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THE VEDANTA KESARI

"LET THE LION OF VEDANTA ROAR."



VOL. XVI, No. 3: JULY, 1929.

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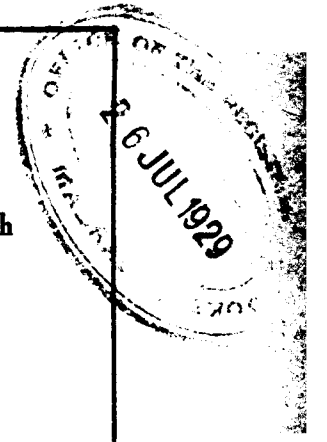
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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Vol. XVI]

JULY 1929

[No.

PRAYER

ॐ

कृष्ण कृष्ण महायोगिस्त्वमाद्यः पुरुषः परः ।

व्यक्ताव्यक्तमिदं विश्वं रूपं ते ब्राह्मणा विदुः ॥

त्वमेकः सर्वभूतानां देहात्वात्मेश्वरः ।

त्वमेव कालो भगवान्विष्णुरव्ययश्चरः ॥

वाणी गुणानुकथने श्रवणौ कथायां

हस्तौ च कर्मसु मनस्तव पादयोर्नः ।

स्मृत्या शिरस्तवनिवासजगत्प्रणामे

दृष्टिः सतां दर्शनेस्तुभवत्तनूनाम् ॥

नमः परमकल्याण नमः परममंगल ।

वासुदेवाय शान्ताय यदूनां पतये नमः ॥

O Krishna, Yogin Supreme, Thou art the Great Original Being. The universe, manifest and unmanifest, is known to the wise as Thy body.

Thou art the sole Master of the body, breaths, the mind and the senses of all beings. Thou art Time, the Possessor of all majesties, the Lord omnipotent and subject to no change.

Let our speech be devoted to the narration of Thy greatness, our ears to the hearing of Thy stories, our hands to the performance of Thy works, our minds to the meditation of thy feet, our heads to bowing to the world as thy abode, and our eyes to seeing the righteous who are Thy body.

Salutations unto Thee, O Vasudeva, the Lord of the gods, who art the abode of everything auspicious and good.

SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM

GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

About 8 p.m. in the evening, Monday the 20th August, 1883, when M. and his friend Hari Babu entered the room of the Master, they found him meditating within the mosquito-net, sitting on his smaller cot. As they sat on the floor, the Master came out of the net which was then rolled up, and was saluted by the devotees.

The Master said [to Mani], "I was meditating within the mosquito-net; and I thought that meditation was nothing but imagining a form and I did not like it. How fine it would be if He reveals the object of meditation in a flash! I said to myself, 'when is the difference between the meditator and the object of meditation?'"

Mani: Yes, sir. You said that He Himself has become the beings and the world and everything. He who meditates is also He.

Sri Ramakrishna: Again, if He does not make us meditate, can we meditate? Meditation also depends on His will. What do you say?

Mani: Such is your case no doubt, because you have no ego within you. Whoever has destroyed his ego has reached this state.

Sri Ramakrishna: But it is good to have the consciousness of being the servant of the Lord. While I am feeling that I am doing everything, it is excellent to consider myself as a servant of God.

[Signs of the knowledge of Brahman]

Mani used to contemplate the nature of Parabrahman. The Master said to him,

"Brahman is like the sky, He does not undergo any modification, even as fire has no intrinsic colour of its own. By His own Shakti, He has assumed variegated forms. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are really the three Gunas of Shakti. If you cast a particular substance into the fire, the fire will burn white; with another it will be red, with yet another, it will be black. Brahman is beyond all the three Gunas and none can ever describe His nature.

He is beyond speech. Whatever persists after everything else has been negated away and causes infinite bliss, is Brahman.

"A bridegroom has come to his father-in-law's place and has been sitting in the parlour along with many other young men of his age. The bride and her friends have been seeing them from the next room through a window. Her friends do not know her husband; so they pointing to a young man ask her, "Is that your husband?" The girl smiles and says, "No." Then they point to another and ask her if that is her husband; again she says, "No." Again they point to a third one and receive the same negative answer, till they point to the bridegroom himself and ask her. This time she says neither yes nor no, but only smiles and remains silent. Then her friends knew that this indeed was her husband.

"Wherever there is true knowledge of Brahman, there is silence."

[Holy company: the duty of the householder]

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mani): Why do I talk so much?

Mani: That is for awakening the spiritual consciousness of the devotees, just as, to quote your words, the boiled ghee will make a bubbling sound when the raw bread is thrown into it to be fried.

The Master referred to Hajra in course of conversation.

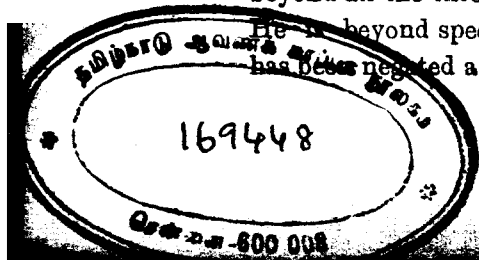
Sri Ramakrishna (to Mani): Do you know what is the nature of a good man? He never pains or worries any one. There are some who are so constituted that when on invitation they will demand to be seated separately at the dinner. If one is truly devoted to God, one never takes a false step,—one never causes trouble to others.

"One should never mix in bad company. One should always keep aloof from the evil ones,—one has to carefully save oneself. [to Mani] What is your opinion?"

Mani: Yes, sir, bad company drags down the mind from spiritual levels. But as you said, it is different with the strong and the heroic.

Sri Ramakrishna: How is that?

Mani: When the fire is low, if we put in fresh fuel, the fire goes out. But a blazing fire is not affected even by a fully grown plaintin tree; it burns it to ashes.



The Master enquired about Mani's friend, Hari Babu. Hari Babu had lost his wife some eleven years before and he had not married again. He had his parents, and brothers and sisters of whom he was very fond and took good care. He was about 29 years old. Mani said to the Master, "He has come to see you. He lost his wife long ago."

Sri Ramakrishna : What do you do ?

Mani : He does not do anything particular. But he takes good care of his people.

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) : How is that ? You have become a 'pumpkin-cutting brother-in-law.' You are neither a worldly man nor a devotee of the Lord. This is not good. In certain families, there are some men who are always busy with the boys and girls of the families and smoke their hubble-bubble in the outer apartments;—they have no other work. But sometimes they go inside the house and cut pumpkins. Women, you know, do not cut a whole pumpkin;* so they send word to them through the young boys to come and cut the pumpkins. That is the only use the families make of these men. Therefore they are called 'pumpkin-cutting brother-in-law'.

"Do this, but do also that. Look after your worldly affairs, but keep your mind in the lotus-feet of the Lord. And whenever you are free and alone, read such books on devotion as *Srimad Bhagavatam* or *Chaitanyacharitamrita*, etc."

By that time it was about ten at night. The Kali temple was not yet closed. So Mani went and bowed at the Vishnu and Kali temples. It was a moon-lit night and the whole temple looked beautiful in the silvery light.

When he returned to the Master's room he found him sitting to a light supper. A little while after he and his friend bowed at the Master's feet and left for Calcutta.

* In Bengal the custom prevails that women should not cut whole pumpkins,—these should be first cut into two by a male; then only women can prepare them for the kitchen.

THE BASIS OF CULTURAL SYNTHESIS

Cultural contact is one of the most powerful factors to bring the distant parts of the globe into closer touch with one another. The humanising forces of race-culture instinct with a potential urge for expansion transcend all the barriers which a national tradition imposes upon human imagination; they open out wider visions of life and thought, and thereby facilitate a rapid synthesis of world-experiences as well as a harmony of aspirations. This kind of cultural relation is not a new phenomenon in the annals of the present day, but is as old as the history of the human race. The civilisations of the ancient people coming in contact with one another produced even in the dim past an atmosphere of kinship and cultural understanding. The role India has ever played towards the consummation of such an end stands in bold contrast with the spirit of exclusiveness that characterises the modern life of the Western people. The deathless soul of India quickened the decaying pulse of Europe many a time before, however much the modern West may ignore this fact in the heat of her political greatness. "In the prosperity of Persia and Egypt she laid the foundations of the Grecian and Roman civilisations; through political Greece, she gave Europe Christianity, and through the world-conquering Arab she was the mother of Renaissance, of Reformation and of the scientific and humanistic movements that followed it." The splendid achievements of the servants of the Greater India Society coupled with many an archaeological discovery of the present day have brought to light how in the distant past the tidal wave of Indian culture transcending all geographical limitations swept through different channels of human thought in far-off lands and made a cultural conquest of the greater portion of humanity before any other race could even step out into the glare of a civilised life. In fact such an interchange of experiences and ideas has been a silent and gradual process, and history shows that however strong and well-defined the territorial boundaries may be, the accumulated wisdom of the different races cannot be kept confined for long within their narrow surroundings. Either through political aggression or commercial expansion, these barriers are broken down and opportunities are opened for a fusion of cultures. The establishment of European domination in the East has created a new ferment in the thought-world of humanity; it has brought into bold relief the distinctive features of the two types of civilisations of the East and the West. It has furthermore ushered into prominence the most pressing problem whether the aggressive Western culture would engulf altogether the passi v

civilisation of the East or a happy cultural synthesis is at all possible of accomplishment through mutual understanding and a process of assimilation.

Humanity demands that a pointed and straightforward answer must be given to this question and a common meeting ground should be found out where the East and the West can unite and evolve a fuller civilisation in the interest of human well-being. It has been rightly pointed out by the Hon. Bertrand Russel that one conclusion is irresistible that any future civilisation must be a world-civilisation, not the civilisation of a nation or even a continent. Asiatic ideals cannot be preserved in Asia except to the extent to which they can be spread over mankind. The days when isolation was possible are past; Asia must teach the West or unlearn her distinctive virtues. For, the whole world is interdependent and a constant stream of thought has through ages enriched the common heritage of mankind. It is the realisation of the mutual dependence that has kept the mighty human fabric bound together and ensured the continuity and permanence of civilisation. It must also be remembered that the evolution of the different types of civilisation differs not because of any fundamental difference in human nature but on account of differences in circumstances and environments. The Western civilisation owing to its peculiar environments bears the stamp of aggressive manliness. It is characterised by 'a spirit of group action, scientific and business organisations, efficiency, power and material comfort and gratification;' and the reason is not far to seek. The Western people had to contend with the mighty forces of the sea and the light of their civilisation was practically lit up there. The history of the whole host of the European powers—Greece, Rome, Italy, Spain, France, Scandinavia and the British Isles—points invariably to the one conclusion that the Western civilisation is but a continuous development of the struggling process with the sea. The heroic struggle for existence as well as the insatiable craze for the expansion of their sphere of material influence drew out the virile energies of the people which expressed themselves in group-activity. In fact the Western civilisation was bred under the stimulus of an insistent urge for expansion and conquest. Efficiency has been its keynote and industrialism is but a natural sequence of the commercial instincts of the Western people whose bubbling energies have found their material fulfilment in the activities on the sea. But the case is quite different with the Asiatic people. The Eastern civilisation is an inland one; for the people placed in the midst of favourable environments had very little to contend with adverse forces and consequently developed a reposeful civilisation along the banks of the mighty rivers that water the fertile soils of

their respective lands. Egypt built up her greatness on the Nile, Assyria and Babylon on the Euphrates and the Tigris, China on the Hwang Ho and so did India evolve out her splendid civilisation on the banks of the Ganges. The genius of the Eastern races developed into an inwardness of vision instead of gravitating towards material greatness. Asiatic civilisation is in fact characterised by love for peace and toleration, mysticism and meditation, spiritual comfort as well as salvation. Conservatism which is one of its distinctive traits has often been denounced as antagonistic to human progress, but a deeper analysis reveals that this stability or conservatism has kept it as firm as the pyramids of Egypt or the peaks of the Himalayas while the civilisations of Greece and Rome, Egypt and Babylon have been swept away from the face of the earth through the ravages of Time.

Aggressive militarism and efficient industrialism are conspicuous by their absence in the entire scheme of Eastern life, though in the eyes of the Western people these are considered as effective instruments of human progress. This attitude of supreme indifference to material concerns is primarily due to the deep-seated spiritual instincts of the East, that did never compromise themselves with the pragmatism of the West and lend countenance to the morbid principle that money and power should govern all human aspirations. Herein lies the fundamental difference between the two types of civilisation in their spirit and outlook. It is the abstract idea behind the concrete fact of life that really counts in the progressive realisation of the Eastern cultural ideal. One is thus intensely spiritual, and individual realisation has been reckoned as the summum bonum of human aspiration; whereas the other by nature of its development and expression amidst peculiar environments is ultra-materialistic. The absence of struggle has led one more or less to a state of repose while the extraneous circumstances have filled the other into intense activity. Rightly Prince A. Lobanov Rostovsky has remarked: "The European civilisation is extensive and quantitative, whereas the Asiatic is intensive and qualitative. The culture of Europe addresses itself to the masses, and in doing so has to level itself down to the general comprehension at the expense of certain higher qualities. In Asia the masses are not taken into consideration; life is left to follow its natural course, and just as any other force of nature, its growth remains wild." But in spite of these characteristic differences in the two types of culture, the idea of exclusive growth and evolution of one at the expense of the other at this stage of world's progress is indeed preposterous. "East and West are but two points on the horizon and as we extend our vision these two apparently opposite

points come closer and closer until they blend in unity," so says a modern thinker.

The facilities of international contact were never so great as now. The distances of time and space have been annihilated through the marvellous feats of science, and *already there are unfailing indications of a synthetic understanding of human purposes and destiny.* Human energies like the centrifugal and centripetal forces have their ebb and flow in the affairs of men, and this variation in the tide becomes visible as we study the history of nations. The world is now no longer local; the whole human mind has been consciously open to truth. For, physically science has made the world one, and psychologically, the whole world has become expectant, and there have arisen new breeds of culture in which the stereotyped character of the separate culture is altogether lost. Everything is now in a melting pot. India has much to learn and much to teach. She might sit at the feet of the West and learn practical sciences. But she has also her priceless treasures to give to the West in exchange for the secular knowledge. India has ever been the world's international intellectual Exchange, and to-day in this age of world's greatest readjustment the East and the West have again met together on the soil of India for the evolution of international solidarity. The conception of the individual has undergone a material alteration, and the generalisations and intentions of the East and the detailed knowledge of the West have now met to show man as other than the body—as the veritable embodiment of a world-soul. Even in the conception of States both have shaken off their instinctive belief in kingheads and have pitched upon democratic ideas that have come to stay in the world. For, democratic system takes cognisance of larger compass of wills, recognises the individual as real and opens avenues through which the burden of his experience may be effective at the centre of power. Besides, the West is daily growing sick of her material culture, and many sincere souls are now out to feel the heart-beat of humanity. In the West there has of late been a great orientation of the philosophy of life, and many are laying the greatest stress upon the value of thought,—the foremost among them being the idealists of France and America. On the other hand, most of the lands of the East have already begun to run the process of industrialisation and understood the intrinsic merit of the West's technical efficiency. But, as Lord Russel puts it, 'something of what the West has to teach in the way of technical efficiency will have to be assimilated, since otherwise East will continue to be exploited and oppressed by the West. When man's main purposes are bad, efficiency is harmful. It would be far better to pursue the common good with some slackening

of efficiency than to pursue mutual destruction with the energy and ruthlessness which the West admires.' He further points out that *Asia must come to the rescue of the world, by causing Western inventiveness to subserve human ends* instead of the base cravings of oppression and cruelty to which it has been prostituted by the dominant nations of the present day.

But this superficial 'give and take' is not the sure cohesive force that would suffice to bring about a co-ordination between the two unless the angle of vision is changed and the underlying principle of oneness of humanity is visualised and made to govern the aspirations and activities of men. There must be a free exchange of heart, and each must look upon the other with love and respect and not with a sense of supercilious contempt that has created so much discordance in the harmony of our cosmic life. Viewed through the telescope of history it becomes distinctly evident that the crude method of unifying nations through diplomatic manouvres is sure to prove nugatory. The once glorious part played by Alexander and Caesar, Attila and Charlemagne, Tamerlane and Napoleon now sinks into insignificance when the permanent values of their military exploits are judged in the light of other unifying forces that have contributed to the solidarity of men in the realm of human ideals and aspirations. Other nations except India have up till now given historic importance to the warrior and king; but India to the person who is the maker of warrior's thought. The making of human life into new historic moulds has ever been the proud function of Rama and Krishna, Zoroastrian and Buddha, Confucius and Lao-Tse, Christ and Mahomet; for, their width of vision, catholicity of heart and, above all, their spirituality have been the priceless legacy to the humanity of all ages and climes. Thought is the spring of action, and when that thought is sublimated into a spiritual potency, it transcends all limitations and governs the thought-world of mankind. That is why the teachings of the saints and prophets of all climes count more in the betterment of human lot than any number of political platitudes in the name of peace and good-will. For the silent thinker is the mover of nations' will. A Luther and a Voltaire, a Rousseau and a Thomas Paine are more valuable assets in the history of human progress than the hosts of military prodigies the world has ever produced. Europe must learn to view the outlook of life through this new perspective: for 'what appears to be permanent for the future welfare of humanity is the re-establishment of the balance between the two continents broken a couple of centuries ago. However, as the water-tight compartments which had enabled the various civilisations to grow side by side have been definitely swept away, the only basis on which this balance can

be achieved is the more complete fusion of the civilisations concerned.It is to be hoped that this evolution will not make out of Asiatics only second-rate Europeans but that the magnificent creative genius of Asia will adapt itself to novel conditions, and on the basis of European cross-fertilisation will produce a synthesis of new cultural values. *Europe must acknowledge whole-heartedly the spiritual riches of Asia, not as museum curiosities but as real living values to be absorbed into her own civilisation.*

The East has once more rallied round her sacred idealism; and there is also an attempt to absorb into her system whatever of the West has been found conducive to the healthy growth of her organic life. The East has ever recognised that a Bernard Shaw or a Mother-link, Bergson or an Undset, Romain Rolland or a Rabindranath, has no local habitation; for they are all pitched high above the artificial distinctions of race or nationality and commands the respectful homage of entire humanity. In art and music, painting and sculpture, literature and drama, men and women sing but to the one cosmic tune and visualise the same supreme beauty that is universal and human; and it is the glory of the East, especially of India, that the movers of thought have in every age been deified and worshipped with the flowers of love and reverence. But may we ask what the West has done up till now to intensify this spirit of universal brotherhood? In spite of these long years of mutual contact, the manifold achievements of the Oriental minds have not as yet been allowed to accommodate themselves in the scheme of the cultural reconstruction of the Western world. The reason is indeed quite palpable. Most of the Eastern nations have so long been under the political thumb of the West and thus suffered in their estimation; and the accumulated wisdom of the East was looked down upon as 'the babblings of an infant humanity.' It is indeed a hopeful sign of the times that some thinkers have got over this superiority complex and are trying to watch the march of events from a higher platform of life. The gift of the East is the gift of spirituality—the only force that must change the entire relation of mankind. However marvellous and awe-inspiring the material achievements of the West may be, there is no gain-saying the fact that the whole fabric of her culture must crumble to pieces unless the Eastern culture is brought to bear on the whole trend of Western activity. "*The West needs a temple bell to rest and the East a bugle call to action*"—is indeed a pithy pronouncement of a Chinese professor that epitomises the whole psychology of the present cultural synthesis. Man does not live by bread alone; he must needs tap some other sources for the satisfaction of the yearning of his soul. Men and women are not merely a bundle of matter, but spiritual

entities working up to the oneness of spiritual consciousness. Modern science has even compelled the dumb plants to record the experiences of their pains and sufferings and many a secret of the unknown realm has been brought within the ken of human comprehension. The artificial boundaries between man and man, nation and nation, the organic and the inorganic are fast vanishing away. Man must realise the profound significance of these far-reaching changes, and stand face to face with the reality of life to pick up the missing link amidst this endless variety of forms. And it is needless to point out that when this spiritual vision will be opened unto humanity, then and then alone would they begin to embrace one another in love and sympathy and lay the actual foundation for a happy synthesis of culture—a consummation devoutly wished for.

AKBAR AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD*

(FROM A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE)

By Swami Nirlepananda

Point of View:—We do many things which we ought not to do. Life worth its name necessarily indicates and involves this. A Bhikshu ought to forget his past associations. Yet past memory like an un-failing consort, would faithfully and persistently follow us however much we may try to shrug it off. And the whole truth is that we are merely trying to make the Ideal—Real. As one living the present history of India also, we have to drag the stamps and influences of antiquity always with us.

We remember our sweet, old academical days. We have carried the impression with us all these years. In these anxious hours of communal rancour the various workers in the vineyard of Sri Ramakrishna, monastic as well as lay,—all are striving to translate into action the supreme Ideal of *Rapprochement* in every sphere of life. They must be only too glad to bow down before royalty (with all its limitations) which was bold enough to experiment with it.

Be it remembered that this is not a piece of purely objective, scientific research of an antiquarian. We have plainly called Akbar, our Hero. This is a bit of a lover's history with all its shortcomings, and shall we say some of its redeeming features too?

Introductory:—It is one of the eternal platitudes of history that a great man is rightly understood and appreciated when he is compared

* Read at the Saradanauda Lyceum, Khatra, Dt. Bankura, Bengal.

with his contemporary notables. And this is best done when we take due consideration not only of the contemporaries of our hero's own land alone (which is right in its own way) but when with a still broader intellectual outlook we stretch our vision far and wide, without confining ourselves within the narrow geographical boundary of a particular country and view the history of the whole contemporary world as an indivisible unity. This will serve as an excellent training in historical imagination. Moreover it is the unmistakable perspective which will unfold before us all the merits and demerits of our hero, so that we are able to make a correct estimate of him bereft of all narrownesses and provincialisms. The great Mughal—Akbar is seen rightly when set amidst the long line of sixteenth century world-statesmen. In the present paper our main stand undoubtedly is on Akbar,—Akbar, as viewed side by side with his contemporary politicians. We are in the realm of comparative politics and culture.

After these words are said, a problem naturally suggests itself in our mind which has to be solved first. Some one asks—well, how are you going to judge them all? You must have a common norm. Pray, what is that?

When tackling a subject like this we are always conscious of a great many limitations. We know that these varied statesmen do not belong to the same country. Every one of them has his or her peculiar problems and strange environment when compared with any other, and all thoughtful students of history must confess that there are always inherent differences and dissimilarities in each one of these cases, which must not be lost sight of. The comparative method has its own limitations. Occasionally certain features only are common factors. We must not forget also that comparisons are sometimes odious. Take for instance, Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain and Emperor Charles V—"the greatest monarch of the sixteenth century". Elizabeth had to do with more or less a unified island-entity, whereas Charles having scattered territories lying far and wide, had to meet greater difficulties as regards inter-communication between the different parts. If this is the case with two European contemporary statesmen, it is quite obvious that there would be far greater differences in the cases of Akbar, the Mughal-Indian and Elizabeth, the English Queen.

Yet, there is a way out of this difficulty and that must be stated and accepted before we can proceed further. In order that parallelism may at all be possible we must turn to the general aspects of the whole affair. Speaking broadly, every statesman, whether Asiatic or European, had to tackle certain problems whose practical counter-parts may be obtained more or less on all soils. All our estimates would therefore be based upon these common, nearly similar State-problems which

confronted each one of these. We must take account of the method-and means adopted by these respective statesmen towards solving them and their relative amount of success, so far as is practicable for us to gauge. The various statesmen must be taken bereft of their minute, territorial and local colouring and viewed in their general, broad features. That is perhaps the way of seeing them best in order that any comparison may be instituted at all. All our previous doubts and difficulties would thereby mostly vanish and the rather complex problem which so long beset us will stand simplified. Akbar, so to speak, was confronted with a Question-paper wherein certain State-problems were set for satisfactory solution, which (if we have the eyes to detect) re-appeared, more or less, in similar garbs before his contemporary European competitors. Attention must be turned to these. Thereby we obtain the right standard to help us to see as to who is the winner in this test of statesmanship. It is always helpful for mutual understanding to discover a synthetic link amidst all apparent varieties and dissimilarities. From a student of Vedanta, not less than this is expected.

The sixteenth century, its galaxy of great rulers :—At the outset, the sixteenth century seems to be very wonderful in one respect. Perhaps it alone produced the largest number of great rulers,—and the galaxy appears in all its grandeur and brilliancy. Our eyes are dazzled and we are full of wonder at such strange coincidences of history. Shall we call this the dispensation of the Divine wielder of human destinies—glimpses or flashes of His hidden hands?

The history of the world is thus sometimes seen to be the same web of life with merely varied filaments. England had its Henry VIII and Elizabeth. France produced men like Francis I and his successors. The Empire got its wonderful Charles V (in his one aspect), Ferdinand I, Maximilian I and Rudolph. Spain—its Philip II, Russia, its Ivan, the Terrible. Scotland—its Queen Mary; and last but not the least, Turkey produced one of its greatest modern builders—Solyman, the Magnificent. India also bore her share in enriching the century with one of her greatest rulers,—Akbar, the Great. It must here be remembered that strictly speaking, all these names cannot be put in the rank of statesmen. Real statesmanship cannot be had in the market-place. It is ever a rare commodity. Some of these, just mentioned had really sterling merit and worth which we would like to see in statesmen. But along with them the remaining others whom destiny raised to such high and prominent positions, must also be studied. Their blunders must be pointed out, if any. Students of psychology would bear us out, when we say that the law of contrast shows a thing at its best.

Difficulties on accession :—The first thing that suggests itself with regard to these statesmen is their respective situations at the time of accession. Some of them had to go through enormous difficulties, oppositions and dangers before they were able to stand on secure footings. Attention must be given to these. They had literally to assert their prerogatives of rulerships. For a statesman is never judged well by his victories in isolated battles which have every possibility of being chance-products. But a study of the series of constant and chronic difficulties which he had to face, brings out very clearly his power of resistance and his tact. The touch-stone of dangers reveals our inner worth and brings out our real colour, our true mettle. Bad days are our best tests.

Now, when compared with his contemporaries, the difficulties which Akbar had to face on his accession, surpass all in volume and intensity. What was his position? Let us think over it. A boy of fourteen was left in charge of governing a continent-like country (not yet fully under control) such as, India! The Indian Empire was veritably like the bow of Ulysses which none but he could wield. Although unusually manly and tactful, his very youth made him unfit for such a stupendous task. Can a mere boy claim obedience and respect from aged, experienced and veteran generals? After the demise of Humayun they were all on the look-out to assert their own independence and acquire their own fortune. They wanted to carve out separate, free holdings entirely for themselves. His difficulty from chiefs like Khan Zaman, Adham Khan, Asaf Khan, the Uzbek leaders, the Mirzas and his brother Hakim was not something negligible. He was thus surrounded on all sides by a host of these recalcitrant, refractory, aged generals—who were supposed to be his avowed guides and well-wishers. In fact he was hard enmeshed in a deadly trap of tutelage. In actuality, to begin with, *they* wielded the supreme authority, *they* were his overlords and *he*,—merely a minor ward, a subordinate. Take the instance of Elizabeth or Charles V (Emperor). Can we obtain in their cases similarly exact situations? Akbar was specially more unfortunate in this respect than any of his contemporaries. The plots against Elizabeth were mostly formed many years after her accession and were, rightly speaking, later developments. For Akbar that was not all. The young prince was at that time, as we have said, the mere figure-head but more specially and immediately the real authority lay with Bairam Khan. Bairam began to act as an incubus to the young ruler when he (Akbar) aspired to free himself from the demon-like jaws—the deadly tentacles of his *so-called* guardian and breathe pure air once more. It required all the tact and good judgment of Akbar to purge off this stunting slavery.

His contemporary statesmen had no prototype of Bairam to contend against.

Then again, Akbar had no trained and faithful army behind him which could promise to stand by him in those dark days of adversity and bitter opposition. It is very well-known that among all alien dynasties in India that of Tamerlane was the "weakest and most insecure" in this respect. In the cases of all former Muslim rulers beginning from the Ghors and ending with the Lodies, the help of a large and well-trained standing-army was always at the back. Without that, how could the outlandish Muslims hope to make any stand in India? This danger was more aggravated in the case of Akbar. He knew full well that his dynasty was completely cut off from all connections with its extra-Indian home-land. But in addition to this Akbar had to give up all hopes of recruitment from Kabul, which produced the most warlike soldiers of these days, just because it was governed by an inimical brother. We seek elsewhere a parallel of this in vain. With what sort of soldiery had Akbar to be satisfied? It was made up of the worst stuff possible. A band of infantry devoid of all national or noble sentiments, always ready to sacrifice all higher ideals for their personal gain,—was Akbar's only solace. Henry VIII or Elizabeth had a feeble army to depend upon at the time of their accession. But it must be admitted by all that their cases were nothing like this at all. A foreign ruler among Indians like Akbar required the help of an adequate army much more stringently and keenly than any of his contemporaries. Perhaps this circumstance inculcated in young Akbar's mind that his rule in order to be really effective should be not by a soldiery but by love,—by winning men's heart. The message of Piyadasi Asoka's Stone Edict once more became a living force in the personality of Akbar. He realised full well that "the chiefest conquest was a conquest by *Dhamma*" (in his case by a Dharma,—tolerant, universal). We have to touch on this point again when we discuss his policy and his ideal as a ruler.

It must not be forgotten moreover that at the time of accession Akbar was master only of Delhi and its adjacent places. His very stand upon that insufficient and solitary ground meant in itself an enormous difficulty. What was the Capital City and a few more acres of land in comparison with the vast boundary of India? With such a circumscribed area of jurisdiction and with a number of elderly advisers and spurious well-wishers who constantly dinned into his young ears the advisability of leaving India for good and giving up the task of conquest as something superhuman,—what could he do? It must be said to his eternal credit that with his uncommon natural genius of royalty and his excellent education of early boyhood amidst

adversity, he refused to follow their advice and was bent on trying this bit of difficult task. Perhaps this born statesman with his extraordinary insight saw the vision of a consolidated India under his benign banner. He accordingly applied himself heart and soul into his task. It must not at the same time be forgotten that it took at least twenty years of strenuous fighting before Akbar could recover the lost territories and provinces of his predecessors. Herein lies his greatest difficulty. Such a sustained, lengthened effort also in its turn shows and establishes his abnormal mettle. This again has no counterpart in contemporary history. For this reason we may say without the least tinge of partiality or prejudice, that the difficulties of Akbar far surpass those of any of his contemporary statesmen. Naturally therefore the most honoured place among them ought to be his. Scrutinise the position on accession of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, Francis I and all his sixteenth century successors, Charles V, Ferdinand I, Maximilian II or Rudolph, Solyman or Ivan—none of these met the miserable plight which Akbar had to contend against. Many of these fought perhaps more than Akbar but that was not due to their inherent position but invariably to extend their territorial jurisdiction outside their own lands. The protracted quarrel and warfare between Francis I and Emperor Charles V was a typical example of this. The boy Akbar stood on grounds extremely slippery, sharp and dangerous. He was forcibly drawn into a vicious war-zone. There was no other choice for him, no other alternative. It was inevitable. His very existence was at a stake. All blatant, optimistic spirit was at the point of being crushed. He had to fight out every inch and establish his prerogative.

When we reflect upon all these difficulties of Akbar, we are tempted to hazard the statement that not only has he a respectable position among sixteenth century statesmen, but if a book were to be written on the world-statesmen of all lands and of all times, Akbar's claim of a place in it cannot be gainsaid.

Next let us turn to those difficulties in the internal administration, which more or less every statesman had to fight against on accession. Both Henry VIII and Elizabeth had the task of restoring order amidst chaos and general insecurity. Elizabeth showed her tact by fighting against all this ring of difficulties,—an impoverished people, a shattered navy and a general anarchy. She acquitted herself very creditably and naturally occupied a most respectful place among her contemporary State-competitors. Veritably hers was a Queen's place. Akbar also had to contend against these drawbacks. He inherited an almost empty exchequer and a country in anarchy, greatly perturbed after the Shur dynasty ruled. The Emperor Charles

had to suffer far less financially than either Elizabeth or Akbar. The rich Netherland trade-cities furnished him with sufficient money and these at first contributed rather liberally.

But when all these handicaps already alluded to, are scrutinized, we are convinced of the fact that Akbar's problem was rather a knotty one. The remark of Mr. Bowell seems after all to be very sane,—the policy of Akbar, says he, combines that of Servius Tullius in Rome with that of Philip Augustus or Philip IV in France.

Statesmen as soldiers:—Next we turn to these statesmen as warriors. Like most of his contemporaries Akbar also had to fight. He saw, as we have said, that, in order to live and rule at all, he must fight, and he faced the situation with befitting courage. We cannot definitely say of his contemporaries that, to begin with, they had to fight because they *must*. By this we do not mean that all the wars waged by Akbar were defensive. In many cases he had to take the initiative beforehand for he knew that a clash of arms was inevitable. Moreover we must not forget that apart from justification or condemnation, ambition for extension also is an impelling force for kings. He appreciated the truth of the dictum that in certain cases the best and wisest defence is an opportune offence. Elizabeth also saw that for England's honour and good name, soldiers must be sent to France and Spain. So she acted accordingly. All the conquests of Akbar may not stand comparison with the brilliant external conquests of the Turkish Sultan Solyman in points of military skill and strategy. In fact, Akbar took no part in any extra-Indian campaign. Perhaps the area of such a vast land like India was more than sufficient. Yet amidst all the military glory gained by Akbar's arms, it must be added that the statesman in him always was more powerful than the bloody warrior. Like Ivan, the Terrible, of Russia, we cannot say of him that he had an inherent thirst for human blood. Akbar launched into battles generally when conciliation was of no avail. This is excellently illustrated in his wars with the Rajputs and his friendly alliance with Bijapore and Golconda. Even after a victorious battle he never proved to be cruel and inhuman to his fallen enemy. Of Akbar, as it has been said by a recent biographer of Lord Kitchener, it may be repeated, that his difficulties with his enemies were not so much as beating them only, as,—beating them in such a fashion and by such means as to arouse as little bitterness as possible. He was not satisfied to secure a negative victory. He wanted to win over his former antagonists to his side for ever. Thus he liked to pave the way to a positive victory in the sense that the friendship and loyalty of the new allies could be relied upon. This he counted as real institutions of peace negotiations. It is amply illustrated by his dominant

policy of conciliation. He had that amount of saneness and sagacity which convinced him once for all that it is only the conquest of heart that lasts long and consequently is worth fighting for. In all the military activities of Charles V or Solyman or even of Elizabeth, we look for this in vain !

(To be concluded)

RELIGION AND ITS FUNCTION

By Prof. Suresh Chandra Sen Gupta, M.A.

Religion is a living reality and is as much a part of our existence as some of our physical necessities on which the vital breath depends. If food builds up the tissues of the body and keeps the flesh alive, religion keeps the higher life in man going and it is in this higher life that man really lives. Are we really living for our fellowmen around us, whether in family or society, when we are wholly taken up with our own sordid wants, busy taking the best food and putting on the smartest dress, utterly indifferent to the clamours of our hungry children or brethren ? We are dead so far as the latter are concerned, our life is no better than a dog's or cat's,—it is certainly not human. This is not living in the higher life and every one hates such an existence. Why ? Because the promptings of the true life within the throbbings of the Divine in man are there in him. No man if he rightly consults his inner experiences can be truly happy when he is indifferent to the higher demands of his nature. These demands are most pressing in the youngmen, when they have not yet been won over by the world. Why do they run to rescue a drowning boy or a house in flames ? In expectation of fame or reward ? No, certainly not. They do not know why they go, yet they go and do their duty. And this is religion, which thus consists in attending to the higher promptings or throbbings of a man's soul. Religion is not a mere magic web of so many subtle theories or dogmas, to which, only the blessed few—the God's elect—the Israelites of Jewish history or the Brahmins of our own, can be admitted. It is a common blessing 'as broad and general as the casing air.' It is not a privilege of a particular caste or tribe. Every man, if desirous of bringing out the best in him, must treat religion as much indispensable to his higher life as air to his physical. The Divine is within him. It is constantly knocking at the door of his heart which he has kept shut from without, being busy with the phenomenal appearances of his life. A man was to go beyond these to seek out the noumenon or the transcendental

reality which gives life and form to all that we see around. Without a keen perception and living realisation of this truth, our existence would reduce itself to a mere shadow, a mere "sound and fury signifying nothing." We may not all succeed in intellectually realising this lofty Vedantism but our hearts, if properly attuned, would vibrate or chime in unison with it and our lives would be suffused with its holy harmony. The ignorant rustic leaving his sickle in the field to offer a drink to the thirsty on the way-side, responds to this great truth,—he shows for the moment that his inward urge to help a distressed fellow-creature is a greater, higher reality than even his blooming corns. This is religion, as Swami Vivekananda understood it and wanted men to understand. He was a true Hindu and perhaps, as has been already pointed out by many, the greatest champion of Hinduism in the present age, for his life in its intellectual, spiritual and practical aspects was only the embodiment of the highest truths of the Vedanta, and what is Hinduism but the Vedanta ? Its essence lies 'in the realisation of a conscious union with our true self which is one with God'. Our real self is the ultimate reality and if this supreme truth be applied to practical life, the social, economic and other troubles of the world around us must vanish away as the clouds before the sun. This is not mere lofty idealism but the truth of it may be actually realised by men. Where is the room for hatred or jealousy or petty rivalries of all sorts that divide mankind into so many water-tight compartments,—when man can feel in the depths of his consciousness that behind the white and the brown, the king and the beggar, the rich and the poor, the same divine reality is pulsating and trying to evolve itself ? The realisation of this truth brings with it a peace and a harmony which not even the Kellogg Pact may dream of. The shrewd diplomats in the numerous Peace Conventions and Locarno treaties may promise loudly but may not have even a dim perception of the Supreme Truth of the Vedanta. It is this and this only which must be clearly understood by all true reformers in order that the reforms they talk about or seek to inaugurate in the different spheres of life may have any permanent value or meaning for man. Swami Vivekananda impressed this on the sceptic West and it is only a matter of recent history how his message was taken up by a wondering world.

But religion is not an abstract realisation only but also an active and dynamic force in our own life which pushes us on and on in our higher efforts. The ideal of Hindu religion has been rejuvenated in the modern age by the heroic monk Swami Vivekananda. The meditative, "ochre-clad" Yogi lost in his holy raptures did not dream away his life in a state of dolce-far-niente (sweet-doing-nothing) as

perhaps the sceptically-minded would caricature the stage of Samadhi. But he came down from his heights to draw us up, to help human progress, not by mere preachings but by realising and worshipping, in selfless service, the Narayana in the miserable and suffering. India's present and future progress will depend mainly on the active realisation of the truth as preached by the great Swami Vivekananda, and the great panacea, as he conceived it, for all our evils and sufferings is "a religion that would be scientific and a science that would be religious". However much the present tendency be to characterise the Vedantic gospel as vague and dreamy and though the efforts be keen in some quarters to set the young faces rigidly against the *Dhyan Murthi* (the meditative pose) in which the soul of India lies, we feel bound to say that no efforts or activities of man may be blessed or be of any good to him which leaves God out of calculation, relying only on human foresight or wisdom.

THE PROBLEM OF HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY

By Swami Devatmananda

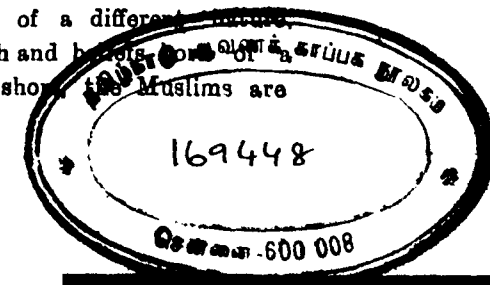
The history of a nation is a record of the kaleidoscopic changes in its socio-political life. And it becomes thrilling and stirring when the changes appear to be violent and far-reaching. India has in her history such records of the darkest periods when conqueror after conqueror overran and made havoc in the very heart of the once peaceful and quiet country from far-away foreign lands. The repetitions of such incidents brought about far-reaching consequences. India is already saturated with the forces of foreign culture and civilisation and consequently the country is passing at the present moment through a state of violent changes. For, what is a civilized human society but a dynamic and forward-moving force? And a society is called civilized only when it advances with strong and steady steps towards a higher idealism. This country in short is at present in the grip of a revolution for a higher evolution. But in the midst of the din and bustle of the multifarious activities of social, political and religious regeneration a distinctly discordant note is being continuously struck in the arena of our collective life. The problem of Hindu-Muslim Unity did never assume such a huge proportion as it has done to-day. The two warring communities are seriously at loggerheads in the name of the amelioration of their respective societies. The only silver lining of hope in the gathering gloom of communal tension is that some of the best brains and sincere

lovers of the country from both sides have already lent their best energy and attention to the matter and are straining every nerve for the final and happy solution of this much-tangled problem. For, it is an undeniable truth that it has retarded the progress of the land in every possible way. And naturally the hope of the country for a united stand will ever remain a visionary dream unless and until the problem in question is satisfactorily solved. But notwithstanding the fact that so much effort has been made in that direction the tremendous labour has failed to produce any appreciable result.

The two outstanding problems, 'the cow slaughter' and 'music before the mosque' during the prayer time are especially agitating the minds of the two communities at the present day. Leaving aside all the economic and political considerations associated with the prevention of cow slaughter, let us study the problem from the ordinary commonsense point of view. The Hindus aver that it is their religious duty to protect the cow because they look upon her with a religious sentiment. So they cannot tolerate cow-killing by the Muslims, though they shut their eyes to the organised form of cow slaughter by the Christians who have been systematically doing it for so many years! And the reason for this differential attitude is quite obvious. The orthodox section of the Muslim community on the other hand asserts that as it is enjoined by the Holy Prophet and the Sacred Book, the Muslims are free to obey the commandment. So far so good: it is a religious injunction and they must follow it. But is it the only injunction in the whole Book? What about the other great commandments given out by the Prophet? Quite naturally then, the question arises, 'is it observed religiously or spitefully?' That is to say 'is the cow slaughtered in a public place to spite the Hindus and to wound their religious feeling alone?' Perhaps, it is this sort of non-Muslimlike behaviour that offends the Hindus the more. Similar is the case with 'music before mosque.' For, all on a sudden the Muslims waking up one fine morning discovered that they had not been behaving properly as a true follower of Is'lam by allowing music to be played near certain mosques. Frantically indeed, they set out to correct their mistakes and for good or for evil, the country now faces two of the most serious problems on earth.

The differences in religious faith and social customs and usages between the two communities must be attributed to the two distinct types of cultural ideas in which they have been nurtured and brought up from the very beginning. The Muslims imbibed ideas and mentalities of a different nature, behind which they had a set of religious faith and habits characteristic climate and environment. In short, the Muslims are

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not Hindus and the latter cannot expect them to have customs and manners similar to their own. Such being the case the Hindus cannot have any ground to grumble against the Muslims because of the above differences. Are not the Christians foreigners, and diametrically opposite to them in every respect? How have the latter been able to put up with all such differences? Have not the Hindus, again, so many differences among themselves? Have they not a good number of sects with various ideas and ideals, peculiar manners and customs amongst themselves? Yet, they are allowed to stand in the Hindu fold and nobody questions their right to do so. Thus, it is quite clear that much of the trouble arises out of the existence of a number of misconceptions among the members of the two communities as regards each other's faiths, beliefs and creeds, and the reason is that both the communities are not intimately known to each other. For, from the very beginning of the Hindu-Muslim contact the circumstances have been drifting in such a manner that very little chance was left for the two races to come into an intimate touch with each other. Moreover, the major portion of the difference thus created is generally due to a misunderstanding of each other's modes of life and culture. A section of the Mahammedans believe that if the life and conduct of Mohamet are brought to the very doors of the Hindu public and presented to them in vivid and living colours, much of the crudities of this conception will disappear and the path for a better understanding between the two can be paved. And finally, they hope that if they can discover a common point of contact upon a cultural and spiritual basis the bond of amity and goodwill will also be ensured.

With this end in view the 'Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaih Islam' of Lahore published and distributed freely several thousand copies of a brief sketch of the life of 'the Prophet of Islam' 'to all fair-minded non-Muslims on the occasion of the 14th centenary of the great benefactor of humanity'. A noble and broad-minded Muslim as he is, Maulavi Muhammad Ali the writer of the above pamphlet, deplores the lamentable state of affairs in the country and says at the very beginning of its preface: "It is with deep regret that one sees that though the Hindus and the Muslims have been living together in this country for about a 1000 years, yet little attempt has been made by the two communities to understand each other." And as a true follower of that immortal founder of the Islamic faith, he, in extending the cordial and generous hand of a brother to the Hindus, gives out the object of the free distribution of this pamphlet to 'the fair-minded non-Muslim'. He says: "This pamphlet though very small, is an attempt towards the great end of bringing about friendly relations between these two great communities, and it tries to remove the misconceptions which

prevail about the Prophet of Islam in Hindu mind." But how is it that the life of the Prophet being so noble and generous and his teachings so grand and pure, the Hindus living in the same soil have failed to have a correct estimate of his life and teachings? From the perusal of the booklet, one comes to the conclusion that either the religion taught by the Prophet is a quite different one from what is actually practised by the present-day Muslims or that the latter are the followers of the Prophet not in reality but in name only. The writer says that it was to bring about universal peace that the Holy Prophet Mohamet laid down in clear words that a prophet was raised in every nation and that a *true* Muslim must believe in all the prophets. "We sent apostles we have mentioned to thee, and apostles we have not mentioned to thee," says the Holy Book, and elsewhere it reiterates the same idea when it says, "There is not a people but a warner has gone among them." Thus, Mohamet has upheld the 'profession of faith in all the religious reformers raised among different nations', and the writer rightly observes, "It is in fact the only thing that can bring peace to the different warring factions of humanity that follow this or that prophet," and he sums up by saying, "A Muslim is bound to believe that a vast country like India and a huge nation like the Hindus could not be without a book or without its prophet." But how do the Muslims regard the Hindus and their religion? The Hindus are to them no better than Kafirs and their religion, idol-worship! But what was the object of the Prophet that led him to fight? It was 'not to compel the unbelievers to accept Islam which was against all the broad principles which he taught,' but, 'it was to establish religious freedom, to stop all religious persecution, to protect the houses of worship of all religions, mosques among them'. The Holy Koran says: "Fight with them until there is no persecution, and religion is only for God." Such being the case, may we ask what place do the Muslims assign to the Hindu gods, goddesses, prophets, saints and their religious books? The writer with a righteous indignation laments over the misconception amongst the Hindus 'that the Holy Prophet preached his faith with the sword'. He says, "The great and liberal mind that preached not only love and respect for the founders of the great religions of the world but much more than that—*faith in them* could not shrink down to the narrowness of intolerance for those very religions. It (Islam) preaches equal love for all, equal respect for all, equal faith in all"; for, explicitly the Holy Book says, "there is no compulsion in religion." And the religion that was preached by the Holy Prophet is so very catholic and broad that it gives full and unqualified scope and choice to the people at large, for religion is a personal

concern. The Koran says, "The truth is from your Lord, so let him who pleases believe and let him who pleases disbelieve." Nowhere the Holy Book asserts that the unbelievers (in Islam) being idolators must be persecuted and brought within the fold of the only religion, viz., Islam. On the other hand, there are clear and unequivocal proofs to the contrary. And yet the Muslims look upon the Hindus differently only because they profess a different faith and hence they are called idolators ! And these fanatical Muslims stand before the world as the true followers of the immortal Prophet ! Is it not a blasphemy ?

Again, what was the attitude of the Prophet towards an enemy ? Did he want 'a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye' ? He soared high above the common contamination of the ordinary life of the world. He was magnanimous *par excellence*. At the death of his deadliest enemy, Abdulla-bin-Ubay, the head of the hypocrites and who night and day plotted against the Muslims, he prayed to the Lord to forgive him. 'Twenty long years of persecution and warfare were absolutely forgiven and forgotten.' It is magnanimity indeed and 'is worthy of all admiration'. Instances can be multiplied to show that Mohamet was born a prophet of peace and goodwill. But what a deplorable contrast do we notice between his lofty teachings and the actions of his followers in India to-day ! As regards his even-mindedness in administering justice the writer says : "Muslim and non-Muslim, friend or foe, were all alike in his eyes.....Notwithstanding the deep-rooted malice of the Jews against Islam, when a case between a Jew and a Muslim once came up before him, he decreed in favour of the Jew, regardless of the fact that the Muslims, nay, even perhaps the whole of his tribe, might thereby be alienated." Was it a diplomatic move on the part of the Prophet to acquire name and prestige thereby ? No, he truly lived what he said. "Let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably ; act equitably ; that is nearer to piety," said the Prophet. And he was true to his words up to the last when on his death-bed he had it publicly declared, "If I owe anything to anybody it may be claimed ; if I have offended anybody he may have his revenge." Such being the Islamic Ideal, is it not a pity that at this critical juncture a section of the Mohammedan community in India have raised a veritable crusade against the Hindu thought and culture and have thereby tarnished the fair name of Islam and created an unhappy division between the two communities to the relief of the masters of the land ? Mohamet has assigned a very high place to acts of charity. He speaks of charity as 'indicating the performance of our duties to God and the performance of our duties to man and other creatures of God'. We are indeed surprised to find that the writer of the pamphlet, Maulavi Mahamad Ali, has in his zeal and

enthusiasm for his own religion painted the Prophet in rather too undignified colours. In the preface to 'the Quran' the Maulavi says that 'according to the Holy Quran all religions have Divine revelation' as the *common basis* and asserts that the revelation that has come through the Prophet has been 'the last of the great religions of the world'—rectifying the errors and inaccuracies that have crept into the others by the passage of time—that religions and religious laws have been harmonised and made perfect in Islam, and that no prophet is needed after the Holy Prophet Mohamet, who is therefore called the 'Seal of prophets'. "Thus," he sums up, "as a distinctive characteristic of its own, Islam claims to be the *final and the most perfect* expression of the will of God." Here the statement would have been correct if it would have been made with certain reservations. For, Arabia where Islam had its origin and the few other places round about it, were not the only spots on the face of the globe ; besides the degenerated form of Christianity and the various other forms of idol-worship, there were many other religious faiths in lands other than Arabia and its surrounding countries, much older in origin and more catholic in their outlook than what prevailed there. Hence, the new faith, i.e., Islam, cannot be called the 'perfected' of *all* the religious faiths of the world and cannot be accepted as 'final' too ; for if Islam once admits the possibility of the rising of prophets previous to it, it must have to admit on the same ground of the Law of Nature the possibility of prophets who are yet to come, though it may not be in the same faith, but in other faiths certainly. Islam may be 'the final' and 'most perfect expression of the will of God' to the Muslims, but what guarantee is there that it should be accepted as such by people professing other religious faiths ? But the Hindus view this aspect from quite a different angle of vision. Lord Sri Krishna explicitly and unequivocally says in the Gita :

यदा यदाहि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सज्जाम्यहम् ॥

"Whenever, O descendant of Bharata, there is decline of Dharma and rise of Adharma, then do, I incarnate myself forth." Is not this statement corroborated by facts of history and admitted by the Puranas that hold that the Lord did come down in embodied forms from time to time whenever such an incarnation was necessitated by the inexorable Law of Nature ? The Koranic statements, 'We sent apostles we have mentioned to thee and apostles we have not mentioned to thee,' and 'there is not a people but a warner has gone among them' are but faint echoes of this declaration of the Gita. In fact, there cannot be any room for partiality on the part of the

Lord of the Universe towards any particular section of humanity of any particular spot under the sun.

The writer's ignorance of the teachings of other religions can be easily understood from his own statement in the book. He (the Prophet) taught, *what no teacher before him had ever taught*, not only that a prophet had appeared in every nation, but also that a Muslim must believe in all those prophets, just as he believed in the Prophet Mohamet. And he continues, "He (the Prophet) not only taught how one individual could live at peace with another, but also how different tribes and families of the human race could live in peace and harmony with each other, and to crown all, what *nobody in the world* had ever attempted, how peace could be brought about among the contending religions of the world." He further says, "He taught, and *never before him had the truth found expression through any prophet*, that there is not a nation on the face of the earth but has had a Divine messenger of its own." The writer is unquestionably a cultured and well-read man occupying a high position in society, and consequently when he goes to deal with a delicate subject, *viz.*, the sacred life, career and teachings of the Holy Prophet, he ought to have been very cautious in making surmises and statements which are clearly wide of the mark; for, they affect in no small measure the feelings and sentiments of those towards whom he appears to be so very sympathetic and who concern him so much. A writer who pleads for such a noble and high mission of peace and goodwill is expected to know something about the history of the land and specially the one that concerns religious movement. He ought to have known the existence of the old religions of the Hindus, the Buddhists, etc., and a little of their creed and teachings. He ought to have known, again, that the Hindus have a set of Holy Books which are admitted to be the most ancient in the world and that they are authentic too, for they are regarded as revelations not indeed of an inspired personage, but of eternal principles, which do not stand for their veracity upon any particular personage. In fact the oldest known Aryan scripture, the Rig Veda, struck the note of harmony, of universal peace and brotherhood by declaring in a distinct and unequivocal expression the unity of Godhead: *एकं सत् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति* "The Existence is One, sages call it variously." Later, in the days of the Mahabharata in the ever memorable battlefield of Kurukshetra, which dates as early as 3102 B. C. (Cunningham) Lord Krishna reiterated the same old statement of the Hindu scriptures, *viz.*, the universality and catholicity of the Hindu conception of Godhead when he said :

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।

मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥

"In whatever way men worship Me, in the same way do I fulfil their desires : (it is) My path, O son of Pritha, (that) men tread, in all ways." Again, in the notable hymn to Lord Shiva, called Mahimna Stotra, the devotee sings by way of praising Him :

त्रयी सांख्यं योगः पशुपतिमतं वैष्णवमिति

प्रभिन्ने प्रस्थाने परमिदमदः पथ्यमिति च ।

रुचीनां वैविध्यादजुकूटिलनानापथ्यजुषां

नृणामेको गम्यस्त्वमसि पयसामराव इव ॥

"Of the several paths laid down in the three-fold Veda, Sankhya Yoga, Shaiva and Vaishnava scriptures, though some people take to one and some to another as the best, and though devotees follow these various paths, straight or crooked, according to the difference in their tendencies, yet, O Lord, Thou alone art the ultimate goal of all men as is the ocean of all rivers." Thus, it is clear that this wide outlook of religious life was admitted universally by all the Hindu Sacred Books, and at the same time, infinite scope was also given to the variation of thought and expression as regards the various aspects of the Supreme Being. This is not all; the Hindus did not stop by simply theorising and speculating upon such a high flight of conception but it was duly translated into practical everyday life. Every Hindu was taught to respect and revere others' views of Godhead and methods of worship. And to this day every Brahmin boy just to refresh and strengthen his memory as to the Supreme Unity of the various aspects of Godhead repeats every day :

आकाशात् पतितं तोयं यथा गच्छति सागरम् ।

सर्वदेव नमस्कारं केशवं प्रतिगच्छति ॥

"As the water falling from the sky goes to the sea, so the salutations to all the gods go to (the one Supreme Lord, Keshava)." Thus, in very olden age, where history even fails to peep into its gloom the Hindu Sacred Books early tolled the knell of fanaticism and bigotry. And consequently history characterises the Hindus as 'mild and meek', because they never dipped their hands in their neighbours' blood even by way of political conquest, not to speak of religious coercion and conversion. The Hindus are primarily religious and their sole object in life is to demonstrate it practically by living the life. Thus, even after the Mahomedan conquest of India, though they were systematically and persistently provoked and coerced in matters of religion they did not retaliate. As regards Buddhism, it is needless to point out that it held before humanity a message of universal brotherhood and peace many centuries before the advent of Islam. And even to this day millions of victaries pay

their respectful homage to the Lord Buddha that preached the gospel of brotherhood from door to door, some 2500 years ago. Thus, instances can be multiplied to show that the assertions of the writer in question and persons of his ilk cannot stand the test of the grim facts of history.

Lastly, in reply to the primary objection of the Maulavi that many misconceptions prevail amongst the Hindus as regards the life and teachings of the Holy Prophet it can be asked, "what is responsible for that? How such a noble life has been misunderstood by the Hindus who are said to be so very catholic and broad in their views and who have been tolerating every form of religious faith since time immemorial?" Here the Muslim compatriot should be told definitely and clearly that the Hindus do regard Mohamet as a Divine Prophet of mankind and that they do honour and respect him as they do their own prophets and saints. This is not all, some go still further and accept him as another incarnation of the Lord, and so they offer him their heart's worship as such. For it is an admitted fact of history that in the hey-day of early Indian history when hordes of foreign tribes and peoples with their peculiar faiths came to India, they were accommodated in the Hindu fold without the shedding of a single drop of blood. Consequently, the root cause of the misconceptions, if any, regarding the Prophet must be sought elsewhere. The Muslims entered this country as conquerors and with fire and sword they carried everything before them till the nations of the soil were reduced to the position of conquered slaves. Their work did not stop in conquering the land only: the people had to sacrifice many things held precious in life, and over and above their religion also was at stake. With the Hindus, religion is the central pivot round which revolve all other phases of their socio-political life; for, to them the latter is quite subordinate to the life of religion. History tells us that excepting a few broad and noble-minded Mohammedan emperors the majority of the Muslim kings in India could not see eye to eye with the Hindu thought and culture and their attitude tended to foster a spirit of racial antagonism with the result that the attitude of the Hindus toward Islam has necessarily been one of apathy in spite of a close contact of several centuries between the two. Naturally enough Islam and its founder have been looked upon by the Hindus with terror and horror. And it would not be an exaggeration to state that very few sincere efforts have hitherto been made by the votaries of Islam to remove the misconceptions that attach to the good name of the Prophet and his noble teachings. What is needed is life wherein must be reflected the sublime idealism for which true Islam stands. For mere platform speeches, and pious wishes and even assembly legislation

will not be able to cement the ties between the two warring communities.

Last but not the least is the outstanding fact that the Hindus and Muslims will have to stand or fall together in their task of shaping the destiny of India. For, is not India after all, the motherland of both the Hindus and Muslims alike? In spite of all the existing differences it is the cradle of their infancy, the pleasure garden of their boyhood, the heaven of their youth and the final resting place in their old age. In every sense it is the home of both the communities and it will be so in time to come and the only requisite is that they must be made conscious of the same. It is time for all of us, the children of the soil, to sink all the petty differences in our common cause of national reconstruction. India is not yet dead as many suppose. Though much of her energy has been frittered away in petty quarrels, we still hope to see her once more seated, rejuvenated and glorified, as of old among the civilised nations of the world. She has yet to contribute her quota to the sum-total of human thought and culture. It is coming to be; for, "the decree has gone forth, the fiat of the Lord has gone forth—India must rise," as Swami Vivekananda, the great patriot saint of modern India once prophesied. The two apparently opposite forces must be welded into a harmonious whole for a permanent unity between the two. Rightly did Swami Vivekananda say, "For our motherland, a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedanta brain and Islamic body—is the only hope. I see in my mind's eye the future of perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islamic body." For, according to him, "without the help of practical Islam, the theories of Vedantism, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind". He further declared, "We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Quran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Quran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the various expressions of the Religion which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best". Standing before the august assembly in the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, the Swami with the keen foresight of a seer prophesied more than three decades ago, "Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of their resistance: 'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.'" This we think, is the only solution that can be offered to the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity that has faced India today.

INDIAN METAPHYSICS

(Continued from the June issue)

By K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, B.A., B.L.

The Charvaka System

The materialists were known as the Lokayatikas or the Charvakas. The former word implies that the world which we see is the only reality, and the latter word signifies those who are pleasant-spoken. To them perception is the sole source of truth, while inference is unreliable and scripture is not true at all. They define reality as that which can be sensed. The ultimate cosmic principles are the four elements: earth, water, fire and air. Intelligence is the result of their combination. Thus, thought is a function of matter. Even the materialists cite scripture for their purpose (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, II, 4, 12). Religion is an illusion and God does not exist at all. Nature is the only existence and there are no gods anywhere. The rule of life is: Eat and drink and be merry today, for tomorrow we die. Thus, this philosophy—if it can be called so at all—is a philosophy of selfishness and sensuality. It substitutes license for discipline and self-indulgence for self-sacrifice. But it never flourished much or long in India and was very soon criticised and overthrown, despite the statement that it was embodied in the Brihaspathi Sutras. It is adumbrated in Jabali's advice to Sri Rama in Valmiki's Ramayana, but Sri Rama demolishes it and shows its hollowness and untruth. The consciousness is no more a property of the body than light is a property of the eye. We are conscious of the body and speak of it as our body. How can this be if both are one? If consciousness be a property of the body it could be sensed by others like other material things but it is not an object of sense-perception at all. The materialistic philosophy can never account for morality and religion which are the deepest and truest things in us.

"Who forged that other influence

That heat of inward evidence

By which he doubts against the sense?"

Jainism

Jainism on the other hand is a noble faith. It is traced by its followers to Rishabha Deva. He is referred to in the Bhagawatha as the founder of Jainism. The actual founder who gave its doctrines currency and power was Vardhamana who was born in 599 B.C. and

died in 527 B.C. The Jain scriptures refer to the seven *tattvas*, the nine *padarthas*, the six *dravyas* and the five *astikayas*. According to them the universe consists of two ever-existing, categories, i.e., Jivas (souls) and Ajiva or non-soul consisting of the formless entities viz., dharma, adharma, space and time and the entity with form viz., pudgala (matter). Dr. Radhakrishnan says with brevity and truth: "Buddhism and Jainism deny the existence of an intelligent first cause, adore deified saints, possess clergy practising celibacy, and think it sinful to take the life of any animal for any cause." Buddha lived from 567 B.C. to 488 B.C. Thus the lives of these two great founders of religions overlap each other to a very large extent. Jainism is however an older faith in India than Buddhism.

Jainism does not affirm the eternal Creator and Ruler of the universe, though it admits dharma and adharma and it admits also a future life and heaven and hell. That is its greatest defect and weakness. It does not accept the authority of the Veda. Its great virtue is its emphasis on the doctrine of Ahimsa (non-injury). It affirms that every living being has a soul and that we should not injure life for any purposes including sacrifices. It emphasises the value of the ascetic life. According to it perfection is not nothingness but "a state of being without qualities and relations, and removed from all chances of rebirth".

In regard to creation it holds that Prakriti (Nature) is atomic in its constitution and is the cause of the world. Dr. Radhakrishnan says: "The central features of Jaina philosophy are its realistic classification of being, its theory of knowledge, with its famous doctrines of *Syadvada* and *Saptabhangi* or sevenfold mode of predication and its ascetic ethics." It is not possible to go into these intricacies of doctrine here. Their defect is that, while they emphasise the need for suspending judgment owing to the complexity of Truth, they do not strike straight for the Truth. The doctrine of *Syadvada*, or *Anekantavada* as it is called consists of the following affirmations, viz., a स्यादस्ति (may exist), स्यान्नास्ति (may not exist), स्यादस्ति नास्ति (may exist and may not exist), स्यादवक्तव्य (may be unaffirmable) स्यादस्ति अवक्तव्य: (affirmation of existence not possible), स्यान्नास्ति अवक्तव्य: (affirmation of non-existence not possible), and स्यादस्तिनास्ति अवक्तव्य: (affirmation of existence and non-existence not possible). The *Saptabhanginaya* refers to the sevenfold *standpoints* or angles of vision. They are naigamanaya, shanaya, vyavaharanaya, rijusutranaya, sabdanaya, somabhirudhanaya and evambhutanaya.

According to Jainism the soul is active in its nature. "The consciousness of the Jiiva is ever active, and this activity reveals its

own nature as well as that of the object." Our passions lead to the inflow of matter (*puṅgala*) which obscures the soul's knowledge. Karma is matter in a subtle form. When the soul is freed from matter, it becomes omniscient and its knowledge shines forth unobstructed. The liberated souls are alone the gods and are never born again. *Moksha* is eternal upwardness.

I have already referred to the non-affirmation of a Supreme Creative God in Jainism, though it says that souls attaining perfection are Paramatmas or supreme souls. Later on the Hindu gods came into Jainism, though they were placed before the *Tirthamkaras*. It errs also in attributing the possibility of contradictory qualities to reality, though it has done a great service by emphasising the many-sidedness of reality. The *Syadvada* and the *Saptabhanginaya* do not lead to any final pragmatic realisation of values. The Jaina philosophy rendered a great service by its doctrine of *anekantavada* or manysidedness of reality, but it failed to reach the core of reality and to affirm the Absolute. It takes its stand on realism and pluralism but does not show how the universe of matter and the universe of souls are comprehended and transcended in a higher unity. The Noumenal reality or the Absolute is not the mere totality or summation of relative realities. Another defect is the view that the soul is not atomic or infinite but has got dimensions and is co-extensive with the body and is capable of expansion and contraction (*nadhyamaparimana*). But this view would result in the soul being impermanent like the body. The Jain faith has lived on in power because of its great doctrine of *ahimsa*, and also its readiness to maximise its points of agreement with Hinduism, a quality not possessed by Buddhism.

Buddhism

Buddhism also, though a heretical dissentient from Hinduism became a powerful force because of its high and noble ethos. Its metaphysic was soon superseded in India by the reasserted Hindu metaphysic. Strangely enough the modern western philosophy is largely analogous to it. The pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer with its emphasis on the denial of the will to live, and the theory of creative evolution of Bergson were anticipated in it. In spite of all this, the weakness of Buddhism lay in what Dr. Radhakrishnan describes well when he says: "He (Buddha) denied the divinity of the gods and undermined the authority of the Vedas.....Ancient Buddhism resembles positivism in its attempt to shift the centre from the worship of God to the service of man." Yet with a strange inconsistency he says: "A persistent misreading of India's religious history is responsible for the prevalent view that Buddha's view

is an alien one opposed to the Vedas." "The denial" by Buddhism of God and the soul, its denial of room to religious emotion and devotion and its conception of *Nirvana* were the causes of its downfall in India, though in other portions of Asia which had not the gift of the higher revelation given to India it attained wide and even immense popularity. Buddha in short tried to make a religion of philosophy and failed.

The great vogue of Buddhism in India was due to the fact that though it denied the authority of the Vedas and the value of sacrifices, it was saturated with Hindu ethical ideals and the Hindu doctrine of Karma albeit emptied of the Hindu doctrine of the self. In his estimate of Buddhism Dr. Radhakrishnan is less than fair to the value of the Upanishads. He is not right when he says: "The contempt for ritualism was common to him and the Upanishads." Buddhism never affirmed the great affirmation of the Upanishads about *Ananda* (Bliss) being the core of being. *Nirvana* is no doubt suppression of suffering but that is all. Buddhist pessimism is unrelieved by the doctrine of *Ananda*. Its doctrine of the annihilation of personality (*Nirvana*) is at the opposite pole compared to the doctrine of the blissful Absolute (*Sachchidananda*).

Further, Buddhism erred in declaring that there is no permanent being and that all existence is momentary. Buddha, however, unlike Bergson, affirms that there is a law governing the perpetual dynamism of things. But he did not accept the Upanishadic doctrine of the Immutable Blissful Atman. He saw only becoming in being and not being in becoming. His denial of the self is based on a fundamental error of thought. Without a unifying self, there would be no perception or memory. One cognition cannot cognise another cognition. The different aspects of empirical consciousness must be connected in one self-unconsciousness. All the wonderful resources of Sri Sankaracharya's logic were employed in disproving this fundamental heretical error of Buddhism. Dr. Radhakrishnan is hence not correct when he says that "Buddhism is a return of Brahmanism to its own fundamental principles". It was Buddha's elevation of moral nature and the beauty of his ethical gospel combined with his crusade against caste and sacrifices that led to the temporary popularity of Buddhism. But its inner defects as described above led to its downfall. They are its denial of the soul, its assertion of the momentary and essentially unreal character of the world, and its doctrine of the annihilation of personality. In short, its assertion of annihilation led to its own annihilation.

The Hinayana represents the early sceptical Buddhist thought. Mahayana Buddhism represents the dilution of the true Buddhism

by bringing a God and devotion. Dr. Radhakrishnan says well: "The decline of early Buddhism, the rise of Mahayanism and the revival of Brahmanism all synchronised..... It (Mahayana) is the younger branch with Sanskrit, while the Hinayana is older with Pali as its language. The latter claims to represent the teachings of Gautama in its original form and to preserve the rationalistic, monastic and puritanic elements of his teaching. The Mahayana develops the doctrine in a mystical theological and devotional way. The Hinayana has maintained its supremacy in Ceylon and Burma, the Mahayana in Nepal and China." Thus early and original Buddhism taught that the world is unreal and that the self is a fiction. It denied God and emptied life of devotion. The learned author says: "By its abstract and negative tendencies the Hinayana became the incarnation of dead thought and the imprisonment of spirit. It gives us neither a warm faith for which to live nor a real ideal for which to work." Its morbid asceticism resulted in a revulsion of feeling and led to a rebound and reaction. The Sunyavada which holds that all is non-existence and the Vijnanavada which affirms that nothing exists except in consciousness were transformed in the Mahayana affirmation of the metaphysical substratum of permanence. The Mahayana tolerated the prevailing faiths and added only "a new respect for life, kindness to animals and resignation". An Adi Buddha was lifted by it to the throne from which the Hinayan had driven God away. The Buddhas were regarded by it as the saviours of the world. Every individual was proclaimed by it to be a potential Buddha. The historic Buddha has Amitabha on one side and Avalokiteswara on the other. The Hindu gods were taken into the Mahayana pantheon but given a Buddhist setting. The Mahayana theory of Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya gave scope for metaphysics and theology and ethics. Bodhisattvas below the rank of Buddha were affirmed and took the place of the *arhats* of the Hinayana. They voluntarily desist from the attainment of Buddhahood so that they may work for the uplift and salvation of mankind. According to the Mahayana *nirvana* is not annihilation.

There were four schools of Buddhism. They are the *Vaibhashikas*, the *Sautrantikas*, the *Yogacharas* and the *Madhyamikas*. The *Vaibhashika* school of Direct Realism affirms the inner world of ideas as well as outer world of objects but states also that the objects which we see cease to exist when they are not perceived. Dr. Radhakrishnan states: "The self called *Pudgala* has no existence apart from the elements of personal life. The unity of the individual is a fiction for the continuous flow of mental states." It

was against this illogical heresy that the Vedanta Sutras and the irrefragable logic of Sri Sankara waged relentless and successful war. The *Vaibhashikas* and *Sautrantikas* accept the atomic theory and affirm only four elements, viz., earth, water, fire and air. The *Sautrantikas* (Indirect Realists) admit the existence of an extra-mental and objective world but contend that the outer objects are only momentary and that we have no direct perception of objects but only mental presentations from which we infer external objects. Dr. Radhakrishnan says: "In opposition to the *Vaibhashikas* and the *Madhyamikas*, the *Sautrantikas* maintain that thought can think itself and that we can have self-consciousness." The *Yogacharas* assert that there are no objects independent of the mind and that all that we have are only clusters of sensations. They support the *Vijnanavada* (Idealistic Phenomenalism) and say that the only reality is *Vijnana* or consciousness. Thus their doctrine is pure idealism and subjectivism. The *Alaya Vijnana* is an ever-changing stream of consciousness. Sri Sankaracharya employed all the resources of his logic to overthrow this theory. He points out that it fails to account for the variety of perception, and that there is disparateness between dream phenomena and the phenomena of the waking state. The waking state has pragmatic values. The *Yogachara* analysis of perception is opposed to our experience. We are always conscious of something and not merely conscious. If there be no outward objects why should consciousness take such forms of objects at all? Why should there be any certainty and order about such cognitions? What is the cause of the illusion of externality of things if the sense of such externality is an illusion? The Buddhists erred equally egregiously in denying the permanent self. The *Madhyamikas* (nihilists) went the length of saying that all things are *Sunya* or void and that even *Vijnana* is unreal. Dr. Radhakrishnan says well: "Thus the *Madhyamika* abolishes the constant *alaya* and sets the stream of ideas adrift." Nagarjuna goes the length of saying that the world is unreal, that birth and death are unreal, that suffering and liberation are unreal, and that even the Buddha is unreal. This is an absolute negation of all values in life. Even *Nirvana* is an illusion! Dr. Radhakrishnan says: "Since to the *Madhyamikas* all thoughts and things are void, they are sometimes called *Sarvaviavashikas*. This view that the world with its suns and stars is nothing more than a baseless appearance, is quite in consonance with the popular classification of the four Buddhist schools into the *Vaibhashikas* or presentationists who admit the perceptibility of external objects; the *Sautrantikas* or representationists; the *Yogacharas* or subjectivists; and the *Madhyamikas* or nihilists." The original

Buddhist doctrine was the Madhyamika doctrine. It became more and more saturated with realism later on in the other schools of Buddhist philosophy.

Thus the Buddhist schools of thought are based on negation, pessimism and nihilism of different degrees. One of them says that there are outside things and inner sensations of them; another could say that we know only inner sensations of outside things; or third says that there are no outside things at all but only inner sensations; and a fourth would say that everything is void. Dr. Radhakrishnan's analysis of their doctrines is brilliant and comprehensive but suffers from an unwillingness to assess them aright and an eagerness to make out *sunyavada* to be a little better than it is. The error of such an attempt attains its climax in the statement, P. 666 of Vol. I: "The Madhyamika theory is an Advaitism of the type of Sankara or Bradley, for the concept of self to it is not ultimate." An evaluation which equates Sankara's Advaita with the Madhyamika theory which he fought and refuted all his life has something fundamentally wrong in it. It is equally incorrect to affirm as the learned author does at P. 668: "The Alata Santi of Gaudapada's Karikas is full of Madhyamika tenets. The Advaitic distinction of Vyavahara, or experience, and Paramartha or reality, correspond to the Samvriti and Paramartha of the Madhyamikas. *The Nirguna Brahman of Sankara and Nagarjuna's Sunya have much in common.*" It is wrong to equate the Advaitic *anirvachaniya* doctrine with the Madhyamika *nissvabhava* (void of reality) doctrine. Dr. Radhakrishnan says: "It is a strange irony that the great exponents of the two doctrines look upon themselves as supporting antagonistic propositions." It is a stranger irony that there should be an attempt to assimilate the great exponents of antagonistic propositions in the realm of philosophic thought.

Thus Buddhism began as a Hindu schism and ended as a Hindu sect. When India had an ageless and wonderful pantheon and faith which appealed from the most ancient times to reason and devotion and imagination, where was the need for a parallel and diluted pantheon with an indeterminate doctrine about the nature of perfection and a vacillating view about the reality of the soul? Buddhism had no higher ethos than Hinduism and merely cut away men from their moorings by denying the revelatory character of the Vedas. A Buddhism which originally denied and latterly affirmed the soul and God, which at first denied and later on preached immortality, and which wavered in its pessimism and monasticism became a house divided against itself and was unable to stand against the resurgent Hinduism. Buddhist priests became opulent and immoral, and

Buddhist temples became filled with old and new deities and were centres of grandeur rather than centres of purity and holiness.

Thus Buddhism became diluted and weak and impotent and was absorbed into Hinduism and thus died a natural death in India. There was no violent extermination of it all. The polemics of Kumarila and Sankara hastened its disappearance and extinction. Dr. Radhakrishnan says: "Uncompromising devotion to the moral law is the secret of the strength of Buddhism, and its neglect of the mystical side of man's nature the cause of its failure." Buddhism brought nothing new to Hinduism though it intensified the Hindu respect for life and kindness to the dumb creation. Dr. Radhakrishnan thinks that Buddhism introduced the note of pessimism from which later Indian thought never emerged. I do not think that this view represents the entire truth. Hindu thought, both before and after the Buddhist schism, knew the eternity of the bliss of Truth beyond the pain and the evanescence of relative being.

It is thus clear that Buddhism failed in India in spite of the sweet and lofty personality of its founder and its sublime ethics and its universal appeal to some of the noblest elements in human nature, because of its metaphysical weakness and its inability to appeal to the highest nature of man. Its attempt to create a parallel pantheon and to weave new epics in the shape of the Jataka tales for capturing the popular imagination and maintaining the popular allegiance and to create a new amalgam of cult and myth and ritual and philosophy—an attempt that has been sought to be revived to-day—could not bolster it up for a long time against the resurgent forces of revived and purified and sublimated Hinduism which went back for inspiration to the Vedas as the bedrock of truth and which derived sustenance especially from the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. The re-risen flood of Hindu thought swept clean away Buddhism and its ramifications and manifestations.

(To be continued)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

EDUCATION IN INDIAN VILLAGES

It is a fact known to all that India is one of the most backward countries in the world in the matter of education. Our politicians and publicists often blame the government for the inadequacy of the funds it allots for this vital concern, and rightly so. But we regret that the people on their part too do not evince sufficient interest in this matter. For, apart from some enlightened persons in towns the

average Indian villager does not consider education to be a necessary equipment for his children's welfare in life. The consequence of this is that even the little money that is allotted for this purpose is not usefully spent. The village schoolmasters neglect their duty, the villagers connive at it, and the result is that the boys going out of the village schools know next to nothing. The regrettable state of affairs obtaining in Indian village schools is vividly described by Sir John Campbell in an article entitled 'The Magistrate's Indian Diary', appearing in the May number of the Atlantic Monthly. The following is an extract from it :

".....At last I found the school. It was a rather decent building, as rural schools go in India ; but it seemed strangely silent and deserted.....I entered the main class room, to find no boys, but two well-fed and sturdy-looking country ponies ! The other rooms were locked. Of course no one had the key, or knew where it could be found ; so I solved the problem by getting the village blacksmith to wrench out the staple. One room was used as a store-house for cheap cloth. In the third I found the school furniture, registers, and so on,

"Without comment, I went through the attendance register with the crowd. It had not been written up for twenty days. 'Who is Ram Sahai, son of Ram Lal ?' 'There is no such person in the village.' 'And Maqbool Husain, son of Abdul Ghani ?' 'There is no such person.' 'Dullo, son of Kesri ?' Ah, yes ; but he died four months ago out of evil eye.' And so it went. Roughly, out of thirty-odd names, twenty-five were fictitious ; there were five pupils only, and they enjoyed what was practically a perpetual holiday.

"When the facts were clear, the crowd—again as usual—became informative. The teacher kept school occasionally, but usually he sold cloth in the surrounding villages. That was what the ponies were for. There might possibly be five pupils. The registers were fudged—the people evidently thought that reflected the greatest credit on the teacher's ingenuity and resourcefulness. 'Oh, yes—the inspector sahib has been here quite often to inspect. When he comes, the school is always full. The teacher arranges with relatives of his, teachers in villages not too distant, to send boys over, so that the classes will be full, and the inspector sahib will have boys to examine.' Everyone in the village knew the fraud ; no one did anything to stop it. The hard-working inspectors of schools, with an enormous area to cover, and dependent to a large extent on local hospitality could not make surprise visits. Everything fitted in nicely—but no one in the village got any education.

"The people thought that the government had a bee in its bonnet on this matter ; it preached the virtues of learning, in season and out of season, but the villagers were not impressed with the 'educated' products of the system ; and boys were useful, from a very early age, in herding goats, doing odd jobs about the house or the farm, playing with and looking after younger children. The parents had got on without being able to read or write ; that was, quite clearly, the business of the priest or the village accountant. One could not do everything. To send their children to school meant some hardship—some inconvenience at any rate ; and this thoughtful teacher has evolved a sound method which conciliated village opinion, avoided all difficulties with the powers that were, and incidentally gave the villagers something of a hold over him, which, they doubtless hoped, might materialize into cloth fractionally cheaper than otherwise obtainable.....

".....I visited the chief school at this centre shortly after the fair. The boys in the highest class were eighteen to nineteen years of age, and at the end of their purely vernacular education. They had been taught, from the age of about seven, in their own tongue. Of the thousands who have been poured out into the funnel, perhaps fifty had emerged. I was particularly interested in the final products. At mental arithmetic they were astonishingly good—far better, low be it spoken, than I myself. And yet they were not nearly good enough for the local bunnias and shopkeepers. They wrote the cramped Hindi, which is the language of the accountant here, with extraordinary ease. And, apart from these two acquirements, they knew nothing. They were not interested in anything else, nor were their parents.....

".....I agree with Roosevelt,—was n't it he ?—who said that the Romans had never done anything half so fine as the English achievement in India. But 'this person,' as Kai Lung would say, thinks that on their roll of honour the word 'education' will not be found."

Further comment is unnecessary. The standard of education received by the Indian villagers through the so-called munificence of the government has been rightly portrayed by this European writer who claims to have an intimate knowledge of the functionings of the village-life in India. This is the picture not merely of any particular village but of most of the Indian villages which, on account of the studied indifference of the government to the need of efficient primary education and the criminal negligence of the leaders of the country, have become the veritable abode of corruption and deep-seated superstition. It is time that the educational problem is earnestly taken up both by the government and our countrymen to organise village-life into a healthy nucleus of culture and strength and thereby lay the foundation for the future regeneration of the land.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

Chaitanya to Vivekananda : Lives of the Saints of Bengal. Published by G. A. Natesan & Co, Madras. Price Rs. 1-8.

This book contains the lives of six saints, viz., Chaitanya, Sankara Deva, Hari Das, Ramprasad, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda—five of whom belong to Bengal and one is an Assamese. There are books extant at any rate in the vernaculars of India dealing with the lives of the saints of the North and South, and a book on the lives of the saints of Bengal has been a great desideratum which the book under review now supplies.

Lord Chaitanya appeared in Bengal at a time when on account of the ascendancy of the Mohammedan rule the Hindu religion was at a low ebb and the religious atmosphere was greatly vitiated by the abominable Tantric rites and the arrogance of Sanskrit pandits and scholars who simply indulged in intellectual gymnastics and ridiculed attempts at self-realization. How Lord Gauranga who was no exception to this sort of intellectual intoxication was thoroughly changed after he had come in contact with Ishwara Puri, a Vaishnava monk, how when he attempted to rescue the masses from their abject mental and moral torpidity by delivering them his message of Prema Bhakti he was beset by those jealous of him with well-nigh insuperable difficulties, how he surmounted them by embracing the Sannyasa Ashrama and how thereafter he launched successfully on the work of

reclaiming the people with missionary zeal and reforming enthusiasm are recounted in the book with a telling effect.

Haridas was a saint sprung from the untouchable community of Bengal and being a follower of Chaitanya endeared himself to the people by his genuine Bhakti and pure life. The low community to which he belonged was no bar to the people holding him in high reverence.

Sankara Deva was born in Assam and he did the same work for the Asamese which Chaitanya did for Bengal and no less were the difficulties which he was put to by the wily Brahmin priestly class.

When Mohammedan rule was tottering and before British rule ensured its footing in Bengal, Ramprasad bridged, as it were, the transition period by renovating Tantric worship in his life, and the songs sung by him clearly reveal the depth of his feeling and their popularity shows the immense influence they exercised on the minds of the masses—an influence which is strongly felt even to-day.

Under the aegis of British rule which succeeded the Mohammedan supremacy a rude shock was given to the Hindu spiritual life by Western culture which threatened to swallow it. How Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa stemmed this tide of Western Realistic philosophy by pouring out incontestable ideas from within his realized self and by his perfect life of non-attachment to lust and gold and how his world-known disciple and apostle of Hinduism, Swami Vivekananda, spread his gospel to the wonder and amazement not only of his countrymen but also of the Western world which was forced to accept the greatness of Hinduism are very vividly and graphically described in the book under review.

This book is a very good primer of Hindu religion and philosophy and we strongly recommend it to all students of life and religion.

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE BIRTH-DAY CELEBRATION OF BHAGAVAN SRI RAMAKRISHNA AT BALIATI (BENGAL)

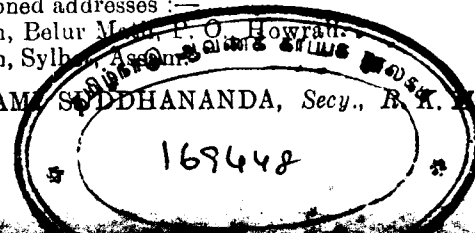
The 94th birthday celebration of Sree Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva was held on the 2nd June in the local Math premises. Nearly fifteen hundred Daridra Narayanas and devotees were sumptuously fed. The eighteenth annual meeting of the Mission branch was held in the afternoon with Dr. Jamini Ranjan Majumder, Ph. D., of the Bengal Social Service League in the chair. The annual report was read and prizes were distributed among the girls and boys of the free schools conducted by the Mission. Speeches were delivered on the life and teachings of Sree Ramakrishna Deva and on Education. Lantern lectures were arranged on the life of Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda, village-organization and on agriculture.

FLOOD IN ASSAM: APPEAL FOR FUNDS

Details of the flood-havoc which has overtaken Assam, have reached us. The Mission received wires for help from different places. In response, we have already sent workers and have wired instructions to the Mission centre at Sylhet and Silchar to start relief work immediately. But public co-operation is the first thing we desire. So we are appealing to the generous public to send their kind contributions to any of the undermentioned addresses:—

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