga*

men and women with the same eye, perceiving them as identical with the *Atman* (the Soul) and behave with them accordingly. Those who make a distinction between men and women are far from the perfect knowledge of *Brahman* though aspirants to it they may be."

These words of Tota Puri now came back to Ramakrishna's mind and led him to put his long-acquired spiritual knowledge to the test and devote himself to the well-being of his wife. Whenever he felt anything to be his duty, he could not neglect it or leave it half-finished. In the present instance also he did not act otherwise. "When he resolved to educate his young wife, he did not do it in half measures. He saw to it from the first that she attained skill in the service of God, Guru (spiritual preceptor) and guests and in the works of the household and learnt the proper use of money. He taught her above all to live in absolute self-surrender to the Lord and behave correctly with all persons under all circumstances and in all conditions and stations of life."

The pure-hearted girl felt an indescribable joy in living in the divine company of Ramakrishna and being blessed with his self-less love and care. In later days, she often spoke of this great happiness to the women disciples of her husband. "Since then," she would say, "I always felt as if a pitcher filled with bliss had been installed in my heart. I cannot tell you how full I felt of that calm, steady and divine joy."

A few months later Ramakrishna went back to Dakshineswar. Saradamani also returned to her father, intensively conscious of having found a supreme endless happiness.

"The great lasting joy with which her first acquaintance with her godly husband had endowed her, kept her above the joys and sorrows of her daily life; but the world did not allow its flow unimpededly. For often the villagers would refer to her husband as a mad man, as one who roved about nude, crying out the names of God, and the village woman pitied and despised her as the wife of a lunatic. These though she endured them silently, went deep into her heart. Was he really so changed from what she had seen him? Had he really become what he was reported to be? Thus would she think and conclude that if the reports were true, then her place should not be in her father's house but by his side to serve and nurse him. After long and careful thought, she resolved to go personally to Dakshineswar to see him with her own eyes and act as circumstances required."

Some of her distant women relatives had decided that year to go to Calcutta for bathing in the holy Ganges. She now proposed to accompany them. When they asked her father for permission, he came to understand the reason for her intended visit and arranged to take her himself to Calcutta. It was not possible to reach Calcutta by railway from Jayrambati. She had either to walk or to travel in a palanquin but the rich only could avail themselves of the latter means. Therefore Ramchandra Mukherji started on foot with his daughter and party. "Saradamani, unused to such rough journeys on foot, fell ill of severe fever on the way and caused much anxiety to her father. He found further progress impossible and took shelter in a way-side rest house."

In the morning, however, Ramchandra found her completely free of fever and thought it best to proceed slowly, instead of waiting helplessly in the rest-house. She also agreed with her father. They fortunately came across a palanquin before they had proceeded far and engaged it. That day also she had fever, but it was comparatively mild. She bore it easily and did not speak of it to any one. The same night at nine the party reached Dakshineswar.

Seeing her arrive so ill, Ramakrishna became very anxious. "He arranged for a separate bed for her in his own room, lest she should catch cold elsewhere. She was cured completely in three or four days by proper treatment and nursing."

All these days Ramakrishna kept her in his own room and himself supervised her treatment and diet; and when she recovered, he arranged for her stay with his mother in the *nahaval*\*. Saradamani saw that Ramakrishna was the same as before and his love and affection for her had not changed. A great joy filled her heart and she devoted herself to the service of her husband and his mother. Her father went home after a few days rejoicing at the happiness of his daughter.

Ramakrishna also devoted his attention to the discharge of his duties to his wife, and availed himself of his leisure hours to instruct her on the end and aim of human life and its duties. His training did not end in verbal instruction. His method was to keep the pupil by his side and completely master his heart with his great love. He would then give him instruction and keep a keen and constant

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\* A small room, at some distance from the temple enclosure, intended for the temple music.

watch over him to see how far he was carrying those instructions into practice, and would correct him whenever he found him going wrong. He followed the same method with Saradamani. Ramakrishna was so careful about even trifling details that he said to his wife, 'When you get into a carriage or boat, get in first. But when you get down, get down last after seeing if anything is left behind.'

It is said that one day while shampooing her husband's feet, she asked him, "Who do you think I am?" To which Ramakrishna replied, "The Mother who is in the shrine gave birth to this body and is now living in the *nahavat*; even she is now shampooing my feet. Really, I tell you, I find you an embodiment of the Divine Mother Herself." Ramakrishna found in all women—even the most corrupt, the presence of the Mother of the universe.

"The Rishi of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* thus teaches in the discourse on Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi:—Because the Divine Self is in the husband, therefore does the wife love her husband; and because the Divine Self is in the wife, therefore does the husband love the wife."

During this time Ramakrishna and Saradamani used to sleep in the same bed. Ramakrishna had no consciousness of the body, spent almost the whole night absorbed in *Samadhi*. From what Ramakrishna said of those days it is clear that if Saradamani also had not been completely free from all desires, he would not have so completely escaped the taint of body-consciousness. It is doubtful if, without the noble and pure character of his wife, Ramakrishna would have reached the height of spiritual realisation that he did though it may be she appears even now rather like a shadowy figure behind the effulgent personality of her husband.

Thus passed more than a year. Ramakrishna found that his mind was not assailed by even a moment's consciousness of physical appetite and could not look upon and think of Saradamani as other than a fragment of the Mother of the universe or different from the *Atman* or *Brahman*. He felt that he had passed through the ordeal unscathed. He, therefore, arranged for the performance of the *Shodasi Puja* \* and worshipped Saradamani with due rites and ceremonies. It is said that during the later part of the worship she lost external consciousness and went into *Samadhi*.

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\* The worship of a young woman as the very embodiment of the Divine Mother.

But this did not make her proud or turn her head.

She spent nearly five months at Dakshineswar after the *Shodasi Puja*, during which she would, as usual, serve Ramakrishna and his mother and his guests by preparing their meals and doing other household duties. In those days Ramakrishna "used to be in constant *Samadhi* throughout day and night" and "signs of death would sometimes be manifest on his person" and Saradamani could scarcely sleep at night for fear of his going into *Samadhi*. When Ramakrishna came to know of it, he arranged for her sleep with his mother in the *nahavat*. After such a life of sixteen months she returned to Kamarpukur in the month of Kartik of 1280.

Saradamani Devi, being a Bengali Hindu wife, was naturally very bashful. She spent many months in constant attendance on her husband and his guests, but very few ever saw her. She would leave her bed at three, before day-break, long before any one was about, and return to her room after finishing her bath and other morning duties and would not come out of it during the whole day. She would finish all work silently and with extraordinary quickness long before others had risen, and engage herself in worship and meditation. It was marvellous to see how in spite of her habits and nature, she spent days in dutifully serving her husband in spite of all personal discomforts in an one storeyed house in Shampukur, crowded by strangers, where he lived for sometime undergoing treatment for cancer. "As soon as she learnt that his disease might be aggravated for want of a suitable person to prepare necessary diet for him, she hastened with a glad heart to take up the charge without the least thought of her personal comfort. It was she who bore the brunt of the responsibility of nursing him."

Ramakrishna passed away on the 13th Shravan, 1293. Saradamani was thirty three years old. I had heard that she did not put on the weeds of a widow on the death of her husband. In order to ascertain the truth of it, I wrote to a disciple of Ramakrishna and Saradamani. I received the following reply :

"When after the passing of Sri Ramakrishna she was about to remove the bangles from her wrists, Sri Ramakrishna revealed himself to her in the healthy appearance of his early days, and holding her hand, said, 'Am I dead that you are removing the signs of wifehood?' After that she never bared her wrists. She

always put on a cloth with a thin red border and bangles on her hands" \*

If all had this faith in the immortality of the soul, the world would be relieved of much of its misery, sin and suffering.

She lived for thirty-four years after her husband's passing. She herself passed away in her sixty-seventh year on the 4th of Shravan, 1327. The Bengali monthly *Udbodhan* of the next month celebrated her austerities, renunciation, steadfast faith, self-control, universal love and service, tireless activity, complete indifference to personal comforts, simplicity, humility, patience, kindness, forgiveness, sympathy, selflessness and other great qualities. The followers of her husband and herself used to call her Mother and even now refer to her as such. May the significance of this name be fulfilled in every way.

## THE IDEA OF PROGRESS IN INDIA

(A REVIEW)

*By Principal Kamakhya Nath Mitra, M.A.*

The *Hindu* of Madras in its issue of the 20th May has reproduced an article from the *Nineteenth Century and After* contributed by Mr. John S. Hoyland under the title "The Idea of Progress in India." The present writer read the article in the *Nineteenth Century and After* as soon as the English mail arrived but did not think it necessary to take serious notice of it. But now that the *Hindu* has given it such wide publicity a few words must be said by way of criticism. Mr. Hoyland is an educationist and a missionary of Nagpur and is also an apostle of the cult of infinite progress which according to him is the special feature of Platonism and Christianity. The culture of India, in his opinion, is lamentably lacking in the idea of progress and that, he asserts, accounts for her stagnation through centuries. The idea of progress, he thinks, must be transmitted to India through education if India is to rise once more in the scale of nations. The motive power, he believes, must come from the West. We are thankful to Mr. Hoyland for his solicitude for our welfare and we would gladly have accepted his suggestion if it could be proved that the idea of progress, as he

\* Bengali Hindu widows wear only a white piece of cloth without any coloured border. They do not wear any jewelry.

understands it, is supported by history and is scientifically sound. Unfortunately, however, his thesis is not well supported by arguments.

The present writer associates himself with the smart comments of the editor of the *Hindu* and proceeds to offer a few observations of his own.

To begin with, it must be said that there is nothing original in Mr. Hoyland's estimate of the civilisation of India. It is difficult to name the first man who laid down the dogma that the differentia between the East and the West is the idea of progress but the conjecture might be hazarded that it is Sir Henry Maine who before all clearly divided societies into progressive and stationary in his famous book *The Ancient Law*. According to him European societies are progressive and Asiatic societies, stationary. Sir Henry Maine was a profound scholar no doubt but his knowledge of the history of the East cannot be said to have been deeper than that of Professor Rhys Davids who in the closing pages of his *Buddhist India* refutes such arbitrary distinction and emphatically pronounces the opinion based on unimpeachable data that so far as India at least is concerned she has always moved like the countries of the West. Like the countries of the West her movement has been sometimes rapid and sometimes slow. It is also true that like Europe she has had her periods of stagnation and decay. The great fallacy of most Western scholars is to judge India by these periods alone. We might as well say that the West is stationary and even retrogressive by confining ourselves to the pages of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

The Unchanging East! The Immoveable East! We are tired of these parrot-cries. History gives the lie to these cheap generalisations. But, then, we refuse to believe in the theory of absolute progress. Our philosophy and scriptures teach us that the movement of the world is curvilinear, that the world moves in cycles—and we are convinced that both science and history support this teachings of our sages. The idea of infinite rectilinear progress is scientifically untenable. Huxley's conception of evolution is in favour of our contention. Nor does history lend support to the idea. It is a false philosophy of history that tells us that there is progress *ad infinitum*.

The most illiterate Hindu is imbued with the idea of movement which includes the idea of progress and his idea is more rational than that of Mr. Hoyland. He believes that the wheel



will come full circle in course of time. He believes that after *Kali Yuga* will come *Satya Yuga* again. He believes that Lord Sree Krishna will descend not once but over and over again to establish the kingdom of *Dharma* and destroy all wrong-doers whoever they may be. From the point of view of India; as she is to-day, this idea of progress has more pragmatic value than that taught by many philosophers of the West.

It is not possible within the compass of a brief article to review the Western philosophy of history from Vico downwards; but of one thing we are convinced and it is this—that the idea of progress in the modern Western sense is neither Platonic nor Christian as Mr. Hoyland would have us believe, for according to Plato the movement of the world is cyclical and early Christians daily expected the end of the world. Our idea of saving India is entirely different from Mr. Hoyland's Christian-Platonic scheme of education. We are Vedantists. We know something about Plato and Christianity too, and we believe that ours is the last word of philosophy and religion. If India is to be saved at all it must be through the message of practical Vedanta, boldly delivered by Swami Vivekananda to the proudest peoples of the West intoxicated with the exuberance of a mischievous imperialism and material prosperity acquired at the expense of the East. We have fallen no doubt in the scale of nations but the meaning of the so-called Christian civilisation is not unknown to us. Very well do we know what a shocking veneer it is. We reject it emphatically and mean to save ourselves. Hands off!

But does Christian Platonism really teach that idea of progress by which the modern Westerner so vehemently swears? The present writer has already said that it does not and let him support his statement by quoting the authority of the best representative of Christian Platonism in England to-day. The name of Dean Inge is universally known. He has written an arresting dissertation on the Idea of Progress incorporated in his famous book *Outspoken Essays*. Whoever has read it must be well acquainted with the views propounded by the learned Dean. According to him neither Platonism nor Christianity is responsible for the so-called idea of Progress which is the working creed of Modern Europe. It is the off-spring of this-worldly outlook and he traces its descent to three persons mainly, viz., Hegel, Comte and Darwin. According to him it has degraded Christianity, for Protestantism has allied itself with Hegelianism, Darwinism and Comtism. The Roman

Catholics in this particular, he holds, are wiser than the Protestants. Dean Inge, the leading Christian Platonist of England, is a believer in curvilinear movement. He knows that the kingdom of Christ is not of this earth but that is no reason why Christian Endeavour should cease. What does Mr. Hoyland, a Christian missionary, say to all this? Does not his Master say: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

The so-called idea of progress, the doctrine of evolution, does not affect in the least our conception of *Moksha*. It does not in the least affect the Endeavour of the Hindu so well known as *nishkama karma* (selfless work). *Atmano mokshartham Jagadhitaya cha*—For our own freedom and also for the good of the world—such is our motto. We, Hindus, are by no means going to lower our standard. We are never going to imitate the Protestants and alter our outlook.

The West talks so much of progress—but what is the meaning of progress? Is not moral progress the essence of progress? Now, can it be shown that the West has advanced morally? Does it stand to reason to hold that because Buddha travelled at the rate of four miles an hour and we traverse the distance of sixty miles within that time, therefore we must be more civilised than the great preacher of Nirvana? We do not intend to deprecate intellectual progress or scientific advancement, or physical, political and economic betterment but we do insist that everything must be subordinated to the moral aim. Science without conscience is an unmitigated evil. The talk of progress without morality is a provoking cant. What we say is this: Do your work with all your heart and all your soul but for God's sake don't be in a hurry. Because we believe in cyclical movement there is no fanaticism in our blood. We know that to work alone we have the right but not to the fruits thereof.

Mr. Hoyland thinks that Christianity stands for an all-round progress but is that the verdict of history? What does Gibbon say and Draper say? There are many again who think that it is the Catholic Church alone that exercised the tyranny of dogma but according to Bury, the famous historian, it is a mistake to suppose that Protestantism ever emancipated thought. Protestantism did nothing of the kind. It did but substitute dogma for dogma and persecuted as relentlessly as the rival Church whenever it could,

Mr. Hoyland says that in the case of Europe there have been periods of decadence and barbarism no doubt, but then there has been also an unconquerable capacity for recovery and herein according to him does Indian History differ from the History of Europe. The plain fact, however, is that India's power of recovery has not been less remarkable. She not only recovered from the invasion of the Persians, Greeks, Saks and Huns but absorbed them all. The Mahratta and Sikh powers rose over the ruins of the Mughal's throne and it is reasonable to believe, that India will rise again like the phoenix from the ashes—when and how nobody can say—but one thing is certain and it is this—that Christian Platonism will have very little to do with the rise of India.

It is also quite possible that the West will fall once more. "Time may come," in the words of Macaulay, "when some New Zealand artist will take his stand on a broken arch of the London bridge and sketch the ruins of St. Paul." Whether the West will decline as rapidly as Oswald Spangler predicts is more than we can say but the fact remains that with all its talk of progress the spirit of re-barbarisation has settled over the face of Europe. That is the opinion of no less a thinker than Mr. Bertrand Russel. All shallow and superficial people are talking of progress—their optimism is temperamental and is also the result of thoughtlessness and prejudice—but in the writings of deep thinkers like Dean Inge and Bertrand Russel a pessimistic note is clear and unmistakable. We shall be glad if the idea of progress saves the West.

We have no quarrel with Christianity or Platonism—in fact, we have a great respect for "Christ's heart and Plato's brain," but what we do hold is that neither Plato nor Christ had anything to do with the so-called idea of progress and so Mr. Hoyland's scheme for India's salvation falls to the ground.

India is the land of idealism—the home of mysticism. This is the impartial opinion of Josiah Royce. India is the land of Yajnyavalkya and Buddha, of Kapila and Patanjali, of Sree Krishna and Ramachandra, of Sankaracharya and Ramanuja. She is the land of devotees like Nanaka and Chaitanya, Tukaram and Kabir, Namadeva and Surdas and it is only the other day that she produced Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, the prophets of New India. Her heroes are not isolated figures as Mr. Hoyland supposes. They are representative men and their life and message have permeated the mass-mind of the country. It is also a historical fact that

popular education in India was much wider in its scope than it is under the Christian-British Government—and Mr. Hoyland had better take note of this fact.

Because India is the land of idealism and mysticism, because India's message is that of Freedom and Renunciation, because India's tradition is that of deep devotion to her Saints and Avatars, therefore India can very well appreciate the idealists and devotees in all parts of the world ; but if any Westerner in his pride thinks that for idealism we must go to Plato and for devotion we must go to Christ and his disciples, then we must at once spring to our feet and repudiate his pretensions. We believe that in things of the Spirit we must be the teachers of the world. We do not want to be proud but we must meet the pride of the West with our pride. If we are proud at all, well then, in the words of Johnson, "our pride is defensive." But the West should know that the "mild Hindu" can be aggressive too.

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## NEWS AND REPORTS.

### **Buddha Anniversary at Rangoon**

A representative public meeting was held under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Mission Society, Rangoon, at the Reddiar School Hall, on the evening of the 21st May last, to celebrate the birthday of Bhagawan Buddha. It was attended by a large number of Indian and Burmese gentlemen, and was presided over by the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Mya Bu. Lt.-Col. U. Ba Vet, I.M.S. dwelt on the ascetic practices of Lord Buddha, and explained with much earnestness the four great truths and the eightfold path preached by the Great Master. Mr. Paw Tun, Bar-at-Law, Deputy President of the Legislative Council, next spoke laying stress on Lord Buddha's great love and sympathy for the masses, for the ignorant and the poor. Mr. S. Ramaswamy Aiyer, a member of the Ramakrishna Mission Society, then read out a few extracts from the illustrious Swami Vivekananda's lectures in the West on Lord Buddha and his religion, revealing the great Swami's high regard and love for Buddha. The President, in his concluding remarks reiterated the salient points of the speeches and thanked the lecturers. The meeting terminated with a vote of thanks to the chair.

### The Birthday Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna

The Birthday anniversary of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated by the Ramakrishna Ashram, Chandpur, Tipperah, on the 29th May last in the premises of the National School. The ceremony was an imposing one. The day dawned with 'Usha Kirtan' followed by the feeding of the poor at noon. In the afternoon there were recitation and sports by the boys. Swami Jnaneswarananda of the Ramakrishna Mission delivered an impressive lecture on the life and teachings of the Master.

The Birthday was also observed with great eclat at the Ramakrishna Sevashram Baliati, Dacca, on the 5th June last. The programme included special 'Puja,' 'Sankirtan,' poor feeding, discourses on Srimad Bhagavatam, etc. Swamis Kamaleswarananda, Aksharananda and Rameswarananda of the Belur Math took part in the anniversary. The special feature of the celebration of this year was the opening of the newly erected shrine. In the afternoon a meeting was held with Swami Rameswarananda in the chair, when prizes were distributed to the boys and girls of the free schools conducted by the Ashrama.

### Vikrampur Ramakrishna Ashram Sammelan

The first session of the above Sammelan was held at the Ramakrishna Ashram compound, Kalma, Dacca, on the 21st May last. In the absence of His Holiness Srimat Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Mission, who was to have presided on the occasion, Srimat Swami Suddhanandaji of the Ramakrishna Mission was elected president. The chairman of the reception committee having finished his address, the president spoke eloquently for nearly two hours. He dwelt on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, on the aims and objects of the R. K. Mission and on many momentous problems of the day and their solutions. The sittings of the conference extended over three days, the third day being set apart for a general 'Utsav.'

Three resolutions were passed at the Sammelan. Of these one was for forming a representative Standing Committee, while another requested the authorities of the R. K. Mission at Belur to keep a closer touch with all village organisations that were working with the same aim and objects as the Mother Institution. In connection with this Conference a most attractive exhibition of the local products was held, and several lantern lectures were arranged,

The gathering was a distinguished and representative one. Many Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission delivered instructive speeches at the Sammelan. The whole function was a grand success.

### **Sri Ramakrishna Sarada Ashram, Ponnampet, Coorg**

The new Ashram was opened by Srimat Swami Nirmalanandaji Maharaj, President, Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, Bangalore City, on Friday, the 10th June last. The proceedings of the day began in the morning with Special Puja and the installation of the portrait of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna in the shrine room. After Bhajana the devotees carried in procession a portrait of the Master through the streets of the town. Everywhere big crowds gathered to pay their respectful homage to the Prophet of the age. More than a thousand people were fed on the occasion, both the rich and the poor sitting together.

In the evening, a public meeting was held under the presidency of Srimat Swami Nirmalanandaji Maharaj when speeches were delivered by many Swamis in English, Canarese, Tamil and Malayalam explaining to the villagers, the life and teachings of the Great Master. In his concluding speech the President invoked the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna on the people of the place. The proceedings of the day came to a successful close with a Harikatha Kalakshepam.

### **Lectures by the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission**

Under the auspices of the Vivekananda Society, Calcutta, Swami Vishvananda, President, Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, Khar, Bombay, delivered his second lecture in English on "The Message of Swami Vivekananda to Modern India" at the Theosophical Hall, College Square, Calcutta, on the 13th May last. The lecture was very much appreciated by the large audience who gathered to listen to the Swami.

Under the auspices of the Y.M.H.A., Nawalapitiya, Ceylon, Swami Avinasananda of the Ramakrishna Mission, delivered a public lecture on Lord Buddha in the Kathiresan School Hall on the 15th May last, Brahmasri Sathasiva Kurukkal presiding. The Swami spoke very impressively on the life and teachings of the Great Master laying special stress on his doctrine of Ahimsa.

On the occasion of the annual celebration of the Sri Ramakrishna Seva Samiti, Ahmedabad, Swami Sambuddhananda, Secre-

tary, Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, Khar, Bombay, delivered two very interesting lectures in English before a large audience in the local Town Hall, on the 22nd and 23rd May last. The subject of the first lecture was "Sri Ramakrishna and Universal Religion," and that of the second was "Formal Worship in Hinduism." Both the lectures were much appreciated by all present. He also gave another address on "Practical Vedanta" in the Conaught Hall, Rajkot, on the 2nd June to the great satisfaction and benefit of his hearers.

At the invitation of the public, Swami Omkarananda of the Ramakrishna Mission, Belur, visited many districts of Eastern Bengal. During this tour, the Swami delivered a series of lectures at different places. At Noakhali he spoke on the "Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna," and "Vedanta in practical life." At Dacca he delivered three lectures, one at the Jagannath College Hall, the second at the Buli Institute and the third at Jindabahr,—the subjects being "Problems of the Age," "Karma Yoga" and "Message of Swami Vivekananda," respectively. At Baliati and Sonargan he addressed the students on the "Duties of the Students." At Chandpur he spoke on "Swami Vivekananda's message to the young men of Bengal," and at Narayanganj on "Works before Modern India." He also delivered an impressive lecture on the "Harmony of Religions" at the Ramakrishna Ashram Sammelan, Kalma, Dacca.

### **Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta**

A special feature marked the celebration of Easter this year at the Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta. On Easter Sunday Swami Paramananda consecrated a part of the Ashrama premises—a newly graded hill—to the building of the "Temple of the Universal Spirit"—a temple where the adherents of all faiths could gather without let or hindrance for their daily worship. In the afternoon the Swami held a Service on this ground and strewed the spot with flowers where the altar is to stand. After the ceremony he delivered an address to those present on the occasion.

### **The Ramakrishna Mission Sevashram, Narayangang**

We are glad to acknowledge the receipt of the Sixth Annual Report of the above Ashram from January 1925 to December 1926.

During this period the Sevashram did splendid services which mainly consisted of rendering relief to the aged, the invalid and the destitute, picking up helpless sick persons from the roadside and carrying them to the hospital for treatment, *mela*-relief, epidemic relief, etc. It also conducted a free library and a primary school for the poor.

It is gratifying to note that nearly four thousand patients were treated at the out-door Dispensary, and that another four hundred persons including those suffering from Phthisis, Cholera, Pneumonia, Typhoid, etc., were nursed in their own homes and supplied with free medicines and diet whenever necessary.

The total receipts during the years under review including the balance of the previous year, donation for building fund, subscriptions, etc., were Rs. 5,486-6-3. The entire amount was spent for the different items of service.

The management appeal to the generous public for funds for building a permanent home for the Sevashram. We hope the kind-hearted public would liberally contribute their mite and enable the workers to render their service to the poor with greater efficiency.