

THE VEDANTA KESARI

“Let the lion of Vedanta roar.”

“Let me tell you, 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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PRAYER

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नमो नमो वाङ्मनसातिभूमये
नमो नमो वाङ्मनसैकभूमये ।
नमो नमोऽनन्तमहाविभृतये
नमो नमोऽनन्तशैकसिन्धवे ॥
न धर्मनिष्ठोऽस्मि न चात्मवेदी
न भक्तिमांस्त्वच्चरणारविन्दे ।
अकिञ्चनोऽनन्यगतिः शरण्यं
त्वत् पादमूलं शरणं प्रपद्ये ॥

Salutations unto Thee, O Lord, the Origin of mind and speech but Whom neither can comprehend. Oh God of eternal glory, Thou boundless ocean of mercy, salutations unto Thee.

I have done no good deeds ; nor do I know the Self ; nor am I devoted to Thy lotus feet ; I have none. Thou art my only refuge ; Oh Lord, I take shelter in Thee.

YAMUNACHARYA.

ŚPIRITUAL TALKS OF SWAMI BRAHMANANDA

- Q.** Maharaj, with all my efforts I cannot control my mind, it is so restless. Please, do tell me how to curb it.
- A.** No doubt, to control the mind is a difficult task, but not an impossibility. By regular practice it can be tempered and brought under restraint. Do therefore perform a little meditation everyday, and never fail to do it. The nature of the mind is to run away like a restless boy. Drag it back whenever it seeks to go out, and set it to the meditation of God. If you can continue this struggle for two to three years, you will find in you a joy unspeakable; and your mind, calm and docile. In the beginning meditation proves very difficult and dry. But if you insist in meditation, like the taking of medicine then you will find in it a perennial source of joy pure and unalloyed. What terrible ordeals does not a student go through to pass in his examinations? Verily I say unto you God-realisation is far easier than that. If you call upon Him with sincerity and an unperturbed mind, He will surely reveal Himself unto you.
- Q.** If I have been able to pass in the examinations why shall I not be able to see God—this is most hopeful. But at times when I think that with so much of meditation as I do I have not made any progress, I consider all this is vain attempt and a horrible despondency overwhelms me and I despair of success. What shall I do then Sir?
- A.** No, never despair, there's no cause for it. The law of Karma is irresistible. If you do a good work it

will ever produce a good effect. With sincere devotion or without it, in any way you like, if you chant the holy name of God it will always bring you good. The result is inevitable. Therefore shake off all your despair and push on in the struggle with strictness and regularity. Then peace will surely come and reside in you, not otherwise. Through meditation not the mind only becomes pacified but the body also improves and diseases lessen. Therefore, even from the standpoint of good health one should practice meditation.

- Q. Maharaj, what is the necessity of spiritual initiation ?
Without the help of a guide, if a man in his own way, devotes himself entirely to God, will not that be enough for realising Him ?
- A. Initiation is necessary because it helps concentration. When you are initiated you are shown the object upon which the mind is to be concentrated. You cannot keep your mind wavering from one thing to another. But if you are not initiated, you have no particular object to concentrate upon. To-day you fix your mind on Hari, to-morrow on Kali, and the third day on the formless Brahman. A grim restlessness is the result. This is most harmful to an aspirant. Until this state is overcome and substituted by a peaceful attitude of mind, spiritual realisation will ever remain an object unknown. So, for attaining this calmness of mind and averting unsteadiness, initiation or the help of a guide is necessary. Moreover, the spiritual path is a most formidable one strewn with innumerable pitfalls. And unless a man is guided by an experienced hand, however clever he may be, he is sure to stumble and get ruined. Hence the necessity of a guide or Guru,

Without troubling yourself much, work hard, my boy, then will you find joy. In the beginning you are to drudge on like one at the alphabet for the first time. Don't worry, don't complain, gradually will peace come in. Do you know, how I behave with those who always complain that they are not finding peace or joy? For the first two to three years after their initiation, I give no reply, nor do I pay heed to them. But, after that period, when they meet me, they tell me that they are making some progress and also finding some joy and peace. A man must steadily try for some time before he can expect a peaceful state of mind. Therefore I ask you to struggle for a period of at least three years without any break and then you can have a claim for joy and not earlier. You won't do anything and yet want to succeed. It is most absurd. Nothing great can be achieved by trickery or idleness. If you really want peace, if you really want to realise God, then steadily work and wait. For spiritual realisation is a question of time.

(To K.) It is also true that in spite of your best efforts you can do nothing before its due time. Time determines everything. Nevertheless yours is to struggle and to wait. The mother bird knows well when to open the egg. So the Divine Mother reveals Herself to the devotee when the time is ripe. Work and wait. This period is a very hard time. The devotee is always in suspense—once hope, then despair; now joy, the next moment sorrow; a great struggle goes on. He is constantly in the midst of a fierce duel and this continues till he is blessed with His vision. But if he is under a competent guide, he can be much relieved of this struggle. An expert guide can give an upward lift to the struggling mind even when it is not mature.

But it has its dangers too. If it is repeated too often, the disciple cannot hold it and the result is a greater struggle and a gloomier despair.

In this struggling period of Sadhana the aspirant must be always alert. He must follow certain fixed rules of conduct and must never deviate from them. He must observe perfect continence and eat only such food that has a soothing effect on the body. He will have to be under the direct guidance of an expert. All on a sudden he must not exert his brain too much in meditation. If he does otherwise he is sure to suffer. His brain will become heated, and consequently he will feel giddy ; and many other brain troubles will follow. Meditation in the primary stage being a regular warfare with the mind—the mind constantly going outwards and the Sadhaka trying to drag it back to the feet of the Lord, there is every possibility of the brain getting overheated. The aspirant should prevent this crisis with great care. Nor should a man in the beginning of his Sadhana apply himself in practising Pranayama (control of breath) and other Hatayogic exercises. Slowly and steadily he should proceed in the spiritual path. Then he will find these preliminary struggles disappearing one by one. Finally he will attain to the state of real meditation. At that stage even though he meditates for pretty long hours, three or four hours or more, at a stretch, he will feel as refreshed both in body and mind as after deep sleep. He will feel great joy in him. The spiritual novice must also keep a special eye as to his diet. The body and the mind being closely connected, the least change in the one is followed by a corresponding change in the other. If the stomach is irritated by taking any improper food, the mind too will have a like

effect. And for a restless mind meditation is impossible. It is for this reason that so much stringency is laid on the dietetic regulations of a Sadhaka.

Under no circumstances, again, should the Sadhaka fill more than one half of his stomach with his usual food. And half of the remaining half is to be left for water, while the rest should be kept empty for the free passage of air. Furthermore, an aspirant must not be dejected in spirit, by ruminating on his sins. Whatever huge sin a man may commit, it is so only with reference to the limited vision of man ; from the absolute standpoint, from the standpoint of God it is nothing at all. A single glance of the Lord and all monstrous sins of millions of births are set at naught. All heavy punishments that are prescribed for sins in the scriptures are but for the upkeep of the social discipline and for making people refrain from the evil ways of life. God, our Father, is ever merciful to us. He is ever loving to His children. His name removes all evils. Therefore, there is no cause for dejection to them who sincerely call upon Him. It is also true that as the result of our past actions, at times dejection and despair overtake our mind. But that is no reason why a Sadhaka should bow down to them. Knowing that past actions may exert themselves on him, he should be prepared to fight them outright. God will give him strength. His name will be his impenetrable armour. It will save him from all consequences. This is one way of Sadhana. It is rather dry and monotonous in the beginning. There is another path, I mean, the path of the Vaishnavite. It is a very nice path. It does not involve much hardship as the other path. It is most gentle. In this path you are to contemplate

the life and deeds of Sri Krishna, Sri Rama or any other incarnation of Lord Vishnu. There is no monotony, no drudgery in it. A devotee is to bring about some relation with God and worship Him. But this also has great dangers. For it has often been found that many unfit persons, in their attempt to worship God as a lover, have fallen off from their ideal.

EDITORIAL NOTES

United India

During the Christmas week representative men of culture and leading from the various provinces of India gathered together to attend the Indian National Congress and the various conferences convened along with it. The vast assemblage of many brilliant sons of India who had met on those platforms had the rare and valuable privilege of exchanging their thoughts and views with one another and strengthening the bonds of sympathy and love so very essential for the making of a united India. This remarkable gathering very naturally gives rise to some reflections in our minds and we deem it our duty to share them with our readers. As might naturally be expected, politics has been the most important topic that has engrossed the attention of the representatives and the public at large. This has undoubtedly borne some fruitful results. It is not on the political aspects of the several problems that are facing our country at the present day that we wish to make some observations here. Rather we would engage the attention of our readers in the deeper and more universal considerations that lie at the root of our national existence.

Common Bonds

It is almost a truism that for the promotion and fostering of a healthy national life the first and foremost at-

tempt should be directed towards the discovery and thorough understanding of the common bonds of unity, common interest, common aspirations, common sentiments and emotions that are the very springs of action in both individual and collective life. Undeniably there are such bonds of union and sympathy in our country. It might even be contended that among subject peoples the awakening of the desire for political freedom and independent national life is itself a sufficient motive power and bond of unity.

The love of one's motherland and the natural longing to see her free and independent stir the deepest depths of the human heart and ought to prove strong enough to silence all other conflicting interests and considerations. Yet the public life of our country today presents a very ugly picture disfigured by insane religious quarrels, communal strifes and class schisms. The love of political freedom which alone gives people the power to set aright the numerous inequalities and evils which trouble them is not sufficiently strong in our countrymen. This is an unfortunate state of affairs, which is plain even to the most superficial observers. The most laudable attempts to bring about unity that have been and are being made by our leaders are not such as to inspire much confidence in the minds of the unsophisticated. We have not the least desire to minimise the importance of the part played by the politicians. While they would continue exploring all possible avenues of rapprochement among the various warring sections by suitable compromises and make-shifts, we believe very strongly that in the peculiar circumstances of our country, too much emphasis and importance cannot be given to the common religious and spiritual back-ground of our people.

Common elements in Provincial culture

The common religious foundation of the national life has been emphasised many a time in these pages. Next in

importance come the common points of contact in the various provincial and linguistic cultures. Let us take for instance the case of the prominent men from the several provinces of India who meet on a common platform from time to time ; the Punjabee and the Madrassite, the Bengalee and the Maharashtrian, to refer only to some of the most prominent cases, are woefully ignorant of the special and peculiar features of one another's culture and tradition. The thoughts and sentiments that lie imbedded in the religious and popular lore of saints and reformers like Tulsidas, Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, Ram-Prasad, Tukaram, Jnaneswar, Ramdas, Manickavasakar, Nammalwar and other saints remain more or less unknown outside their respective provinces. Still less familiar are the best writings of poets and thinkers who represent the noblest thoughts and ideas of their times. In the pilgrimage centres and railway trains when persons of different provinces meet together, their ignorance of one another's language, manners and customs not unoften lead to unfortunate misunderstandings. Even when there is no occurrence of open breach of civil behaviour the contempt for their mutual peculiarities is scarcely kept under complete disguise. An appreciative and intimate knowledge of the life and teachings of the great saints of India on the part of the people of different provinces must inevitably lead to a sympathetic understanding of one another's culture and traditions. Over and above their spiritual fervour and devotion, the catholicity of sympathy and the democratic spirit common to one and all of them is most remarkable. Their teachings have also another very important bearing upon one of the most vexed questions with which we are faced at the present day. We mean the uplift of the poor and oppressed classes. Any one who reverently seeks to imbibe their spirit cannot escape the contagion of their all-absorbing love and sympathy towards the submerged classes. It is

also noteworthy that many of these saints themselves have come from the not-very-respectable classes.

The heart of these children of God cried for the poor and lowly of the land. They all proclaimed in a trumpet voice that in the eyes of God the distinction of high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant simply have no meaning whatsoever. They illustrated in their everyday life their unshakable faith that only those that are pure in heart and those that do good are the beloved of the Lord, and none else.

The key-note of their popularity which continues undiminished even up to the present day is to be found in their recognition of all men and women as veritable manifestation of the Divine, and in their eagerness to devote their life for the service of His children. All who are eager to see that our depressed classes come to occupy their due place in the social order cannot do better than walk in the footsteps of these saints.

The function of Library Academy

For the last quarter of a century laudable attempts are being made in various provinces of India to popularise their respective literature by bringing out attractive and authoritative editions of the best products in their languages.

It will be admitted on all hands that this kind of organised attempt has brought forth many excellent fruits. There is however some need to guard against a kind of danger which is likely to grow into serious forms if timely prevention is not taken. We refer to the growth of provincial spirit and clannish exclusiveness. It is not suggested that such a parochial spirit is a necessary consequence of the organisation of literary academy. Before the provincial bias develops partisan and disruptive tendencies it is the duty of all academies to translate

into their respective mother tongues the best products and achievements of their sister languages and do all in their power to promote a comprative study of the general cultures in India and lay the foundation of national unity deep and secure in the hearts of their people.

Common Language

There now arises the question of the adoption of a common language for all India. We are aware that many patriotic and far-seeing statesmen have given their best thought to this important question. But we are afraid that this problem has not attracted that amount of attention which it deserves. Time was when many responsible leaders thought of making the English language the *Lingua Franca* of India. But it is gratifying to note that such an unnatural and preposterous dream has been deservedly given up. That Hindi possesses several advantages and answers to most of the requirements of a common language for such a vast continent as India, we need not proceed to examine in detail. By far the most appealing and material argument in its favour is that it can be understood in almost all provinces except in South India. Another excellent point in its favour is that it is a language intelligible to the majority of the Mussalmans as well. But when the principle of re-organisation of provinces on a linguistic basis comes to be accepted—the Indian National Congress has already adopted it—the question of a common script along with that of a common language would arise for federal and inter-provincial purposes only. The adoption of a common script or language need not cause any fear in the mind of even the most ardent admirer of his mother tongue. It is quite possible to keep any provincial language fresh, vigorous and glowing as it would be the official language of a particular area. The cultivation of a national language for federal concerns need not be felt to be a heavy burden, as this task will fall upon

the shoulders of only a small and select number of persons, in every province.

Inter-University Co-operation

The process of the exchange and assimilation of the provincial cultures might be greatly facilitated by the various universities working together in a team spirit. The professors of one university can be invited by another to deliver a course of lectures on the literature, arts, history, music, painting and other branches of learning. Whenever possible a programme or study-tour by the students in the company of their professors would have to be organised. In a poor country like India unless the state comes to the assistance of the universities with substantial and liberal grants any such scheme however beneficial cannot materialise. The value of the widening of the intellectual and imaginative horizon of the youths by a visit and close observation of the several places in India rich in sacred and historical associations cannot be over-estimated.

The visit to holy centres of pilgrimage like Benares and Hardwar, Rameswaram and Kanyakumari, Dwaraka and Puri; the birth-places of Sri Ramachandra, Sri Krishna, Bhagavan Buddha, Sankara, Ramanuja and Chaitanya and other prophets and saints; the ancient university town of Taxila, Nalanda and Patali-putra and noteworthy cites like Agra, Delhi and Poona are sure to bring home to the young and receptive minds the fundamental unity of India.

Parliament of Religions

Another direction in which the promotion of Unity is possible is to convene an annual Parliament of Religions either along with the National Congress or on other convenient occasions when the representatives of various religions and sects will meet on a common platform with the sole motive of knowing one another more intimately and recognising the essential harmony of all their faiths. Some might be inclined to think that at this juncture when

mutual tension and strife may be apprehended at any place attempts in this direction are likely to be productive of more harm than good. We confess we are not in a position to endorse such gloomy forebodings not that we treat lightly the manifestations of jealousy and hatred, but we consider it a mere passing phase. We have unshakable faith in the good sense and spirit of toleration lying embedded in the hearts of our people everywhere in India. The activities of the Ramakrishna Mission for the past thirty years and more have succeeded in enlisting the hearty co-operation and sympathy of the enlightened in all creeds and religions.

The only preliminary requisite is that attitude of mind which will be ever ready to pay homage to Truth and goodness wherever found and these are not the exclusive monopoly of any religion or sect.

An Appeal to our Countrymen

The several directions in which the promotion of national Unity is possible have been indicated above. But by far the most crying need at the present moment is the careful cultivation of the highest form of patriotism that would be in perfect harmony with the noblest ideals of religions. The fact of a man being a Hindu, Mussalman or Christian or Punjabee, Bengalee or Madrasee should not allow him to forget even for a moment that he is a child of Mother India. It should be the duty of every educational institution in the country to foster in all possible ways the spirit of brotherhood and toleration along with a sincere love for the Motherland. No one can contemplate with unconcern the low position which India occupies in the opinion of other nations of the world. The reason for this unfortunate condition is that our people have not yet learnt to think in terms of their country at large and its people. It is with a view to arouse the spirit of Indian solidarity that Swami Vivekananda the prophet of spiritual nationalism exhorts his countrymen as follows :

“ Oh, India, forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense pleasure ; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother’s altar ; forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood ; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian and proudly proclaim, ‘ I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother.’ Say, ‘ The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian is my brother.’ Thou too clad with but a rag round thy loins proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice, ‘ The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India’s gods and goddesses are my God, India’s society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Baranasi of my old age.’ Say, brother, ‘ The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good’, and repeat and pray day and night, ‘ Oh Thou Lord of Gouri, O Thou Mother of the Universe vouchsafe manliness unto me ! O Thou Mother of strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and **MAKE ME A MAN !**”

THE STATE OF THE EMANCIPATED SOUL ACCORDING TO VEDANTA

By Sridhar Majumdar, M.A.

Illustrious students of Vedanta devoted their earnest attention to a critical study of the state which an individual soul attains in emancipation ; they based their conclusions on the authority of Sruti which is the outcome of direct intuition of the Seers of old, called Rishis.

One class of students hold that emancipation consists in complete merger or dissolution of the individual soul in Brahman, the Universal Soul. They, in support of their assertion, cite Srutis of the following nature :

“The blessed soul, coming out of the body, robed in his finest effulgence, stands revealed in his own pristine glory.” (Chhandogya Upanishad, Chap. VIII, 3, 4).

“He being bodiless, nothing pleasant or unpleasant touches him.” (Chhandogya Upanishad, Chap. VIII, 12, 1).

“This self has neither inside nor outside, but is altogether massive intense consciousness.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Chap. IV, 5, 13).

Another class of students maintain that the individuality of the finite self is never dissolved altogether, even in the state of Mukti. They, on the other hand, in support of their view, cite Srutis of the following nature :

“He becomes the lord of himself,—his movements are unfettered in all the worlds.” (Chhandogya Upanishad, Chap. VII, 25, 2).

“If he desires the vicinity or presence of the fathers, by the mere fiat of his will the fathers present themselves.” (Chhandogya Upanishad, Chap. VIII, 2, 1).

“There he moves at large, enjoying himself, playing and making himself merry.” (Chhandogya Upanishad, Chap. VIII, 12, 3).

The views of the two classes of students seem at the first sight to be conflicting ; and doubt arises as to the truth of at least one or the other class of the Srutis. But these doubts are completely dispelled and the views of both classes of students fully vindicated, when we turn to the view of a third class of students holding that even in his released state Jiva may be said to be different from, as well as the same with, Brahman, i.e., Dualism standing side by side with Monism (Dwaitadwaita). The emancipated soul, according to this view, is revealed in his own normal pristine form, but not in the form of a deity nor in any borrowed form ; and thus being released from his late state of bondage (wherein he felt himself as a distinct entity from Brahman), he abides in the glory of his true Self which is no other than Brahman Himself ; and though a part of Brahman, he perceives himself as assimilated to, and at the same time separable from, Him. Srutis of the following nature lend support to this doctrine :

“He enjoys all desires with the Omniscient Brahman.”
(Taittiriya Upanishad, Chap. II, 1, 2).

The emancipated finite self, according to this class of students, sometimes remains absorbed in Brahman and sometimes recovers his individuality, as is the case of a profound sleeper before and after awaking. For this view vide the Sruti :

“From unity to diversity and from diversity to unity I pass and repass.” (Chhandogya Upanishad, Chap. VIII, 13, 1).

It will thus appear that the view of each class of students is true in respect of the particular aspect of the emancipated soul taken by them ; but the truth seems to be, according to Sruti, an adjustment of the partial views taken by the two classes of students. The sage Badarayana Vyasa also appears to have taken this all-embracing view, regarding the state of the emancipated soul, in his Vedanta Philosophy.

Acharya Jaimini thinks that the emancipated soul emerges from bondage as a person, endowed with the powers and attributes of Brahman. The sage Audulomi holds the view that the emancipated soul manifests itself solely as pure consciousness, without a personality on the back ground. Acharya Badarayana Vyasa decides that both the natures, namely pure consciousness and the possession of the powers and attributes of Brahman are manifested in the released soul, and that there is no incongruity between the two natures however incongruous they may appear in embodied beings, and Sruti supports both the views (Brahma Sutra, Chap. IV, 4, 5-7).

By the mere fiat of his will, the emancipated soul gets all his desires fulfilled ; he thus becomes lord of himself and owes allegiance to none else (Brahma Sutra, Chap. IV, 4, 8-9).

The sage Badari thinks that the emancipated soul is impersonal possessing neither body nor Indriyas, while Acharya Jaimini opines that he *does* possess a body with Indriyas. Acharya Badarayana Vyasa reconciles the disputants by saying that as Sruti contains indications of both the aspects, the emancipated soul may exist in both conditions at his option ; i.e. when he wishes to have a body of his own he presents himself

in one, and when he wishes to be without it he has none. There is, however, no hard and fast rule that the body assumed by the emancipated soul must be, in every case, created by his own will; he may sometimes have enjoyments by being united with a body created for him by the Lord, like the enjoyments, in dreams, of a living person. The Divine Will may, however, make use of the emancipated souls as tools, through the instrumentality of which It chooses to fulfil any of Its purposes. Besides, the emancipated soul may put on any garb contrived by himself suited to the fulfilment of that purpose. He has also the power of projecting himself into space, just as the light of a lamp expands far off and is reflected from many things at the same time. He becomes omniscient and is never unconscious; what is stated in Sruti about specific non-cognition, or total unconsciousness, is either regarding deep sleep or regarding death, but not regarding the emancipated soul in the closest union with the Lord. (Brahma Sutra, Chap. IV, 4, 10-16).

The emancipated soul, united with Brahman, becomes endowed with the powers and attributes of Brahman, except in the matters of creating, preserving and dissolving the worlds. He is no longer subject to mutations caused by births, deaths and other causes; but he possesses for all time the supreme consciousness of being one with the Lord. He attains equality with Brahman, only in respect of enjoyment, but not in respect of exercising authority in matters of creation and the like. He is not bound to return to this world and to undergo rebirth. (Brahma Sutra, Chap. IV, 4, 17-22).

THE PROBLEM OF HINDU SOCIAL REFORM

By Swami Iswarananda

There are two grim and serious dangers facing the progress of Hindu Society at the present day. The forces of reform and reaction are holding the scales almost evenly and social life looks as if it has reached a crisis, which demands a decision either to take a forward step or to go back to the olden days. The voice of reform has roused up the voice of reaction and day by day this society is getting divided more and more and is fast moving on to the verge of social strife.

By contact and friction with the outside nations of the world India has been roused up from her long torpor of centuries. A set of new and outlandish ideas, looking entirely foreign to everything old, imbibed at the feet of the West has been suddenly let loose upon a society which was running its even course of social life for numberless generations, blissfully ignorant of what the world outside the borders of India was doing. As the result of the new impact and awakening European ideas of materialism, rationalism, agnosticism, atheism, and individualism, driving in the chariot of Western science with the brilliance of a thousand suns, with hard-earned facts and figures and tangible proofs, dazzled a new generation of Hindus. A section among them, caught in this whirlpool of dazzling ideas, lost their faith in the past history of India and declared that Hindu society must be entirely overhauled from top to bottom if civilization is to dawn in this dark corner of the world.

Society was bound hand and foot by exacting rules which were holy and sacred. There was no freedom of thought or action. Life was to be lived to the minutest details according to the injunction of the Shastras, promulgated, in the name of God and religion, and the result was that social life was based on inequalities, distinctions between man and man, privileges for the few, cruelty and inhuman treatment towards the so-called low castes, curtailment of the freedom of women, etc. The reform party therefore advocated the complete destruction of all the existing state of things and reform of the Hindu Society along the lines of the civilized nations of the West. Abolition of the Varnashrama Dharma, free intermarriage and interdining between all castes from the Brahmin to the Pariah, free mingling of men and women, remarriage of widows, adoption of Western manners, customs, food, dress etc.—these according to them are the panacea for all the evils of Hindu Society. And more than all these the Shastras and the priests, the gods and the Rishis who were responsible between themselves for all the superstitions and degradations of the people must be once for all consigned to the Ganges for ever. Look to the West, they said, how rich, strong, progressive, and scientific, they are. We too must remodel our society if we are to be on a par with them.

On the other side the voice of conservatism said: “you outlandish, irreverent men, you must know that our society has

been guided and brought up by God-given laws promulgated from the beginning of creation. Shall we change these time-honoured customs and usages and draw upon ourselves the curses of the gods and the Pitris? What strange things, unheard of by our ancestors, are you proposing? The eternal punishment of hell will overtake us if we disobey the Shastras and the Mamool." A few educated champions of orthodoxy say: "Ours is the Sanathana Dharma and therefore it should not and cannot undergo any change; we have built up a society which has come down scatheless through scores of shining centuries inspite of foreign invasions and oppressions and alien influences. Show us another nation which had such a long lease of life. All great empires of the world such as Greece, Rome, Carthage, have come and gone like bubbles and here we stand, the oldest nation in the world, grown grey with experiences of centuries, but still alive. If our social laws and customs were bad we would have died long ago. Therefore all the injunctions of the Shastras must be for our good. We are not going to imitate the West and give up our Varna-shrama Dharma. What! a Pariah to approach a Brahmin? Shall our girls go shameless into the streets holding the hand of any and every young dandy that comes across? Shall our women forget Sita and Damayanti and Savitri and change their husbands as they change their clothes? Shall our men and women dress like Westerners with close-fitting ugly trousers and jackets and go about naked to all intents and purposes? Pshaw! we shall not change our Shastric injunctions." Such is the reply of the orthodox in India.

Thus, the Western influence has brought as its greatest boon freedom of thought and action and a spirit of forward movement in the social life on the one hand, and on the other hand has roused up the spirit of reaction which, sometimes going to extremes, besides creeding fanaticism, gets beyond the control of those even who start the revival. Hindu social reform is therefore placed in a critical stage; either it should swing forward and break all old ties or it should swing backward and refuse to look at anything new. That sometimes seems to be the only alternative, either the old or the new. Which shall we follow? The reform party and the orthodox party are each pulling in their own way with tremendous strength and this society already divided into so many camps will be further weakened and torn to pieces, unless we get a real solution of the problem.

In the first place it is useless for the orthodox to say that no changes shall be made, and it is equally useless for the reformer to demand an entire remodelling. For both are trying the impossible. No society has ever remained stationary and yet lived on for ages, and Hindu society is not an exception to the law. And no society can ever cut itself entirely off from its old moorings without meeting instant death, and the Hindu need not dream that he could demonstrate otherwise.

In fact the Hindu social life in the past has been neither one of entire change nor of entire conservation. The Hindu had combined orthodoxy as well as reform. He was orthodox with regard to certain essentials of life and had left a wide margin for introducing changes with regard to non-essentials. It seems that a good deal of misunderstanding on questions of reform is due to the ignoring of this crucial fact and once this principle is firmly grasped by the educated as well as the uneducated, they will find a *via media* already existing and guiding the social life which would satisfy the demands of both the orthodox and the reformer.

For there are two sorts of truths in our scriptures, the Shastras; one set based upon the eternal nature of God, soul, and Nature and their relations to each other. This portion of our scriptures deals with the ways and means for the realization of the *summum bonum* of life and the varied wealth of experience gathered through countless ages by sages and seers who having realized the highest truth recorded them for the guidance of all mankind for all ages and climes. These are of a universal character and are known as Vedas, a treasure of spiritual laws, self-existent and eternal. And the Vedas therefore properly include all such self-existent truths and laws discovered by sages of all countries and all times. The Rishis through whom these laws were given out to mankind were only discoverers and so were known as Mantra Drashtas, seers of truths. The truths and the laws of spiritual science were ever in existence and will exist for ever, just as the laws of gravity or atmospheric pressure. And therefore this unchanging residue of our scriptures is known as the Sanathana Dharma. This Sanathana Dharma is it which works in the evolution of all mankind, nay of all Jivas, and the Hindu has sought therefore to bring it down to practical life by applying it to his social life. This applied Dharma was understood to be true only under certain conditions. It lacked

universality, being valid only under certain conditions, in a certain society, for a limited time. And this second class of Dharma chiefly embodied in the Smritis, Puranas and Tantras was known as Yuga Dharma, in contrast to the Vedanta, or the Sanathana Dharma. In this class of scriptures the teachings are therefore different. They deal with local circumstances environments of the time, social institutions of the period, customs, manners and so forth. They speak of duties arising from different environments and they change in course of time, and so we find differences and contradictions between the teachings of the various Smritis. One Smriti says, this is the custom and this should be the practice of this age ; another says, this should be the practice. There is one Achara for Satya Yuga another for Kali Yuga and so forth. One society at one stage of its evolution should follow such and such rules and others should be guided by quite a different set of rules as it is at a different stage of culture, so on and so forth. But the eternal laws of evolution known as Sanathana Dharma never change so long as man lives, they are for all times, omnipresent, universal virtues. Therefore it has to be understood that because a little social custom is going to be changed, we are not going to lose our Sanathana Dharma. We have to disabuse our minds of the idea that every village custom and grandmother's tale however harmful and superstitious they might be must be adhered to, because they are sanctioned by the Vedas and the Shastras. The rules and regulations found in the Smritis, Puranas and Tantras have been changed from time to time and we must know that the present day usages have come down to us after numberless changes in the past. There was a time in India when every Brahmin killed the cow and ate the beef, for in the Vedas we read that when a Sannyasin, a king, or a great man came into a house, hospitality required that he should be served with meat. Meat was considered to be the best of offerings to the Pitris and the *Manusmriti* prescribes thirty-two kinds of meat for Pitri Yagna. Later on finding that agriculture, the staple industry of the people would suffer by the destruction of cattle the practice was stopped and a voice was raised against the killing of cows. Thus we find in the Shastras, in the Smritis, what we would consider the most horrible customs.

As time passed all these laws had to be changed and new laws had to be made. Further local customs are various and contradictory which fact shows that these are not binding on all Hindus. The South Indian Brahmin would shudder at the

thought of taking meat, while the North Indian Brahmin thinks it most holy and sacred to offer goats by the hundreds in sacrifice and eat it as Mahaprasadam. In North India women without Purdah would receive the respect due to prostitutes, while in the South it is not at all disrespectful. To a Nambudiri woman post-puperty marriage is Shastric, while a Tamil Brahmin will be out-casted for that unshastric conduct. Various are the customs all over India, but they are local. The greatest mistake made by the ignorant conservative and the zealous reformer is to think that these local customs are the essentials of Hindu Dharma.

It is therefore with good justice and reason that the reform party says to the orthodox who maintain that all these laws must be retained, because these latter believe them to be the essentials and eternal of Sanathana Dharma. "Well, if such foolish and childish customs are the rare gems of your religion then we shall bid good-bye to your religion. We cannot look with respect to a God who has revealed that human beings should not approach other human beings, because they are born in a certain community, that they should be treated worse than dogs and cats. For a scripture that lays down that children should be married and babies become widows, no human being can have any regard. If *your* Varnashrama Dharma requires that women should have no freedom and that the tongue of a man called Sudra should be cut off if he utters the Veda, then it shall be our object of life to demolish *this* Varnashrama Dharma." Moreover they ask with perfect reason and justice : "Are you sincerely adhering to the Shastras? In spite of your professions are you not every day showing how your life, every minute of it, is a thousand and one contradictions to the Shastras? For example you Brahmin, you are not allowed by the Shastras to live in a country ruled by the Mlecchas. If you obey the Shastras, why don't you quit this country bag and baggage? Are you the three highest castes observing the Ashramas of Brahmacharya, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa? Money-making is not the profession for a Brahmin and yet you who stand for every letter of the Shastras are now a days hunting for all jobs under the sun reserved for the other castes. And when it is not for your convenience and privilege, when for example, the removal of untouchability is proposed, you, upper castes, you take shelter under the Varnashrama Dharma and the Shastras, because it is nothing to you, it is others who suffer. Is it not hypocrisy? You

will stand against widow-remarriage, but you men, you will take as many wives as you like—that is Shastra ?” That is the mistake very often made by the orthodox viz., to think that these Lokacharas and Desacharas are the essentials of the Sanathana Dharma and the reform party has taken the orthodox at his own word and declared that the Hindu must give up all his religion, Shastras, and gods and must reform on Western lines.

It is therefore vain for the orthodox to say that they will not change. Our social history and national traditions have all along been against the view of no-change. It is equally vain for the reformer to say that the Hindu must give up his religion and gods and Shastras, for they are the very basis of Hindu life. For good or bad it is there for thousands and thousands of years. A stream has taken its rise in the dim past where history dare not peep flowing through ages and ages of human history. Is it not madness to think of turning it back to its source ? Even if it becomes possible, that moment India will die. For, her only strength, her only vitality is in religion and spirituality. The moment she gives up these she will cease to exist. It is because of her innate spiritual strength, because of her Sanathana Dharma and the principle of Varnashrama Dharma that she has continued to live surviving all the shocks and turmoils of ages and ages and so long as she clings on to this no power under the sun can hope to dethrone her from her glory and power. Therefore all hope of Europeanising Hindu society is out of question. We will have to reform, no doubt, but that has to be done in order to bring the great and glorious spiritual, ethical, and social heritage of the nation once more with fresh vigour and purity into the every day social life, giving up the encrustations of ages and dead formulas, as did the Acharyas of yore, who clinging on to the main pivot of the national life, showed the way for any number of changes without the least fear. If the non-essentials are not changed from time to time they are positively dangerous. Our law-givers knew this and so they were bold in changing these non-essentials and we too must be bold in initiating all necessary reforms. The orthodox are not thereby going to lose their Sanathana Dharma and the reformers need not destroy the main-spring of Hindu social life in order to bring about healthy changes suited to the times.

Thus to take an example, the question of the free mingling of the sexes in India and the freedom of women. The orthodox are

terribly afraid to think of it, while the reformer wants it at any cost. What is the fear of the orthodox in this matter? That his daughter or son might lose her or his chastity and purity. That is the innate thought working in their minds. But why not our women combine the freedom of the Westerners with the chastity and purity for which the Hindu woman has lived and died? Did not Sita live in the midst of Rakshasas for months and years? Did not Savitri go from place to place in search of her mate? Did not the Brahmavadinis of old go from court to court fearlessly challenging the great savants of the time? Thus we find that the idea of freedom of women is not new to Hindu society, but then the reform party forgets that that freedom had carried with it tremendous will-power and the fire of purity and self-control nurtured in the ancient schools of Brahmacharya. Where that is absent free mingling of the sexes becomes positively dangerous, as the Western nations are slowly finding it out for themselves. And when there is this necessary safeguard you will find that no orthodox will stand against the freedom of women. Thus we find that where the ideals of the race are kept intact, we can allow all other conditions to vary as much as possible. Therefore the first duty of the reformer is to educate the women in the ideals of the race as in olden days and leave her to herself so that she may solve her own problems.

To be continued.

LIFE SKETCH OF RAMDAS

(Concluded from page 304)

By Swami Gunatitananda

Now he selected a place near Satara for his residence. It was situated on a mountain called Jaranda in a place called Mahuli near which the two rivers Krishna and Venya meet. During his stay here he would go to Mahuli for bath. After bathing he would perform Sandhya and other religious duties and then go to the neighbouring village for Madhukari Bhiksha (alms) on which he lived. In the evening he would play with boys on the river bank and return to Jaranda after sun-set. Sometimes at sun-set he would sit in meditation for hours and hours together reciting poems and devotional songs till very late in the night.

The intense life of devotion which Ramdas was now living began to draw men to him from far and wide. His lucid exposition of the austere principles of Vedanta by apt illustrations and stories from the Puranas, the Ramayana and other epics coupled with the stirring and fascinating Kirtans for which he had already earned a name during his Parivrajaka life captivated men's minds. His fame spread in all directions and many saints and Sadhus from far and wide began to flock to see him and hear him discourse on religion, and his interpretation of religion. It was at this time, during his stay at Jaranda that the well-known Saints of Maharashtra, such as Tukaram, Jairamswami, Anandamurti, Moraya, Gosavi, Dharnidhardev and Woman Pandit came to see him one after another from distant places. Ramdas had by this time made a good number of disciples among whom there were men, women, householders and Tyagis. The number of his chief disciples was Seventy-two of whom Twenty always remained with him engaged in his service.

Let us leave Ramdas here and see how Shivaji came to know of him and became his disciple. Shivaji showed signs of precocity from his very childhood. He had a religious bent of mind and was very fond of Kirtans. One day he heard a good Kirtan and was very much impressed with it. In this Kirtan the truth was proclaimed that one cannot find the real spiritual path without the help of a Guru. This set Shivaji athinking and he was ever afterwards in search of a Guru. But his search was in vain. Many were the anxious nights he thus spent when at last one night he dreamt a dream in which Goddess Bhavani appeared to him and told him that he should choose as his Guru Ramdas under whose direction his future was destined to be moulded more gloriously than ever before. He had heard of the fame of Ramdas and was but too glad that his deity had asked him to take him as his Guru. He was thinking as to how he should approach him. In the meantime the news that Shivaji had captured Torana fort (which event took place in 1645) from the Moghuls reached the ears of Ramdas who at once sent a letter to Shivaji eulogising him for his valor and exhorting him to establish in Maharashtra Dharma and free it from the clutches of the Moghuls and protect the cows and Brahmins. This letter was placed in his hands just at the opportune time when he was seriously and anxiously thinking as to how he should get at Ramdas and obtain his blessings. The letter was written in poem and at its end Ramdas asked for Shivaji's pardon for writing the

letter when they were not known to each other and added that what made him write the letter still was the political slavery of Maharashtra which day by day was becoming more and more intolerant and unbearable. There was one more point in it to which he drew the special attention of Shivaji and that was that though he was staying in his province it was inexplicable how he could not have been aware of it so long. Shivaji immediately wrote the following reply and despatched it by the same messenger who brought Ramdas's letter: "Swamiji, I am really guilty, but I know that you are forgiving. I am very glad to receive your favour and blessings. I shall shortly go to see you." Next day he started and with the help of a disciple found out the place where Ramdas was. At the sight of Ramdas he was so much moved that he burst into tears. He said, "My long cherished desire to have a Darshan (look) of you has been fulfilled today. There is one more thing which I pray you to grant me and that is initiation. Thereupon Ramdas asked Shivaji to make certain preparations necessary for initiation. Shivaji did so. He went again to Ramdas who duly initiated him. These two souls, great in their own respective spheres (one in religion and the other in politics) though unacquainted with each other before were thus united by the serene and holy bond of Guru and disciple (master and pupil). Shivaji was much struck by the spiritual glow in Ramdas's face and was reluctant to live separated from him. So he requested Ramdas to permit him to live with him and serve him all his life. To this Ramdas said "Shivaba, it is the duty of a noble warrior like you to stand by the people, free them from slavery and give them peace and happiness." Shivaji as is the characteristic of a true disciple said 'Amen' to it but begged to be taught about Self, duties of a King and duties of a warrior. Ramdas agreed to do so and composed three stanzas which contained full and clear information on these points. When Shivaji was about to take leave of his Guru, the latter gave him one cocoanut, one handful of earth, two handfuls of horse dung and four handfuls of stones as present. Shivaji received them very reverently and bowing down humbly parted from him with tears in his eyes.

Returning to his palace Shivaji narrated the above incidents to his mother who was immensely pleased to hear that her son was blessed by the famous saint. She enquired her son as to what the significance could be of the articles of Prasad which the saint conferred on him. Thereupon Shivaji explained that by them

his Guru meant to convey that he (Shivaji) should conquer a vast kingdom with a good many forts and horses. What greater glory could a mother wish for her son! Her joy knew no bounds when she heard this. Shivaji resumed his work of governing his territory but made it a point to pay a visit to Ramdas once a week, relate to him all about his doings and solicit instructions on knotty points that confronted him especially in his dealings with the Mahomedan rulers. How tactfully he administered and extended his territory, how he managed to render abortive all the plans and designs of the Mahomedans to make him a captive, how he became too strong for his enemies—so strong that they had to advance to him terms of peace—are all matters of history. The historian does not know nor has he the means to know from where Shivaji got so much wisdom, power and ability. It is only those that have a full grasp of the relation between the disciple and his Guru, it is only those that know that only the seers of Truth can have an accurate knowledge of the place and function of things in this Universe, it is only those that can realize the existence of dynamic power in saints and sages that can see and understand that the real power which Shivaji manifested was not his but that of his spiritual Guru who used him simply as a conduit through which his power flowed. Ramdas took such great interest in Shivaji that he spared no pains to remove from his mind those qualities of egotism which bring in their train one's downfall and impotency and implant in their place broad views, noble ideas, and spirit of self-sacrifice which contribute success to all undertakings, be they social, political or religious. In one word Ramdas became Shivaji's guide in all matters, and was his very soul.

One day when Shivaji was superintending the building work of the fort of Samangad he felt proud of his glory and got elated thinking it was he who employed and maintained so many workmen and supported so many disciples of Ramdas. Just then Ramdas appeared on the spot. He took Shivaji with him and went round, minutely observing how the work was going on and at the same time talking on various subjects of importance. In their round they came across in the middle of a road a big rock. Ramdas ordered it to be split into two. It was done accordingly and lo! they found a living frog in a hollow full of water. Then Ramdas said, "Shivaba, what a great king you are! Your majesty has been providing even this frog with food!" Shivaji was touched to the quick when he perceived that the remark

was directed against his foolish pride in which he was but a few moments before indulging. He at once fell at the feet of Ramdas and craved his pardon. Ramdas then composed extempore a beautiful song the purport of which is as follows: "Whose food do we eat? It is Rama that gives us food. Trees grow on the parapet; who waters them? All have seen the living frog in the broken stone. Who gave it water—there being no sea? Just see who provides the child with pure milk which it sucks from its mother's breast which is nothing but flesh and blood? There being no bubbles of water in the sky Das asks how it rains and how cultivation is helped."

One day when Ramdas was going round for alms he came to the palace gate of Raigad where Shivaji was just then residing and loudly shouted "Jai Jaya Raghuvir Samartha." Shivaji came to know that Ramdas had come to his door and wished that he should now be given a fitting present. He at once took a paper and wrote on it, "All that I have acquired up till now, I offer at your feet." He signed and stamped it with Royal Seal and put the document in the piece of cloth which Ramdas was holding out for alms. Ramdas after perusing it remarked, "Shivaba, you have given your all. What are you going to do henceforward?" The reply promptly came, "As your Holiness orders." "If so come with me for alms," said Ramdas to Shivaji who readily consented to do so. Ramdas tied his piece of cloth round Shivaji's neck and both went round throughout the city begging for alms from door to door. Then they both returned to the forest where the other disciples of Ramdas prepared meals out of the rice and other materials brought by begging. The coarse preparations were first offered to Ramdas and then shared by all. After meals Ramdas said, "Shivaba, do you see what a tasteful meal we get ;?" at which Shivaji though used to dainties humbly replied, "I do prefer such meals in your company and wish to serve you all the while for all the pleasures of heaven and earth."

Ramdas was struck by the simplicity and whole-hearted devotion of Shivaji who was living or could afford to live in the lap of luxury. He praised him for his temperament and said, "Shivaba, you are a Kshatriya and it is your duty to look after your kingdom. Nothing will please God so much as this duty when done selflessly for its own sake."

Shivaji in his love and admiration for Ramdas one day pressed the latter to accept a gift from him. It was the habit of

Ramdas to decline all offers of help ; but when Shivaji importuned him to accept at least some lands for the service of his favourite deity, Ramdas said "Shivaba, I do not require anything specially for myself.—What you do for the welfare of the people is itself service to me. But you may assign to me Inams in territories which are still under the domination of foreign yoke." By this he insinuated that the work of liberation which Shivaji was charged with was still incomplete. In this and various ways Ramdas was the power behind Shivaji propelling him to rid the Hindu people from the thralldom of the Moghuls and to establish the Maharashta Empire on a religious basis. It was Ramdas who suggested to Shivaji that the national flag should be of orange colour—a suggestion which was readily taken up and carried out. As a sign of the word of liberation carried on with a higher spirit of service to God, the national flag of orange colour—the sign of Tyaga or renunciation—was hoisted on the forts in Maharashtra. This served to keep up the national sentiment at a higher level of spirituality in public affairs. The old forms of salutation, were dispensed with as implying submission to the foreigner and a new form was introduced. The new form of salutation was to repeat "Ram, Ram" a form which is still adhered to and observed by the backward classes in Maharashtra. Under Ramdas's inspiration and suggestion the Mahommedan designations of appointments held by Shivaji's principal officers were changed to Sanskrit equivalents and the forms of correspondence also were greatly improved.

The idea that he should make some gift to Ramdas got such a strong hold of Shivaji's mind that about the year 1650 Shivaji erected a building at Sajjangad for Ramdas to live in. And Shivaji explained to Ramdas that it was his earnest desire to see him often and often which would not be possible unless he consented to stay in the newly erected mansion. His request was so importunate that Ramdas had to yield to Shivaji's wishes and live in it. In 1680 Shivaji died leaving Maharashtra in a peaceful and happy condition freed from the oppression and tyranny of the Moghul rule. He left behind him two sons who began to quarrel for the supremacy of the throne. Hearing this Ramdas wrote to them a very beautiful letter of advise—a translation of which is appended below :

"Always be attentive. Never waste your time in sinful deeds. Be compassionate and offer yourself at the feet of the

Lord. Take no revenge on your officers but forgive them for their negligence and let them resume their duty with joyous hearts. Set an example to others by your noble mindedness and generous behaviour. Quarrel not among yourselves; for the enemy is ever on the watch for a split among you. Let all the people join under your banner and fight with the enemies and defeat them; for thus only will your fame spread far and wide. Let the whole world stand in awe of your power. Forget and forgive. Let the firmament ring with the shouts for freedom and the masses be awakened. Let the banner of the Maharshtras flutter on every hill fort. Be courageous and aspiring. Remember your father and immortalise yourselves by sacrificing your all in all at the altar of the nation. Let Shivaji be your ideal in life. Remember his valour and endless toil. Care not for pleasure or pain; but struggle to build up an Empire. Only then will you be called a man." This letter though short and brief reveals his fiery patriotism and strong spirituality.

Ramdas though not a great Sanskrit scholar was a great writer. He had a distinct style of his own. His hand-writing was very nice. From his very childhood he had a strong and healthy frame. He was a skilful swimmer and could tame and ride a turbulent horse. He was a good preceptor too. His teachings were suited to the times he lived. In the latter part of Magh on Navami day Ramdas who knew his end was drawing near sat in front of the image of Sri Rama in a meditative posture uttered "Hara Hara" Twentyone times and lastly uttering "Sri Ram" opened his eyes and instantly fixing them on the image shuffled off his mortal coil.

The following are some of the important works he wrote; Dasbodh Ramayana, Atmaram, Advice to the Mind, Miscellaneous Abhangas etc. Of these Dasbodha and Advice to the Mind are greatly read and revered in Maharashtra.

HOW INDIA CAN REGAIN HER LOST POSITION

By S. S. Settur, M.A., L.L.B.

* * *

On one occasion, the Swami (Vivekananda), myself and two or three other pets of his were seated in a room at the "Castle Kernan", Triplicane, Madras. Our talk turned on Japan. The Swami at once fell into a sort of reverie and said "How quickly has Japan proved to Europe what an Asiatic is capable of. At one stroke of her sword she has smashed for ever the lie—the abominable lie—of the inferiority of the Eastern to the Western. What is Japan when compared to India? But yet three-hundred millions of human beings are vegetating here like so many worms under the heels of a handful of foreigners without even realizing their own pitiful position. They never realize that India was the Queen of Asia for five thousand years and now Japan has taken her place without even a sigh escaping from them."

On hearing this outburst, every one there was visibly affected and we remained mute. He was also silent for half a minute and started again. The following is an amplified version of what he said. "Oh, how I would change all this in ten years, if only you Brahmanas did your duty. How I wish I were a Brahmana. Then I would have shown what a true Brahmana ought to do". Then turning to me he said, "The other day when I asked you to go to America, you brought in the excuse of not being a platform speaker. I know you are proud of your birth and one can always read it in your face. Of what value is your birth, if you are not prepared to discharge the duty that goes with it? Brahmanas in this country have been worshipped by all the rest for centuries. Do you know why? The latter were not such idiots as to worship them, merely because they were Brahmins. You know how far famed India has always been for her wealth, for her goods and the rest. Was not this wealth acquired by the energy, brain-power, and skill of Kshatriyas and others? The Brahmana has very little share to his credit. Does this not shew that in worldly knowledge, shrewdness, commonsense and the like, others were not unequal but superior to the Brahmanas. You see this superiority even

now. In the knowledge of Brahma Vidya were they inferior? No, never, look at the Upanishads. Swetaketu went to a Kshatriya to learn them. By far the best part of the Upanishads proceeded from the brains of the Kshatriya. You cannot therefore, attribute the position conceded to the Brahmanas to their superiority in Brahma Vidya.

But yet it is an undoubted fact that ever since Indian culture started by the Brahmana he has been given the first place in this country. You cannot account for this in anyway except by attributing it to his special function of Adhyapana or teaching. Whenever the Brahmana overlooked this fact and claimed superiority for his mere birth then was trouble. Our Vedas and Puranas tell of great feuds arising between Brahmanas and Kshatriyas. The story of Parasurama is an instance and that of Vasishta—Viswamitra rivalry is another. The Brahmana earned his high position through his function. He was entrusted with the education of the nation. He was an honorary teacher throughout. Therefore our Sastras made it a duty of every one else to look after him by free gifts. If only you did your duty as Brahmanas, India can do it in ten years what Japan did in thirty years."

Then I asked, "Is it so easy?"

"Certainly it is", he replied, "you say 'yes' and I tell you how".

On being pressed to give us his scheme, he said this :—

"The scheme is very simple. I have already said so many times that of all the countries I have seen of the world, India is the most cultured and civilized. Man to Man and Class to Class, this is undoubtedly true. We had no directors of Public Instruction, no Departments of education, and no staff of paid teachers. But yet Vedic culture was carried to every nook and corner of this vast continent. Some old Vedic text declares that a Sudra reciting Vedas should have his tongue cut. But this precept was confined to the shell of words. The substance 'which is what really counts' was made available to all. You are a Ramanuja and you claim the Tamil songs of your Alwars contain the essence of the Upanishads. Many of your Alwars were Sudras, Bedars and Pariahs. How did this occult knowledge, the Goodha Vidya reach them without being taught by

the Brahmanas? The truth is that the Brahmanas being confined by law to the profession of teaching, had to make it a life work. This led no doubt to a narrowness of outlook on their part which is responsible for their present degenerate position. But the nation had the benefit of their services to the full. Every village had its Pauranik and Joshi and even a Shastri. Every town had its Pandit. Every Pandit's house was a School and a College at once, because he took up a student at seven and sent him out into the world only after he graduated as a great Tarkik, or Vaidyakarana or Meemamsaka and so on. If the present day Brahmana, instead of running after government service and money, should stick to his function of teaching, the whole of India can be given the benefit of the new ideas of the West in a few years. I would therefore have you set an example by starting an Educational Mission of the Brahmanas on the lines of—say, the Jesuit Mission. You may adapt their rules to your wants. Take up boys at an early age and bring them up, as the old Brahmanas used to do, in strict Brahmacharya discipline. Teach them all the sciences quickly with the help of magic lanterns and other means which modern science has put in your hands. When they are sixteen or eighteen select out of them those who would be true Naishtika Brahmacharis by voluntarily electing poverty and teaching. Train up these boys in all the latest Sciences and Arts of Agriculture, Commerce, and so on which were taught in ancient times as the sixty-four Kalas and then make them members of your Mission and send them out to Villages and Talooks and Districts. In time your Mission will gradually spread over the whole country as the European Missions have done. Our masses are cultured already. What they want is modern Western ideas. Those can be taught without books as we were doing before, through Kathas and Puranas. In the West they are adopting these methods calling them University Extension Lectures. Hitherto Puranic Stories were recited in the Kathas. The great Historical Stories may be substituted to a certain extent making them as interesting as the others. Your missionaries must establish factories as European missionaries do, but work them for being handed over to the people. They must be loyal to the Indian principle of the open door and no monopoly. *

* Culled from the writer's "Education in Ancient India" Published in the Benares Hindu University Magazine for July, 1927.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

ORGANISED CHRISTIANITY A FAILURE

"The church became all-too-worldly in many respects. * * *
The church adopted things all too human to divine needs. * * *
The church has been strikingly backing in great leaders. * * *
The decline of religious influence is the prevalence of mediocre preaching and this in turn is due in part to the neglect of great issues." These are some of the charges levelled against the organised form of Christianity by a thoughtful writer in his "Outlook of Religion"—an article in the November issue of the *Open Court*. Says he, "The ordinary man simply does not take the church seriously, nor does he take religion as he understands it seriously. There are of course, notable exceptions, but this is the rule. The ordinary man really believes in 'human kindness large among the sons of men' and he has the feeling that the order of things cosmic to some extent sustains such values. But he finds the church inactive or hostile to his specific aspirations for a larger life. He finds the church more active in devising prohibitions than in promoting life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Consequently while a certain strain of mysticism may cause him to retain nominal relations with the church, his heart is not there. It is likewise with authors of note. Where is the modern literature of commanding importance that glorifies the institutions of religion? In vain does one search the volumes of Hardy, Shaw, Wells, Hergesheimer, Drieser and Lewis for evidence of confidence in the influence of organised religion. A frontal attack like Elmer Gantry follows a period of silent contempt as in Main Street.

"The primary assumption of the enormous number of magazine articles dealing with religion is that the church and its allied institutions are not functioning adequately, that the ointment is verily infested with pestiferous insects. The altitude of the press is distinctly not favourable to the church.

"But what is still more serious, competent, honest and devoted students of life, servants of humanity, frankly regard the church as a social problem. Witness Bertrand Russell. In London he delivers an address telling why he is not a Christian, and incidentally challenging the foundations of the old religions. Page the

whole world of humanitarian leaders, and only a small percentage will be found actively interested in organised religion." Some church-men have begun to see the defects of the present organisation and have been courageous enough to give vent to their convictions. The Bishop of Durham opined the other day that the Church of England with all other churches, was in the greatest danger of disintegration and disruption and that the majority of citizens had ceased to be Christians while on the other side of the Atlantic Bishop Manning of New York declared, "At this moment the Christian Church stands before the world disqualified for her divine post" These assertions only go to shew that Christianity as an organisation has spent its force and the hankering West looks forward today to the establishment of a new order of things.

DEVITALISING INFLUENCE OF A FOREIGN TONGUE

The sad state of our present system of education has been clearly and forcefully brought home to the readers in a thought-provoking article by Mr. P. N. Datta on "*Education,*" or *The Wasting a Nation's life and Energy*, in the December issue of the *Modern Review*. The writer has rightly pointed out that the main cause among others for this deplorable condition of the educated lies in "the pitiful waste of the life and energy of the nation in driving its youth from infancy upwards to the parrot like learning of a foreign tongue". How much this demand of a foreign language has crippled the child intellectually has been well summarised after a detailed handling of the subject in this wise. "Now," says he, "remember the language is entirely foreign to the child and has no affinity whatever with his mother tongue. He has to plod on through the spelling, the meaning of words, the different meanings of the same words and having the same sound but spelt differently and meaning of words with different affixes and prefixes. The task of learning the language is thus rendered extremely difficult and tedious. But as his medium of instruction is English and as his acquisition of any fresh knowledge depends upon the extent to which he has been able to master the language, the serious handicap of the Indian child in the race for knowledge is perfectly obvious." With what result? "The result is that he is actually acquiring very little fresh knowledge while his mental capacities are being tried to the utmost and his energies exhausted and wasted in acquiring what virtually amounts to a smattering of English which will be of very little

use to him so far as his mental culture is concerned." How does the youth then fare under the present system physically and morally? "Two of our young men out of three at the University", says he, "are suffering from some organic defect or other, and the chances of their being in sound health at the time of their leaving the University are dead against them." "That numbers of our young men, brilliant and fresh from the University and giving high promise of a bright future, often contract diseases, such as diabetes soon after entering on their professional careers and are shortly and prematurely cut off in consequence, would seem to afford evidence as to something being wrong somewhere in the state of things at the University." This is not all. His moral equipment, when he is to start life is next to nothing,—“the educational machinery having never for a moment, from the entrance of the child into a High School till his leaving the University as a Master of Arts or Sciences, pretended to care for the moral side of his nature—having in fact completely ignored it throughout—he owes it to his *Alma mater* if he finds himself at the end of his University career at 25 standing completely naked and bare, that is, without any strong bias or attachment to truth, justice or fairness.”

No wonder then that a section of young India have opened their eyes and have condemned this system as perpetuating slave mentality and are trying to set up a system suited to their own.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

The Mysterious Kundalini: By Vasant G. Rele. With a foreword by Sir John Woodroffe. Published By O. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co. Kitab Mahal, Bombay. Pages 112 with appendix. Price Rs. 3-8-0.

In this book the author has attempted scientific explanation of the Kundalini and the Six Chakras of the Yogic literature. He identifies the Kundalini with the right Vagus nerve, and the Six Chakras with the six plexuses of the sympathetic portion of the autonomic system. "To my mind," says the author, "Kundalini or the serpent power, as it is called, is the Vagus nerve of modern times, which supplies and controls all the important vital organs through different plexuses of the sympathetic portion of the autonomic system."

We are sorry we cannot agree with the learned author when he drags the conscious principle Kundalini, the Adya Sakti and the Six Chakras over which she rules, to the domain of matter and equates them with dead inert objects such as nerves and nerve centres. Although we are no scientists and are therefore not competent to pass our judgment on the correctness or otherwise of the workings of the nerves, we can, with some authority at least, say this much that the author's explanation of the Kundalini is quite inadequate from the orthodox point of view. For, while the Kundalini is described in the Yoga texts as a spiritual principle, the individual cosmic energy, the author brings her down making her an inert unconcious matter of the world just the opposite of what she actually is. Lacking as we are in personal experience regarding the true nature of the Kundalini, we cannot disbelieve, so far as this point is concerned, the authority of scriptures which has been even to this day substantiated by the spiritual realisation of many saints and Yogis of the land. The experience of Sri Ramprasad, is an instance in point. This poet-saint of Bengal, whose Yogic experiences were made into garlands of immortal songs by his own good self sang quite in tune with what the scriptures declare. And Sri Ramakrishna also had no two views. They realised the Kundalini as a conscious spiritual force as mentioned in the scripture. We cannot doubt their realisations simply because they cannot be brought before the ordinary human understanding like a temporal object. There are many things that cannot be explained from what may be called the scientific point of view, and yet they are ever true. In the face of such personal experiences of men of authority as stated above, we cannot accept the author's pleading for identifying the Kundalini with the Vagus nerve. Equally so his interpretation of the Six Chakras.

The writer's way of reconciling the anomaly in the singular use of the Kundalini in the Yogic scriptures and the existence of two Vagus nerves or Kundalinis, as the author puts it, in our body—(with one of which, the right Vagus, is identified the Kundalini of the Yogic literature) is indefinite and far-fetched. His observation that : " They (writers on Yoga) perhaps knew that one of the Kundalinis was not as powerful as the other or could not form connection or pierce through all the important plexuses mentioned by them" is, we are afraid, going too far

for supporting his contention. We entirely subscribe our views to the author's own argument when he says: "Want of knowledge is hardly conceivable in the face of the very accurate description of the sensory nerves" on the part of the authors of Yogic literature. Such being the case it would not be too much to expect of them a clear mention of two Kundalinis if they did find it to be so. As a matter of fact—they did not find two Kundalinis. They saw one. This is supported by the realisations of men of authority.

Nevertheless, the book has its merit too. It is the result of a sincere attempt, to explain Yoga in the light of modern science, although not properly directed. We have read the book with great interest and also to our positive benefit in certain matters. We sincerely appreciate the zeal and enthusiasm that impelled the learned author to undertake the task of writing this little treatise. The book involves hard labour, wide study and deep thinking. We recommend it for the study of those who are interested in the science of Yoga. Such enterprise is indeed admirable in these days.

1. Sri Krishna Paksham. } Paintings.
2. Sri Krishna Vijayam. }

In Water colours—Size 14 X 20. Rs. 3 each. To be had from M. S. Sarma and Sons, Art Publishers, 20, Alangatha Pillai Street, Triplicane.

Indian art still seeks for its inspiration in religion. The two paintings before us are pictures from Bhagavan Sri Krishna's life. The first painting portrays a dead of night scene. The roaring Yamuna flows. From the Yamuna banks shimmer lights through the windows of Yasoda's home, as if eagerly welcoming the coming of the Lord. And the Lord sleeps in Vasudevas precious burden on his head—and Vasudeva is seen wading through the roaring floods.

In Sri Krishna Vijayam we are in Yasoda's well-decorated bed room—Vasudeva has already reached and kept the blue baby with his golden halo beside the sleeping Yasoda. Over Yogamaya bends Vasudava about to carry her.

The pictures are quite suggestive.

NEWS AND REPORTS

SWAMI JANESWARANANDA'S ARRIVAL AT NEW YORK

Swami Jnaneswarananda who left Calcutta for New York last October, reached Boston on the 11th November and was received by Swami Akhilananda who went all the way from New York solely for the purpose. After a short happy stay at Boston, both the Swami and proceeded to New York, reaching there on the 16th. On Sunday, the 20th November, the members of the Vedanta Society of New York presented a cordial address of welcome to the new Swami. In reply he spoke a few wholesome words which were highly appreciated by his new friends. Both at Boston and New York the Swami entertained the friends and admirers of Vedanta Society with his charming music.

ANANDA ASHRAMA

The famous Russian musical director, Leopold Stokowski of international reputation visited the Ashrama twice this year and stayed there for some time.

The summer this year has been a specially fruitful one and has resulted in the reconstitution of the Los-Angeles Vedanta centre and the establishment of a Library and a Reading Room in connection with it. Daily meetings and special meetings on every Wednesday have been conducted. On the resumption of the Los-Angeles centre Swami Paramananda delivered three public lectures in the Symphony Hall. His subjects were "Indias Gifts to the World," "The Great Yoga System of India" and "Karma and Involutionary Healing."

A NEW SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAM AT RANCHI

The Ramakrishna Mission has recently started a new centre at Ranchi in a beautiful Bungalow, given away by Sreemati Indira Devi, the heiress of late Mr. Jyotirindra Nath Tagore of Calcutta. In accordance with the wish of the deceased, a Homoeopathic dispensary will be started by the Mission, where medicines and treatment to the poor Santhals would be given free. The house is situated four miles away from the town on a tableland, 2500 ft. above sea-level and commands the entire view of Ranchi. For the maintenance of the Ashram a small annual grant has also been provided. Swami Visuddhananda has been deputed by the Mission to take the charge of the Ashram and is to be assisted by another Swami in his work.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION RELIEF WORK

ACCOUNTS OF ORRISSA FLOOD RELIEF WORK

(FROM 19TH SEPTEMBER TO 10TH DECEMBER, 1927.)

We beg to announce that the Ramakrishna Mission has closed its relief operations in Orissa, after giving the last distribution of rice at Hanspat on the 5th December and at Dehurda giving a distribution of blankets on the 10th December. From these two centres 1726 mds. 21 seers of rice, 191 pieces of blankets and 40 pieces of new cloths were distributed to the distressed inhabitants of 89 villages.

The accounts given below will show that the total expenditure of the work is Rs. 10,175-0-9, while we have received by donations from the public Rs. 5,961-9-6 only. So exhausting our Provident Relief Fund, which is mainly intended for emergency and for giving a start to some relief work in the beginning, we had to make an advance of Rs. 1,825-8-9 from the other funds of the Mission.

We appeal to our generous countrymen for their kind help to make up the deficit amount and also fill up the Provident Relief Fund and put us in a position to continue our work in future. Contributions may be sent to the President, Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math P. O. Dist : Howrah.

ACCOUNTS

Receipts—Received by donations Rs. 5,961-9-6. By sale proceeds of articles Rs. 148-12-3. From Ramakrishna Mission Provident Relief Fund Rs. 2,239-2-3. Advance from other funds of the Mission Rs. 1,825-8-9. Total Rs. 10,175-0-9.

Expenditure—Rice for recipients Rs. 8,714-7-6. Other food grain, 9-15-3, Sacks Rs. 96-4-0, Transit 234-4-9, Travelling 245-11-6, Equipments 69-5-0, Worker's expenses (for 9 workers) 348-7-6, Establishment 89-14-0, Stationery 12-12-6, Postage 51-9-9, Medicine 24-13-0, Blankets 166-0-3, Pecuniary help 4-7-3, Miscellaneous 7-0-6. Total Rs. 10,175-0-9.

The 19th December, 1927.

(Sd.) SUDDHANANDA

Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission.

BIRTHDAY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

The Sixty-sixth Birthday of Srimat Swami Vivekananda comes off on the 14th of January 1928. The Anniversary will be celebrated at the Sri Ramakrishna Math, Brodies Road Mylapore, Madras, on Sunday, the 22nd inst.

BIRTHDAY OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

The Ninety-third Birthday of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna falls this year on Thursday, the 23rd of February next. The Anniversary celebration takes place at the Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras on Sunday the 26th February, 1928. Feeding of the Daridra-Narayanans will form one of the most important items of the programme on both occasions.