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THE Bharata Dharma

Magazine of Liberal Hinduism

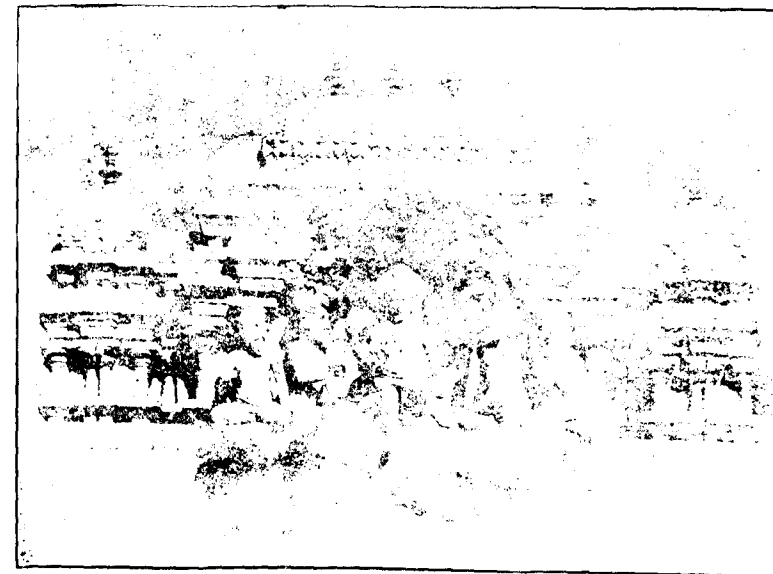
Honorary Editors : { C. V. Krishnaswami Aiyar
K. V. Seshia Ayyangar.



VOL. XI]

SEPTEMBER, 1933

[NO. 6



On the front parapet of THE TEMPLE OF LIGHT, Adyar :

चित्रे ब्रह्मोर्मिले ब्रह्मा शिक्षया गुग्युवा

गुग्युन्तु मोने व्याख्यानं जिय्यान्तु छिन्नमेशया ॥

Ah! The wonder under the Banyan tree! There sits the Teacher a youth; the disciples, elders. The teaching is silence, and the disciples' doubts are dispelled.

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It is requested that all manuscripts for publication, books etc., for review periodicals sent in exchange and other communications to the Editors be in future be addressed to "SOUNDARYA" PILATOPE, MYLAPORE. All business communications may, as before, continue to be addressed to "Mouryalaya" Royapettah, Madras.

SOME APPRECIATIONS

MR. JINARAJADASA FOR DR. BESANT AND HIMSELF.—The attempt of the Bharata Dharma is most necessary if Hinduism is to survive as an effective force in the reorganisation of India to-day....Not only her (Dr. Besant's) sympathy but her enthusiasm is exactly with such a work as is being attempted by the Bharata Dharma.

SIR. P. S. SIVASWAMI AIYAR.—The Bharata Dharma has offered a platform for the discussion of our religious and social problem from the standpoint of modernised faith responsive to the requirements of intellectual progress and rapidly changing social and economic conditions. The articles in the journal have been thoughtful, broadminded and inspiring.

THE HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE VENKATASUBBA RAO.—The ideal of the Bharata Dharma is a lofty one that of enabling the readers to approach the problem of life in a spirit of reason....There is greater need in India to-day than ever to examine old customs and old conceptions and to discard courageously such as are bound to be unsuitable. The Bharata Dharma offers to its readers helpful suggestions in this direction.



THE Bharata Dharma

N.B.—The Arya Mata Sabha is not responsible for any opinions expressed or statements published in this magazine unless they are contained in an official document.

VOL. XII

SEPTEMBER, 1933

[No. 6

RAJAH RAM MOHAN ROY

C. V. KRISHNASWAMI AYYAR

On the twenty-seventh of this month,—September, 1933—it will be a hundred years since Rajah Ram Mohan Roy "crossed the bar" and joined

"the choir invisible

Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence: Live
In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end with self
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars
And with their mild persistence urge man's search
To vaster issues."

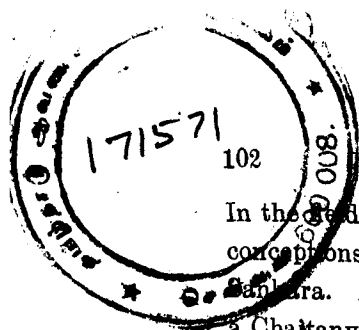
And his grateful countrymen and countrywomen, are doing the right thing and honouring themselves by celebrating that centenary with suitable solemnity and splendour.

In its long and illustrious march along the ages to

"that far-off divine event

To which the whole creation moves,"

India has produced many personalities of undoubted brilliance who have shed lustre on the Indian name. Among them, it will be easily conceded that Rajah Ram Mohan occupies a high and an honoured place,



In the field of mere sacred scholarship and the sublimity of metaphysical conceptions, Rajah Ram Mohan may not occupy a front place with a Banerjee. In the scaling of the heights of emotion, he may not rank with a Chaitanya. In the compass of his work as a reconstructor of the religious and social systems of the Hindus, he may not stand exactly by the side of Swami Dayanand. Nor may he be classed with a Kabir in the making of the music of Hindu-Mahamadan brotherhood. Kristo Das Pal, Dadahboy Naoroji and Gokhale may have outrun him in the race for winning the political emancipation of the country. But one may claim for Rajah Ram Mohan, without any charge of exaggeration, that, in every one of those fields, he held all but the front place and, in the range of his activities, outclasses them all. His was a mind that saw India's life as a whole, maugre all its diversities; and his was the brain that devoted its attention *simultaneously* to work in all the spheres that concern human prosperity and human happiness. Babu Surendranath Banerjee concisely and aptly expressed this uniqueness of Ram Mohan's work and worth, when he said that when Ram Mohan died his work had to be carried on not by one but by many leaders.

Of the incidents in the personal life of Rajah Ram Mohan Roy little need be said. India has ever held that the teaching is greater than the teacher. Hence the somewhat curious phenomenon, commented on by the westerners, of the absence of interest among the Indians in those aspects of the personal life of a hero which occupy so much space in the columns of western newspapers. More so is the sometimes embarrassing absence of even those details which are absolutely necessary to visualise a great personality. Fortunately, we have in the case of Rajah Ram Mohan a fragment of autobiography which sets forth just the few facts which are essential to understand him and his times and, if we may say so, sets the standard for the correct length and scope of biography. In response to the wish of a friend, he wrote:

"My ancestors were Brahmins of a high order, and, from time immemorial, were devoted to the religious duties of their race, down to my fifth progenitor, who about one hundred and forty years ago gave up spiritual exercises for worldly pursuits and aggrandisement. His descendants ever since have followed his example, and, according to the usual fate of courtiers, with various success, sometimes rising to honour and sometimes falling; sometimes rich and sometimes poor; sometimes excelling in success, sometimes miserable through disappointment. But my maternal ancestors, being of the sacerdotal order by profession as

well as by birth, and of a family than which none holds a higher rank in that profession, have up to the present day uniformly adhered to a life of religious observances and devotion, preferring peace and tranquility of mind to the excitements of ambition, and all the allurements of worldly grandeur.

"In conformity with the usage of my paternal race and the wish of my father, I studied the Persian and Arabic languages, these being indispensable to those who attached themselves to the courts of the Mahomedan princes; and agreeably to the usage of maternal relations, I devoted myself to the study of Sanskrit and the theological works written in it, which contain the body of Hindu literature, law and religion.

"When about the age of sixteen, I composed a manuscript calling in question the validity of the idolatrous system of the Hindus. This, together with my known sentiments on that subject, having produced a coolness between me and my immediate kindred, I proceeded on my travels, and passed through different countries, chiefly within, but some beyond, the bounds of Hindustan, with a feeling of great aversion to the establishment of the British power in India. When I had reached the age of twenty, my father recalled me, and restored me to his favour; after which I first saw and began to associate with Europeans, and soon after made myself tolerably acquainted with their laws and form of government. Finding them generally more intelligent, more steady and moderate in their conduct, I gave up my prejudice against them, and became inclined in their favour, feeling persuaded that their rule, though a foreign yoke, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of the native inhabitants; and I enjoyed the confidence of several of them even in their public capacity. My continued controversies with the Brahmins on the subject of their idolatry and superstition, and my interference with their custom of burning widows, and other pernicious practices, revived and increased their animosity against me; and through their influence with my family, my father was again obliged to withdraw his countenance openly, though his limited pecuniary support was still continued to me.

"After my father's death, I opposed the advocates of idolatry with still greater boldness. Availing myself of the art of printing, now established in India, I published various works and pamphlets against their errors, in the native and foreign languages. This raised such a feeling against me that I was at last deserted by every person except two or three Scotch friends, to whom, and the nation to which they belong, I always feel grateful.

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"The ground which I took in all my controversies was not that of opposition to *Brahminism* but to a *perversion* of it; and I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahmins was contrary to the practice of their ancestors and the principles of the ancient books and authorities which they profess to revere and obey. Notwithstanding the violence of the opposition and resistance to my opinions, several highly respectable persons both among my own relations and others, began to adopt the same sentiments.

"I now felt a strong wish to visit Europe and obtain, by personal observation, a more thorough insight into its manners, customs, religion, and political institutions. I refrained, however, from carrying this intention into effect until the friends who coincided in my sentiments should be increased in number and strength. My expectations having been at length realised, in November 1830 I embarked for England and arrived there in April 1831."

To this, must be added the following to make the life-history of Rajah Ram Mohan complete:—

"The immediate object of his visit to that country was to plead before the authorities of the East India Company the case of the *ex-Emperor* of Delhi, with which he was entrusted as his ambassador. But his real object was twofold: first, to baffle the efforts of his adversaries to get Bentinck's *Suttee* enactment repealed; and, secondly, to be present in England during the East India Company's Charter.

"During his stay in London, he was publicly received at the Annual Meeting of the Unitarians of England; he was honoured with a public dinner by the East India Company; and, as part of his public activities, he submitted three papers on the Revenue System of India, the Judicial System of India, and the Material Condition of India, before a Committee of the House of Commons. At the Coronation of William IV, he was honoured with a place amongst Foreign Ambassadors and was personally presented to the King.

"In 1832, when the Reform Bill came up for discussion, he threw himself entirely into the spirit of that Bill and went so far as to make a public declaration that, in case the objects of that Bill were defeated, he would give up his residence in the dominions of England and would settle down in America. During this year, he also republished some of his Indian tracts for the information of his English friends, and visited France towards the end of the year, where he had the honour of dining with the French King more than once. In the beginning of 1833, he returned to England, was

present at the first sitting of the reformed Parliament, and had the satisfaction of seeing the appeal of his adversaries against the abolition of *Suttee* rejected.

"In the beginning of September of that year, he visited Bristol at the urgent invitation of his Unitarian friends, with a view to giving his fatigued constitution a much-needed rest previous to his return to his native land.

"Within a few days of his arrival, he was attacked with a fatal malady which terminated his noble career on the 27th of September. He finally closed his lips with the sacred word, AUM."

Very many readers will perhaps be glad to have a pen-picture of the personal appearance and characteristics of Rajah Ram Mohan. For, there will be only a few, if any, among them, so old as to have seen him in person. The following sketch, which appeared in the Court Journal for October 5, 1833, will be of interest:—

"The Rajah, in the outer man, was cast in nature's finest mould: his figure was manly and robust: his carriage dignified: the forehead towering, expansive and commanding: the eye dark, restless, full of brightness and animation, yet liquid and benevolent, and frequently glistening with a tear when affected by the deeper sensibility of the heart: the nose of Roman form and proportions: lips full and indicative of independence; the whole features deeply expressive, with a smile of soft and peculiar fascination which won irresistibly the suffrages to whom it was addressed. His manners were characterized by suavity blended with dignity, verging towards either point according to the company in which he might be placed. To ladies his politeness was marked by the most delicate manner; and his felicitous mode of paying them a compliment gained him very many admirers among the high-born beauties of Britain. In conversation with individuals of every rank and of various nations and professions, he passed with the utmost care from one language to another, suiting his remarks to each and all in excellent taste, and commanding the astonishment and respect of his hearers.

"It was in argument, however, that this exalted Brahmin was most conspicuous. He seemed to grapple with truth intuitively, and called in invective, raillery, sarcasm, and sometimes a most brilliant wit, to aid him in confuting his opponent; if precedent were necessary, a remarkably retentive memory and extensive reading in many languages supplied him with a copious fund; and at times with a rough, unsparing, ruthless hand, he burst as under the meshes of sophistry, error and bigotry, in which it

might be attempted to entangle him."

Though Rajah Ram Mohan touched life at many places, his religious and social activities seem to be better known than his labours in other fields. That he was the Founder of the Brahma Samaj with all that it stands for is common knowledge. That he was the leader of a vigorous attack on idolatry is perhaps equally well known. But that he was the first among modern Indians to whom the Fellowship of Faiths was a reality is not so well appreciated. It may be said with truth that he was the first great modern Indian student of Comparative Religion and the first Indian preacher of the fellowship of not merely of Indian faiths but of all faiths, including that of Jesus. It is often said that Rajah Ram Mohan was against the use of any symbol in the matter of worship. That is not quite correct. What he did oppose and, if one may say so with respect, rightly did oppose was the corruption of the idea. In answer to the argument in favour of idolatry that the idols which the Hindus worship are not viewed by them in the light of gods or as real personifications of the divine attributes but merely as instruments for raising their minds to the contemplation of those attributes which are respectively represented by different figures, he did not say that even such an use of idols was wrong; he only said:

"Locality of habitation and a mode of existence analogous to their own views of earthly things, are uniformly ascribed to each particular God. Thus the devotees of Siva, misconceiving the real spirit of the Scriptures, not only place an implicit credence in the separate existence of Siva but even regard him as an omnipotent being, the greatest of all the divinities who, as they say, inhabit the northern mountain of Kailasa; and that he is accompanied by two wives and several children, and surrounded with numerous attendants. In like manner, the followers of Vishnu, mistaking the allegorical representations of the Sastras for relation of real facts, believe him to be chief over all other gods, and that he resides with his wife and attendants on the summit of heaven. Similar opinions are also held by the worshippers of Kali, in respect to that goddess. And, in fact, the same observations are equally applicable to every class of Hindu devotees in regard to their respective gods and goddesses. And so tenacious are those devotees in respect to the honour due to their chosen divinities that when they meet in such holy places as Haridwar, Prayag, Siva-Kanchi, or Vishnu-Kanchi in the Dekhan, the adjustment of the point of precedence not only occasions the warmest verbal altercations but sometimes even blows and violence. Neither do

they regard the images of those gods merely in the light of instruments for elevating the mind to the conception of those supposed beings. They are simply in themselves made objects of worship. For, whatever Hindu purchases an idol in the market, or constructs one with his own hands, or has one made under his own superintendence, it is his invariable practice to perform certain ceremonies called Prana-Prathishta or the endowment of animation, by which he believes that its nature is changed from that of the mere materials of which it is formed and that it acquires not only life but supernatural powers. Shortly afterwards, if the idol be of the masculine gender, he marries it to a feminine one, with no less pomp and magnificence than he celebrates the nuptials of his own children. The mysterious process is now complete, and the god and goddess are esteemed the arbiters of his destiny, and continually receive his most ardent adoration.

"At the same time, the worshipper of the images ascribes to them at once the opposite natures of human and of superhuman beings. In attention to their supposed wants as living beings, he is seen feeding or pretending to feed them every morning and evening; and as in the hot season he is careful to fan them, so in the cold he is equally regardful of their comfort, covering them by day with warm clothing and placing them at night in a snug bed. But superstition does not find a limit here: the acts and speeches of the idols, and their assumption of various shapes and colours, are gravely related by the Brahmins, and with all the marks of veneration are firmly believed by their deluded followers. Other practices they have with regard to those idols which decency forbids me to explain."

His conception of true religion and the real basis of the fellowship of faiths are nowhere better described than in his famous Trust deed of the Brahma Samaj and in the following small catechism of his:—

"1. Question—What is meant by worship?

Answer—Worship implies the act of one with a view to please another; but when applied to the Supreme Being, it signifies a contemplation of His attributes.

2. Q.—To whom is worship due?

A.—To the Author and Governor of the Universe, which is incomprehensibly formed, and filled with an endless variety of men and things; in which, as shown by the zodiac, in a manner far more wonderful than the machinery of a watch, the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars perform their rapid courses; and which is fraught with animate

and inanimate matter of various kinds, locomotive and immovable, of which there is not one particle but has its functions to perform.

3. Q.—What is He?

A.—We have already mentioned that He is to be worshipped who is the Author and Governor of the universe; yet, neither the sacred writings nor logical argument can define His nature.

4. Q.—Are there no means of defining Him?

A.—It is repeatedly declared in the sacred writings that He cannot be defined either by the intellect or by language. This appears from inference also; for, though the universe is visible, still no one can ascertain its form or extent. How then can we define the Being whom we designate as its Author and Governor?

5. Q.—Is any one, on sufficient grounds, opposed to this worship?

A.—To this worship no one can be opposed on sufficient grounds; for, as we all worship the Supreme Being, adoring Him as the Author and Governor of the universe, it is impossible for any one to object to such worship; because each person considers the object whom he worships as the Author and Governor of the universe, therefore, in accordance with his own faith, he must acknowledge that this worship is his own. In the same manner, they who consider time or nature, or any other object, as the Governor of the universe, even they cannot be opposed to this worship, as bearing in mind the Author and Governor of the universe. And in China, in Tartary, in Europe, and in all other countries, where so many sects exist, all believe the object whom they adore to be the Author and Governor of the universe; consequently, they also must acknowledge, according to their own faith, that this our worship is their own.

6. Q.—In some places in the sacred writings, it is written that the Supreme Being is imperceptible and unexpressible; and in others, that He is capable of being known. How can this be reconciled?

A.—Where it is written that He is imperceptible and undefinable, it is meant that His likeness cannot be conceived; and where it is said that He is capable of being known, His mere existence is referred to, that is, that there is a God, as the indescribable creation and government of this universe clearly demonstrate, in the same manner as, by the action of a body, we ascertain the existence of a spirit therein called the sentient soul, but the form or likeness of that spirit which pervades every limb and guides the body, we know not.

7. Q.—Are you hostile to any other worship?

A.—Certainly not; for, he who worships, be it whomsoever or

whatsoever it may, considers that object as the Supreme Being, or as an object containing Him; consequently, what cause have we to be hostile to him?

8. Q. If you worship the Supreme Being, and other persons offer their adoration to the same Divine Being, but in a different form; what then is the difference between them and you?

A.—We differ in two ways; first, they worship under various forms and in particular places, believing the object of their worship to be the Supreme Being; but we declare that He, who is the Author of the universe, is to be worshipped, and besides this, we can determine no particular form or place. Secondly, we see that they who worship under any one particular form, are opposed to those who worship under another; but it is impossible for worshippers of any denomination to be opposed to us; as we have shown in the answer to the 5th question.

9. Q.—In what manner is this worship to be performed?

A.—By bearing in mind that the Author and Governor of this visible universe is the Supreme Being, and comparing this idea with the sacred writings and with reason. In this worship it is indispensably necessary to use exertions to subdue the senses, and to read such passages as direct attention to the Supreme Spirit. Exertion to subdue the senses signifies an endeavour to direct the will and the senses and the conduct in such a manner as not only to prevent our own or others' ill but to secure our own and others' good; in fact, what is considered injurious to ourselves, should be avoided towards others. It is obvious that, as we are so constituted that without the help of sound we can conceive no idea, therefore, by means of the texts treating of the Supreme Being, we should contemplate Him. The benefits which we continually receive from fire, from air, and from the sun, likewise from the various productions of the earth, such as the different kinds of grain, drugs, fruits and vegetables, all are dependent on Him: and by considering and reasoning on the terms expressive of such ideas, the meaning itself is firmly fixed in the mind. It is repeatedly said in the sacred writings that theological knowledge is dependent upon truth; consequently, the attainment of truth will enable us to worship the Supreme Being, who is Truth itself.

10. Q.—According to this worship, what rule must we establish with regard to the regulation of our food, conduct, and other worldly matters?

A.—It is proper to regulate our food and conduct agreeably to the sacred writings; therefore, he who follows no prescribed form among all those that are promulgated, but regulates his food and conduct according

to his own will, is called self-willed; and to act according to our own wish is opposed both by the Scriptures and by reason. In the Scriptures it is frequently forbidden. Let us examine it by reason. Suppose each person should, in non-conformity with prescribed form, regulate his conduct according to his own desires, a speedy end must ensue to established societies; for to the self-willed, food, whether fit to be eaten or not, conduct proper or improper, desires lawful or unlawful, all are the same; he is guided by no rule; to him an action performed according to the will is, faultless: but the will of all is not alike; consequently, in the fulfilment of our desires, where numerous opinions are mutually opposed, a quarrel is the most likely consequence; and the probable result of repeated quarrels is the destruction of human beings. In fact, however, it is highly improper to spend our whole time in judging of the propriety and impropriety of certain foods, without reflecting on science or Divine truth; for, be food of whatever kind it may, in a very short space of time it undergoes a change into what is considered exceedingly impure, and this impure matter is, in various places, productive of different kinds of grain; therefore, it is certainly far more preferable to adorn the mind than to think of purifying the belly.

11. Q.—In the performance of this worship, is any particular place, quarter, or time, necessary?

A.—A suitable place is certainly preferable, but it is not absolutely necessary: that is to say, in whatever place, towards whatever quarter, or at whatever time the mind is best at rest,—that place, that quarter, and that time is the most proper for the performance of this worship.

12. Q.—To whom is this worship fit to be taught?

A.—It may be taught to all; but effect being produced in each person according to his state of mental preparation, it will be proportionately successful."

Rajah Ram Mohan was a profound student of other religions besides Hinduism, with the result that he not merely understood the view-points of Mahomedans and Christians better than his contemporaries did, but, what is more important, was able by the aid of such comparative study to understand Hinduism better than even the orthodox exponents of it. Further, his interpretation of Mahomedanism and Christianity was an eye-opener even to professed Mahomedans and Christians. For, he drew attention to many aspects of those religions which they had not perceived and which indicated the greatness of those religions and answered many criticisms of them. All these enabled him to show not merely tolerance

towards other religions but also deep appreciation of them and of those who professed them. He carried on learned controversies with the missionaries of those faiths in defence of Hinduism; and the pamphlets that he issued show how one can defend one's own religion without offending others. A comparative study of religions and a belief in the fellowship of faiths are no doubt familiar things to-day. But in the days of Rajah Ram Mohan, they had been long forgotten, and to him must be given the credit of having resurrected them in modern India.

In the field of social reconstruction, his outstanding achievement was the great fight that he put up for the abolition of *Suttee*. He was for remarriage of child-widows and was of opinion that caste system with its innumerable divisions stood against the country's advancement. At a time when social ostracism was more effective than it is to-day, he broke many caste injunctions such as those against inter-dining and sea-voyage. Nothing is, however, known about his views on inter-marriage. His estimate of women was remarkable, considering the age in which he lived. The following extract from a pamphlet of his could not have been improved upon even by John Stuart Mill:—

"How then can you accuse them of want of understanding? If, after instruction in knowledge and wisdom, a person cannot comprehend or retain what has been taught him, we may consider him as deficient; but as you keep women generally void of education and acquirements, you cannot, therefore, in justice pronounce on their inferiority. On the contrary, Lilavati, Bhanumati, the wife of the Prince of Karnat, and that of Kalidas, are celebrated for their thorough knowledge of all the Shastras; moreover, in the *Brihadaranyak Upanishad* of the *Yajur Veda* it is clearly stated that Yajnavalkya imparted divine knowledge of the most difficult nature to his wife, Maitreyi, who was able to follow and completely attain it!

"You charge them with want of resolution, at which I feel exceedingly surprised: for, we constantly perceive, in a country where the name of death makes the male shudder, that the female, from her firmness of mind, offers to burn with the corpse of her deceased husband; and yet you accuse those women of deficiency in point of resolution.

"With regard to their trustworthiness, let us look minutely into the conduct of both sexes; and we may be enabled to ascertain which of them is the most frequently guilty of betraying friends. If we enumerate such women in each village or town as have been deceived by men, and such men as have been betrayed by women, I presume that the number of the

deceived women would be found ten times greater than that of the betrayed men. Men are, in general, able to read, and write, and manage public affairs, by which means they easily promulgate such faults as women occasionally commit, but never consider as criminal the misconduct of men towards women. One fault they have, it must be acknowledged; which is, by considering others equally void of duplicity as themselves, to give their confidence too readily, from which they suffer such misery even so far that some of them are misled to suffer themselves to be burnt to death.

"With respect to their subjection to the passions, this may be judged of by the custom of marriage as to the respective sexes for one man may marry two or three, sometimes even ten wives and upwards; while a woman who marries but one husband, desires at his death to follow him, forsaking all worldly enjoyments, or to remain leading the austere life of an ascetic."

The Rajah saw that a woman's position cannot be what it really ought to be, unless she is made economically independent. And so he strove to educate them and, further, to remove the restrictions which custom and law had imposed on their rights of inheritance. His pamphlets on this matter and on the rights of Hindus over ancestral property according to the Law of Bengal show, according to Sir Gurudas Banerjee—no mean critic in such matters—his deep erudition as a lawyer and his broad views as a jurist; and the advanced state of the law relating to the free alienability of property in Bengal is due to the latter of those two pamphlets in no small measure. Says Sir Gurudas, "The concluding paragraph of the essay (the latter one) will do honour to any lawyer or any jurist in the country."

The Rajah's work for the education of his countrymen in English was such as to entitle him to be classed with Lord Macaulay, Lord William Bentinck and David Hare as among the makers of modern educated India. He was among those who were responsible for turning the tide towards education on western lines, though he was also a great lover of Bengali and practically the father of modern Bangali literary prose.

Of his political work, much can be said. He has been rightly described as "the father of constitutional agitation" in this country. He struggled hard for the freedom of the press. The following extract from one of his appeals for such freedom gives at once a fair estimate of the Mahomedan rule in India, (about which much that is unfair has been written in school histories) and also the true foundation of the allegiance of the

people of this country to the British Raj:—

"Your Majesty is aware that under their former Mahomedan Rulers, the natives of this country enjoyed every political privilege in common with Mussalmans, being eligible to the highest offices in the state, entrusted with the command of armies and to the Government of provinces and often chosen as advisers to their Prince, without disqualification or degrading distinction on account of their religion or the place of their birth. They used to receive free grants of land exempted from any payments of revenue, and besides the highest salaries allowed under the Government, they enjoyed, free of charge, large tracts of country attached to certain offices of trust and dignity, while natives of learning and talent were rewarded with numerous situations of honour and emolument. Although, under the British Rule, the natives of India have entirely lost this political consequence, Your Majesty's faithful subjects were consoled by the more secure enjoyment of those civil and religious rights which had been so often violated by the rapacity and intolerance of the Mussalmans; and notwithstanding the loss of political rank and power, they considered themselves much happier in the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty than were their ancestors; but if these rights that remain are allowed to be unceremoniously invaded, the most valuable of them being placed at the mercy of one or two individuals, the basis on which they have founded their hopes of comfort and happiness under the British power, will be destroyed."

He was a champion of the peasant; but that did not mean that he was opposed to zamindars. He fought for justice all round. He had no "inferiority complex" in him; and he made his demands for justice to his countrymen, because he believed in the capacity of the Indians. Said he, "The people of India have the same capacity of improvement as any other civilized nation"; and he more than once vehemently repelled the charge of Asiatic inefficiency.

The quantum of the Raja's achievement in any particular branch of life might not be very great. But he was a great pioneer; one who saw great visions and hoped much for his country and laboured hard to set it going on the right road to progress. In all his efforts sacred and secular, though he was an ardent reformer, he was no iconoclast. As he himself said in his autobiography, in his controversies about religion and social reform his attitude was not one of opposition to Brahmanism but to the perversion of it. As Sir Brojendranath Seal puts it

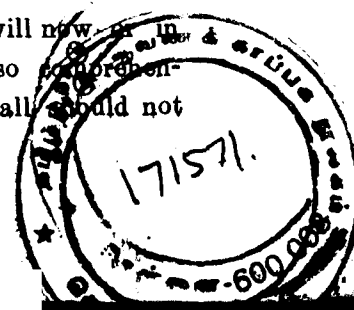
"For a right understanding and estimate of the Rajah's thought and

utterance, it is necessary to bear in mind the two essentially distinct but equally indispensable parts which the Rajah played on the historic stage. There was Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, the cosmopolite, the rationalist thinker, the representative man with a universal outlook on human civilisation and its historic march; a Brahmin of the Brahmins, and cheirophan moralising from the commanding height of some Eiffel Tower on the far-seen vistas and outstretched prospects of the world's civilisation; Jeremy Bentham's admired and dearly loved collaborator in the service of mankind; the peer of the Humes, the Gibbons, the Voltaires, the Volneys, the Diderots or any Free-thinker or Rationalist of them all. For him all idols were broken, and the parent of all illusions, authority, had been hacked to pieces. He, the cosmopolite, was daunted by no speculative doubts, discouraged by no craven fears. For him the veil of Isis was torn; the Temple had been rent in twain and the Holy of Holies lay bare to his gaze! For, he had his disillusionment, was indeed a thorough *roue* of the *monde* (or *demimonde*) intellectual. Calmly, fearlessly, truthfully, he probed, fathomed, dissected. And by deep meditation and brooding, he had won the glimpse of the Truth. But there was another and equally characteristic part played by the Rajah—the part of the Nationalist Reformer, the constructive practical social legislator,—the Renovator of National Scriptures and Revelations. For, the Rajah was cast in Nature's regal mould. His was the work of half a dozen giants. His name was Legion. Hindu Pandit, Zaburdast Moulvi, Christian Padree, the Rishi of a new Manwantara or Yuga, the Imam or Mahdi of a new Tradition, the Prophet or Nabi of a New Dispensation—by what name shall I call this man?"

"The Rajah was no doctrinaire. He had a wholesome historical instinct, a love of concrete embodiments and institutions, such as characterise the born religious and social reformer. A rationalist and universalist in every pulse of his being, he was no believer in the cult of the worship of Reason, of naked logical Abstractions. The universal guiding principle of the Love of God and Man who sought and found in the scriptures of the nations, and rose from the barren religion of Nature or Theo-philanthropy of his eighteenth century predecessors to a liberal interpretation and acceptance of the Historic Revelation and scriptures, not indeed in any supernatural sense, but as embodiments of the collective sense of races of mankind, and as concentrating and focussing that principle of Authority which, in this mundane state, is an indispensable cement and foundation, an elementary factor of communal life, whether in the social, the political

or the religious sphere."

Such were the activities of the great man the centenary of whose passing away falls this month—activities in "the constant and zealous advocacy of whatever tended to advance the glory of God and the welfare of man" as put in the epitaph over his tomb at Bristol. Though it must be conceded in all thankfulness that his work has borne rich fruits, it must also be recognised that there is still a great deal left to be done in the directions in which his life-work lay. Idolatry is not justified to-day in the gross form in which it existed when Rajah Ram Mohan began his attack. But it still persists in many insidious forms even among the educated. Animal sacrifice to gods lingers in not a few places. The comparative study of religions has advanced a great deal, thanks to the assistance the Rajah's work obtained in recent years from the Theosophical Society and the Ramakrishna Mission. But the resultant recognition of the Fellowship of Faiths, though it has taken possession of the intellects of most men and women, lingers still outside their hearts. Inter-sectarian feuds, Hindu-Mahomedan riots, Christian Missionary attacks on Hinduism, Arya Samaj attacks on Christianity—these refuse to disappear altogether. *Suttee* is practically dead as a common practice; but there are still many who would enforce it but for the strong arm of the law. Thanks to the lead given by the Brahma Samaj, the personal freedom of the Indian woman has broadened; but her legal rights to property, except in progressive States like Mysore, are not very different to-day (save in a few small matters of detail) from what they were when Rajah Ram Mohan lived and laboured. Caste divisions are perhaps not so rigid now as in his day in the matter of inter-dining; but even among the subdivisions of the four primary castes, they continue almost as rigid as then in the matter of inter-marriage. In spite of a century of effort and pacts, Hindu-Mahomedan brotherhood is still a matter for future achievement. The press is not as free as it ought to be, though some recent restrictions on it are the result of the abuse of freedom by some members of it. The separation of judicial and executive functions, for which Ram Mohan Roy pleaded strongly, is still as far off as ever; while the relationship between the peasant and the proprietor remains yet a thorny problem. There is great need to-day, therefore, for the Rajah's work to be carried on; for his example to be followed. Great men have existed, said Emerson, that there may be greater men. It may not be that India will now in the near future produce a personality so towering and so comprehensive as Rajah Ram Mohan. But there is no reason why all should not



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labour in the spirit in which he laboured, with full faith in personal liberty, and in the capacity of the Indian to shoulder the destiny of his race with outside help, if need be, but mainly on his own responsibility, with due regard to the claims of the weak and the lowly. Reformers there have been and there are, since the Rajah passed away, who recognise the need for work in the diverse paths trodden by him. But it is unfortunate that many of them have missed the fact that the mainspring of the Rajah's endeavours and the strength which led him to victory were his deep and profound faith in God and not mere belief in meliorism. That faith was the secret of the Rajah's success. The mere meliorist may get temporary results. But one would fain hope that in this year sacred to the Rajah's memory, those who wish to carry on his work will not forget the great secret of his life and will proceed to light their lamps also at the supreme Fount of Light and of Life. That way alone lies the path to real and abiding progress.

Out of the night that covers me,
 Black as the pit from pole to pole,
 I thank whatever gods may be
 For my unconquerable soul.
 In the fell clutch of circumstance 5
 I have not winced nor cried aloud.
 Under the bludgeonings of chance
 My head is bloody, but unbowed.
 Beyond this place of wrath and tears
 Looms but the Horror of the shade, 10
 And yet the menace of the years
 Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.
 It matters not how strait the gate,
 How charged with punishments the scroll,
 I am the master of my fate: 15
 I am the captain of my soul.

W. E. HENLEY.

A EIGHTEENTH CENTURY WESTERN THINKER

By

T. R. VENKATRAMA SASTRI, C.I.E.

The ruling judgments in a society are delivered by the normal and the average. In the country of the nude, dress is the mark of insanity, says the Tamil proverb. It is not therefore surprising that one Thomas Tryon (1635-1703) whose opinions were such as to find favour with the moderns should have been counted among eccentrics not only in his day but for two centuries. A writer in the Blackwood Magazine of April 1933 claims for him recognition as a self-educated original thinker and a pioneer in educational and social reform. To an Oriental his life story has great value.

His schooling began at five and ended in a year. Young Tom became a skilled worker skinning and carding four pounds of wool a day and earning two shillings a week at eight, tending sheep on Sundays for a change at ten for a penny or two pence, tending his own sheep and accounted a good shepherd at thirteen, and learning reading and writing from a young man in exchange for one of two sheep that he then had. He had saved £ 3 at seventeen and went to London with that amount in his pocket.

In a period of mental crisis at twenty-three he gave up meat and drink in favour of bread fruit and water, for some time living on one meal and subsequently adding butter and cheese. His judgment on the value of vegetarianism is thus stated:

"This abstemious clean way of living in innocency not only raised the power of outward senses but also opened the windows of the inward senses and prepared the way for the voice of wisdom. There is as it were a new earth, a new Heaven, new senses and a new understanding."

One of his seventyfive dishes is given as spinach endive and young parsley boiled and eaten with bread and butter and salt commended as exhilarating food and productive of good blood.

In these days when for fasting are claimed all the virtues of prayer, it is worth recalling his feeling of illumination

"being mightily stirred up to a more than ordinary abstinence during which time the Lord manifested himself to me most wonderfully and taught me many great mysteries".

He became a respected merchant at thirtyfive in London, still retaining his habits of study. He wrote books purely out of his own life experience.

While recommending to lovers of wisdom and health the use of grains fruits and herbs in place of flesh and fish which "awakened a wrathful nature," he recognised "there was no stemming the tide of custom and popular opinion" and discussed the quality of different flesh foods. He advises moderation in the use of tobacco, fresh air, light clothing, simple food and exercise. He sketched life according to the voice of wisdom in a society with no lawyers, few physicians, no money-grabbing, no persecution for opinions, no war, no birth control, no torture of criminals, no superfluous expenses on feasts and garments but moneys spent on the planting of trees and the making of roads.

Some aphorisms of his may be useful to Indians.

Say not that my grandfather father and mother did so and so and I believe they were as wise as you and therefore I will do so too for such sayings are tokens of stubborn and incurable folly.

Withdraw thyself from the many and entertain profound silence and the Lord will arise in the centre of thy soul.

All evils arise from intemperate desires and unnecessary possessions and if things were wisely considered, people will not be fond of "Foreign neednots."

All the feuds which people have when they scold, fight, go to law, forswear themselves and act all the devils parts are generally about needless things.

On education, he objected to wasteful methods. He held that parents could teach in twelve months what took five years at school with its grammar and declension and conjugation and construing a Latin author without understanding him. What children learn between two and eight govern all their further education and mothers should be educated to educate and a woman is capable, more than man even, of learning mathematics. According to him the masters are not to whip, beat nor show anger towards any child, be he never so dull.

These and much else as to many miscellaneous topics like dreams, madness, treatment of lunatics, etc., indicate thought in advance of his time.

His earning of two shillings a week and Benjamin Franklin's attempt to live on eighteen pence a week on his recipes are indications of the economic conditions and possibilities of their time and of what may be done even to-day in poor India with careful efforts to avoid all extravagance.

THE HYMNS OF THYAGARAJA

By

C. R. SRINIVASA AIYANGAR.

(Continued from page 83.)

The other Keerthana I spoke of is in the raga Begada and opens with "Bhaktuni Charitamu Vinave." There are three charanas to it. It takes a new line of departure, in that it deals with what defects the ideal Bhaktha is free from; and as such, compliments the other positive description. Freely rendered, it comes to something like this:

"Hear me about the life of the ideal devotee of Seeta Rama. Absolutely free from desire of any kind; yet, *he desires*, though it be for the good of others. He has cast behind him the bonds of Karma, good and evil. A jeevanmukta, his life is one even flow of supreme bliss.

He holds that one should not vaunt his own excellences—'japa, tapas, vrata, homa, tarpana, have I performed, even as the books ordain it.' He should never lend his tongue to speak against the trend of his thoughts. He should never make it a point to go from place to place, blowing his own trumpet and waging a relentless crusade against any that dare to stand up against him. Fickle of purpose, he should not allow his heart to twine itself round wife, child, kith, kin, lands, possessions, power, and fame."

He tells us, "Count not good fortune, birth, learning, rule, beauty, strength and intellect, as true, as real. Further, seek not to create and foster feelings of difference and rivalry and schism between Siva, and Vishnu. Far be it from you to seek comfort, ease, profusion and luxury through bragging that you and you alone deserve the respect and the reverence and the esteem of the world. Do not be wearied away from unbroken contemplation on the divine feet of Seeta Rama, that the son of Vayu, ever holds enshrined in his heart.

Come not under the rod of passion and sloth. Again, voice no complaint that the grace of the Lord comes not to you of itself and without any deserving on your part. Your soul should never stray from the path of Rajayoga, but hold on to it fast and firm. Last, but not the least, let your heart be ever illuminated by the glorious presence of the friend and colleague of the Lord Thyagaraja—Sri Ramachandra, the Ideal King."

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