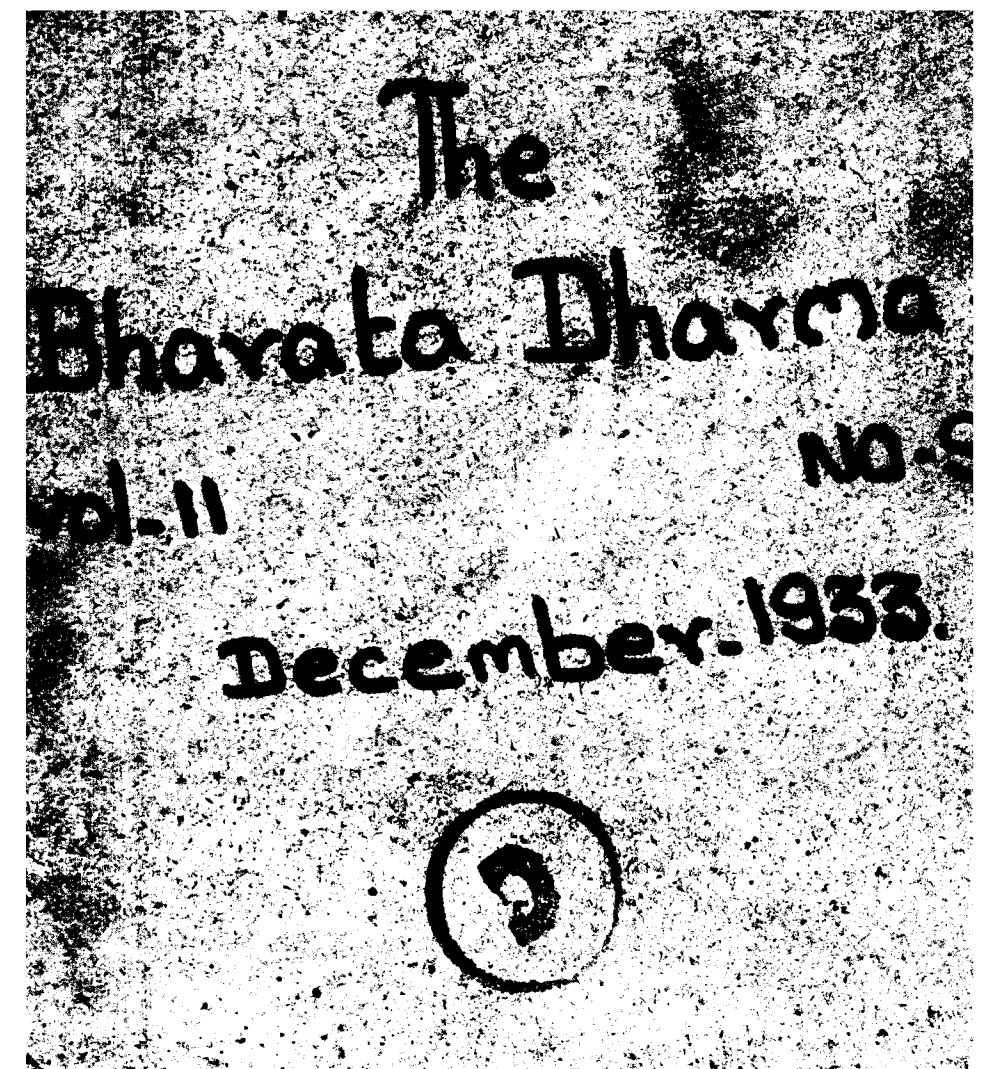




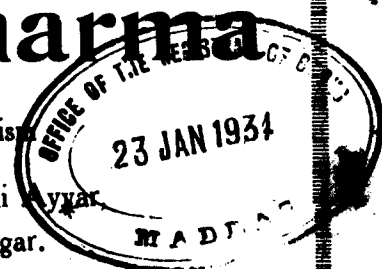
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THE
Bharata Dharma

Magazine of Liberal Hinduism

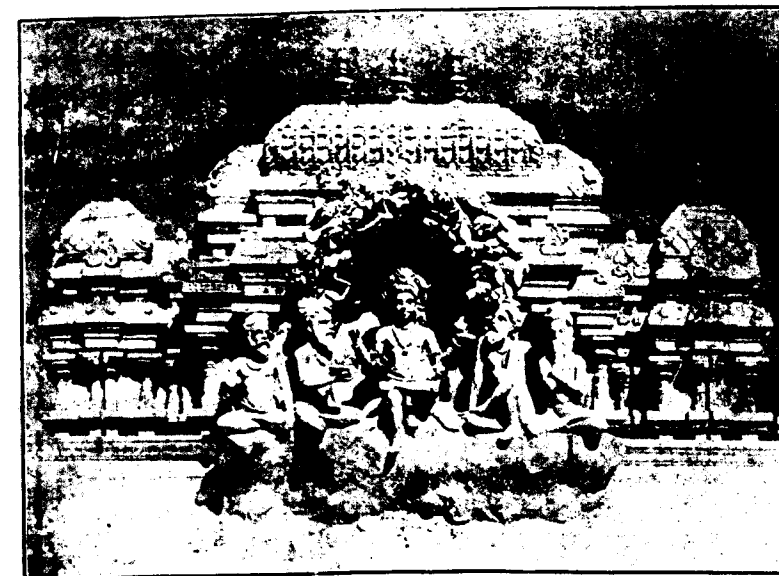
Honorary Editors : { C. V. Krishnaswami Ayyar
K. V. Sesa Ayyangar.



VOL. XI]

DECEMBER, 1933

[No. 9



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

चित् वटतरोर्मले वृद्धा शिष्या गुरुर्युवा ।

गुरोस्तु मौनं व्याख्याने शिष्यास्तु चिन्तनसंशयाः ॥

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]

DECEMBER, 1933

[No. 9

CHRISTMAS.

By

SANDYLYA.

Christmas day is coming, and millions and millions of humans are looking forward to its advent with joyous expectation. To the ordinary man and woman it will be a day of great tamasha, a day of tasty food, of gorgeous apparel, of friendly visits to neighbours, of fire works and sports to the young, of long expected gifts to the very young. To the Christian fundamentalist it is the great day on which his Saviour Jesus was physically born in this physical world, a very sacred day for that reason no doubt but nothing more. But these festivals are in truth much more than days of tamasha or sacred days in the calendar. To those who have the higher vision they have a vaster intent. The *adhyatmic* interpretation of them is a field of fascinating research, a field well-known to many Indians in respect of their own festivals, though common humanity here as in the West knows it not. The following taken mainly from Bishop Leadbeater's "The hidden side of Christian Festivals," will, it is hoped, be found interesting by the readers of "The Bharata Dharma" in this the month of Christmas.

Christmas is one of the greatest of the festivals of the Christian Church; it is perhaps surpassed only by Easter, for on *this* day the Christians celebrate the birth of the Sun-God, as on *that* day they celebrate His victory over the powers of darkness.

The actual date of the birth of Jesus is not known, but from various indications it seems probable that it was some time in the Spring. The 25th December was, however, selected fairly early in ecclesiastical history, because it coincided with that great Sun-festival, and it was naturally convenient to take advantage of what was already a public holiday. Those who do not recognize the symbolical meaning of the life of the Christ naturally suppose all these ecclesiastical commemorations to be merely historical; but those who try to delve a little deeper into the truths of nature, shall none the less find it interesting to look for other and deeper significations as well. What are the points of which the great Christmas celebration reminds such a seeker?

One must certainly not ignore the historic aspect of the day, even though he knows that it is not an actual anniversary. In precisely the same manner, it is agreed that a certain convenient day shall be celebrated each year as the birthday of King George although it may not be the anniversary of his coming into the world in this incarnation, but it would be both foolish and improper to decline to observe it on that account. We are called upon on Christmas Day to look back to the descent of the great disciple Jesus, and to thank him for it, and for all that has since come to the world in consequence of it. It was he who lent his body to the Great Teacher in order that He might come and teach His religion and preach His gospel upon earth.

That may seem a new and strange idea to some, but it is one quite commonly understood by those who grasp the facts of reincarnation—those who know something of the might and the power and the dignity of the Great One Who is called the World-Teacher. It would not be economy for Him, it would not be a good use of His stupendous power, that He should occupy a human body through all the period of its birth and growth, the earlier stages of its life. Therefore one of His disciples takes charge of all that for Him, and He steps into the full-grown and fully prepared body when He is ready to do so, and uses it for the purpose for which alone He takes it over. For He Himself lives habitually upon a plane far higher, and carries on there a work so magnificent, so beyond human conception, that it is little use to try to grasp it, except in the most general outline.

In this particular case an advanced disciple of the Lord Christ took birth in the year 4 B.C. among the descendants of King David, as a son of Joseph and Mary, and to him was given the name of Jesus. He remained in charge of that body until it was about thirty years of age, and then

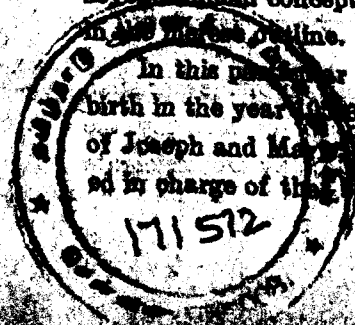
handed it over to the Christ, Who occupied it for the three years of His earthly ministry. The disciple Jesus was reborn as Apollonius of Tyana just about the date usually assigned to the beginning of the Christian era; and a thousand years later he appeared as the great teacher Ramanujacharya, who left so deep an impression upon Indian thought. In due course he received the reward of his self-sacrifice, and attained the Asekha Initiation, thereby becoming one of the Masters of the Wisdom.

Again this occasion recalls to our mind the descent of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity into matter.

Yet again, Christmas Day reminds one of that first of the great Initiations, of which it is a symbol in the carefully arranged syllabus of the Church's Year. One should think, then, what this first Initiation means—how it is indeed a second birth—a birth into the great White Brotherhood.

Through the Advent season the Church looks forward to the next Coming of the Lord; at Christmas that expectation culminates, and her celebration is one of gratitude not only for His last Coming, but also for favours yet to come.

In one of the Indian Scriptures, (the Bhagavad Gita?) the World-Teacher is represented as saying that whenever the world falls into great sorrow and misery, whenever it seems that unbelief and evil are triumphant, then He comes to present the eternal truth in some new way which shall to some extent take the place of His previous statements, which have been distorted. This may seem strange to some, but take it for the moment and think of it—that all these various presentations differ because they are offered to different people at different ages of the world; at different stages of the progress of human thought. If one grasps that idea, he will see that no one of them can be expected to be eternal—that on the contrary, everyone of them must in time become more or less corrupted, more or less distorted; and therefore, just because it is corrupted, unsuited for the needs of the world. The world is advancing, and a new presentation from time to time is an absolute necessity. What was appropriate for people two thousand years ago cannot be fully suited for us in the present day. A vast deal more is known on many subjects than was known then, and any statement of truth that was fitted for people then will need considerable revision and addition before it can be made suitable for us. On the other hand, a presentation of the truth such as would now be absolutely suitable would have been insanity, would have been utterly inappropriate, at that time. It may well be that it is thought



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that a re-statement of the same great truths would be beneficial and helpful.

There is an expectation of the Coming of the Christ all over the world. All religions so far as they are active, are expecting Him. The Hindus look forward to the Kalki Avatars; the Buddhists to-day are awaiting the Lord Maitreya, which is their name for the great World-Teacher Whom the Christians call the Christ. Among the Muhammadans, when a pretender started up not long ago in Africa, he gained an immense following because he proclaimed himself to be the Imam Mahdi, the Saviour for whom they wait. He was not, but many believed it. In Zoroastrianism there is also a tradition of a great One Who is to come. Among the Christians there are the Seventh-Day Adventists and other similar societies.

There is another aspect of the Coming of the Christ—the coming within the heart of each individual, the development of the Christ-principle within us. A great and glorious mystery underlies all this—the wonderful, and yet most intimate, connection between the Second Person of the Ever-Blessed Trinity and the great World-Teacher, and in turn the link joining both of These to that Christ-principle within man to which is often given the name of intuition. Yet indeed it means much more than intuition; it means the wisdom that *knows*, not by process of reasoning but by utter inner certainty. That development must come to every man. That Christ-principle is in every one of us: it can be awakened—it is being awakened among us even now, and as it unfolds we realize the true brotherhood of man; because we realize the Fatherhood of God. We come to know that our consciousness is nothing but an illusion—that we are one in Him. First, one with all who know Him and love Him; and then secondly, by a still greater extension, with all the world, whether as yet they know it or not. To touch that wonderful consciousness, to realize the Christ within us, is not so impossible, for it is being done even now by some. Gleams of its glory sometimes manifest themselves; flashes of wonderful peace and uplifting, so that at least for a few moments we *know*.

All great festivals have another aspect, and this one has it among the rest—perhaps even this has it pre-eminently. They are all special channels of force—occasions upon which a greater outpouring of divine power takes place—greater, than in ordinary times. Let not this thought seem strange; let none imagine it as a limitation of God's Omnipotence. For God Himself works by means, and takes advantage of

opportunities; and this wondrous creation of His is so utterly one in Him, so mystically inter-related, that as the stars move through their courses there are certain times when certain energies are more readily available than at others—when the bridges are clear, the channels are open; and Christmas is such a time. These special occasions, these great festivals, are not mere commemorations; they indicate definite actions on the part of the Living Christ Who is the Head of His Church. All the members of the Church are members of Christ, and are definitely linked to Him through baptism and through confirmation, and still more through the most holy Sacrament of His Love; so they are always to some extent under His influence. But He has ordained certain methods for the pouring down of His influence upon His Church, and the greatest of all is the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Therefore there are special times and special conditions under which the outpouring is more definitely available. Always, everyone of us is in link with the Christ, and yet we all know that we are more closely linked with Him—that the link is more alive, is more vivid—when we come to His Church, when we kneel before His very Presence, in the Bread and Wine which He has chosen to be His vehicle, through which He represents Himself to our outward senses.

Just in the same way as that is a more intimate Presence than the Presence which is always with us, so have we an extraordinary outpouring of power at certain times and seasons. There is definitely a greater, a more universally assimilable outpouring on such days as Christmas, Easter, the Ascension, Whit Sunday, Trinity Sunday; each of these has its own special character. Such a day as this great Feast of Christmas is a real opportunity for each one of us, for there is a stronger and more definite outflow of divine power then, just because the whole world is more prepared to receive it.

"But why should not such an outpouring come always?" Because we are not always ready to receive it. It might have been so arranged in nature that the sun should be strong enough to lick up and drive away any possible cloud. Would it have been a good thing for agriculture if that had been so; at any rate, that is not the plan upon which the world is working. The clouds do not keep back the whole of the life, the strength, that is being poured out by the sun; they keep back just a part of it, and a larger part of his light, but not the force which keeps his worlds alive; and the same is true of his great prototype, the Lord Himself. When a man breaks through his self-made clouds he is able to receive this downpouring of divine blessing; otherwise he would

not be able to receive it, it would have to be forced upon him, and that is not God's way of dealing with man. He never forces Himself upon us. There is very good reason for that; it would not help our evolution if He did. That is the law, and if we want to receive His grace must lay ourselves open to its influence. An individual can do that to some extent; but when thousands upon thousands of people all combine to do it, we see at once how great an opportunity there is for this downpouring of what we must call Grace, Strength, Power and Love, which is always streaming forth.

Christmas is a time when that opportunity is near and vivid; but the extent to which we can avail ourselves of it depends upon several factors. First, and most of all, it depends upon how far the Christmas spirit has entered our hearts. If we are filled with the peace and goodwill of Christmas, the goodwill of the Christ Himself can reach our hearts.

Let us try to realize, then, that Christmas Day is a personal opportunity for each one of us; that we are not merely repeating an old formula when we sing: "Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given." There is actually a definite outpouring of that divine force for each one of us, and the extent to which we can partake of it, the amount that we may gain from it, is limited only by our power to receive. Christ is unlimited, and His power overshines the whole world. What we each can gain from this is our affair; it is in our own hands. Let us open our hearts to the spirit of the Christ-Child, to the spirit of Christmas, and that Christ-Child will fill our hearts with His joy and His peace.

Christmas is a season of rejoicing, apart from its religious side—if anything connected with it can ever be apart from that.

It is a time of peace to men of goodwill, and surely at that time we all try to be men of goodwill; and it is remarkable how nearly a great many people succeed. It is a wonderful thing, this Christmas spirit, this real feeling of brotherhood that is spread abroad on that day. There is a greater goodwill, a greater kindness and comradeship, a truer brotherhood on Christmas Day than in all the rest of the year. It should not be for Christmas only, of course; we should have that feeling always; but since we are overwhelmed by the noise and tumult of the world, since we cannot yet all of us feel that noble Christmas heartens all the while, it is at least a good thing that there should be one day when all the world agrees to feel it, when every man tries to come as near as he can to the brotherhood which ought to exist all the year round. Assuredly it is well, too.

(Continued on page 163.)

SWAMI DAYANAND SARASWATI.

By

AN ADMIRER.

Fifty years ago, in 1883, Swami Dayanand Saraswati shed his mortal nature; and wherever there are Arya Samajists, specially in the Punjab and the U.P., as even in distant Kerala, the semicentenary of his passing away has been celebrated and is being celebrated in the quarter that elapses from Dec. 1933. What manner of a man was this Swami; what was his teaching? That he taught an aspect of the Eternal Truth suitable to many, which they had not seen before, is clear from the lakhs and lakhs of men and women all over India who regard him now as their supreme guru—men and women not only of the masses but of the classes also, persons of great intellectual worth and moral earnestness. And there are many who are not his followers, who yet see in him a personality fit to take his place among the long and honoured spiritual leaders which this country has produced in increasing numbers. There is an age-old tradition in this country that divides the expounders of Hinduism into *Astikas* and *Nastikas*. Superficially understood those terms mean believers in God and unbelievers. But the traditional test is not exactly that. To a pious Hindu the Vedas are the fountain source of all light, spiritual and worldly. He who accepts not their authority is a *Nastika*. He who does is an *Astika*. There have been many religious reformers in the country who while they were passionate seekers after God, did not allow the Vedas the supreme place that tradition assigned to it; teachers like Eknath and other baktas from Maharashtra; reformers like Rajah Ram Mohun and those who followed him. In common parlance it would be wrong to call them *Nastikas*. But in the technical sense they were. The reason for the comparative smallness of the following they had was the profound veneration that for centuries the mass mind of India has had for the Vedas, though it may know little of their contents. No reformer has much chance of extended success in this country, who does not derive his inspiration or at least professes to do so, from the *Sruti*. Swami Dayanand's interpretation of the Vedas was, as is well-known, not the traditional one. But he placed them on the highest pedestal, and that distinguished him from others who laboured in the same vineyard. Hence his great popularity.

The story of his life has been often told. Curiously, the decisive events of his life were what occurs daily to millions of Hindus. Yet his reaction to them was uncommon. Born of a brahmin family at the State, he went

to a Siva temple on a Sivaratri day. He found a mouse making itself merry on the idol, when none was near. This shattered his faith in idol worship. A sister of his and an uncle died young. That made him disbelieve in the mercy of God. His parents arranged for his marriage without consulting him, an arrangement in which most young men have acquiesced before and after him. But he did not want to marry and ran away from his home. Then came the study of the shastras and the practice of austerities and disillusionment as to the effectiveness of those methods; and subsequently his discovery of the truth and the founding of the Arya Samaj in 1875. The following statement made by himself of his beliefs will be found very useful and interesting by the reader and will enable him to determine the Swami's place vis à vis the other exponents of Hinduism.

"He who is called Brahma or the Most High, who is Paramatma, or the Supreme Spirit who permeates the whole universe, who is a true personification of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss; Whose nature, attribute and characteristics are Holy; Who is omniscient, formless, All-pervading, Unborn, Infinite, Almighty, Just and Merciful; Who is the author of the Universe, sustains and dissolves it; who awards all souls the fruits of their deeds in strict accordance with the requirements of absolute justice and is possessed of the like attributes,—even Him I believe to be the great God.

I hold that the four Vedas, the repository of knowledge and religious truths—are the word of God. They comprise what is known as the Samhita Mantra portion only. They are absolutely free from error, and are an authority unto themselves. In other words they do not stand in need of any other book to uphold their authority. Just as the sun (or a lamp) by his light, reveals his own nature as well as that of other objects of the universe, such as earth—even so are the Vedas.

The commentaries on the four Vedas, viz., the Brahmanas, the six Angas, the six Upangas, the Upavedas, and the eleven hundred and twenty seven shuklas, which are expositions of the Vedic texts by Brahma and other great Rishis I look upon as works of dependent character. In other words, they are held to be authoritative in so far as they conform to the teachings of the Vedas. Whatever passages in these works are opposed to the Vedic injunctions, I reject them entirely.

The practice of equitable justice together with that of truthfulness in word, deed and thought and the like (virtues)—in a word, that which is in conformity with the will of God, as embodied in the Vedas—

even that I call Dharma (right). But the practice of that which is not free from partiality and injustice as well as that of untruthfulness in word, deed and thought;—in a word, that which is opposed to the will of God, as embodied in the Vedas—that I term Adharma (wrong).

The immortal, eternal *Principle* which is endowed with attraction and repulsion, feelings of pleasure and pain, and consciousness, and whose capacity for knowledge is limited,—even that I believe to be the soul.

God and soul are two different entities by virtue of being different in nature and of being possessed of dissimilar attributes and characteristics. They are however inseparable one from the other, being related to each other as the pervader and the pervaded and have certain attributes in common. Just as a material object has always been and shall always be, distinct from the space in which it exists and as the two have never been nor shall ever be one and the same, even so are God and the soul to each other. Their mutual relation is that of the pervader and the pervaded, of father and son. This worships and That is worshipped.

I hold three things to be beginningless, namely God, the Soul, and Prakriti—the material cause of the universe. These are also known as the eternal substrata. Being eternal, their essential nature, their attributes and their characteristics are also eternal.

Substances, properties and characteristics, which result from combination, cease to exist on the dissolution of that compound. But the power or force, by virtue of which one substance unites with the another, or separates from it is eternally inherent in that substance, and this power will compel it to seek similar unions and disunions in the future. Unions and disunions, creation and dissolution. (of the world) [and birth and death of the soul] have eternally followed each other in succession.

That which results from the combination of different elementary substances in an intelligent manner and the right proportion and order,—even that in all its infinite variety, is called creation.

The purpose of creation is the essential and natural exercise of the creative energy of Diety. A person once asked another—"What is the use of the eyes?" "why to see with, to be sure," was the reply. The same is the case here. God's creative energy can be exercised and the souls can reap the fruits of their deeds only when the world is created.

The world is created. Its creator is the aforesaid God. The existence of design in the universe as well as the fact that the dead inert

matter is incapable of moulding itself into different ordered forms, such as seeds, proves that it must have a creator.

The earthly bondage (of the soul) has a cause. This cause is ignorance which is the source of sin, as among other things it leads a man to worship objects other than God, obscures his intellectual faculties, whereof pain and suffering is the result. Bondage is termed so, because no one desires it but has to undergo it.

The emancipation of the soul from pain and suffering of every description and a subsequent career of freedom in the All-pervading God and His immense creation, for a fixed period of time and its resumption of earthly life after the expiration of that period constitute salvation.

The means of salvation are the worship of God, in other words, the practice of Yoga, the performance of righteous deeds, the acquisition of true knowledge by the practice of Brahmacharya, the society of the wise and the learned, love of true knowledge, purity of thought, a life of activity and so on.

The righteously acquired wealth alone constitutes *Artha*, while that which is acquired by foul means is called *Anartha*.

The enjoyment of legitimate desires with the help of honestly acquired wealth constitutes *kama*.

Devas are those who are wise and learned; *Asuras* are those who are foolish and ignorant; *Rakshasas* are those who are wicked and love sin, and *Pitachas* are those who are filthy in their habits.

Devapuja consists in showing honour to the wise and the learned, to one's father, mother and preceptor, to the Itinerant preachers of truth, to a just ruler, to those who lead righteous lives, to women who are chaste and faithful to their husbands, to men who are devoted and loyal to their wives. The worship of the above named persons I hold to be right; while the worship of the dead, inert objects I hold to be wrong.

The puranas are the Brahmana books, such as Aitriya Brahmana written by the great Rishis like Brahma. They are also called Itihās, Kalpa, Gāthā, and Nārāyaṇī. The Bhagavad and other books of that sort are not the (real) Puranas.

Tirtha is that by means of which the "Ocean of misery" is crossed. It consists in the practice of truthfulness in speech, in the acquisition of true knowledge, in cultivating the society of the wise and the good, in the practice of *Artha* and (other stages) of yoga—in leading a life of activity, in the diffusion of knowledge and in the performance of

the good works. So called sacred places on the land and water are not Tirthas.

Effort is superior to Destiny since the former begets the latter and also because if the effort is well directed, all ends well; but if it is wrongly directed, all goes wrong.

I hold that it is commendable for man to feel for others in the same way as he does for his own self, to sympathise with them in their sorrows and losses and to rejoice in their joys and gains; and that it is reprehensible to do otherwise.

Samskar is that which contributes to the physical, mental, and spiritual improvement of man. From conception to cremation there are sixteen *samskar*s altogether. I hold that their due and proper observance is obligatory on all. Nothing should be done for the departed after the remains have been cremated.

I hold that the performance of *Yogas* is most commendable. It consists in showing due respect to the wise and learned, in the proper application of the principles of chemistry and of physical and mechanical sciences to the affairs of life, in the discrimination of knowledge and culture, in the performance of *Agnihotra* which by contributing to the purification of air and water, rain and vegetables, directly promotes the well being of all sentient creatures.

Shishtachar consists in leading a virtuous life, in acquiring knowledge during the period of Brahmacharya, in sifting truth from error by the help of (the eight kinds of) evidence, such as direct cognition and then embracing truth and rejecting error. He who practices *Shishtachar* is called *Shishṭa* (Gentleman).

The soul is a free agent to do deeds, but is subservient to God for reaping the fruits thereof. Likewise God is free to do His good work.

Swarga (Heaven) is the enjoyment of extreme happiness and the attainment of the means thereof.

Naraka (Hell) is another name for undergoing extreme suffering and possession of the means thereof."

The Swami had very definite and strong views on many social and educational problems even now engaging the minds of Hindus; and those views are of special value because he could not be ignored as one not conversant with the shastras or opposed to religion. As to who should be allowed to study the Vedas, he said that all classes should be allowed the privilege. He was against caste by birth. *Varna vyavahara* should be, according to him, based on qualifications, accomplishments and character. He

was, however, not for the total abolition of caste. He disapproved of child marriage and fixed the minimum age for a girl's marriage at sixteen. He was against widow marriage, but curiously he permitted Niyoga. According to him Parasara's smṛithi permitting widows to remarry was apocryphal. He was against idolatry, but was keen on *Agnihotra*, as if in it Agni was not in the same position as an idol in temple worship. He was for compulsory education of all boys and girls over the 5th year and such education was to be in a school which should be in a sequestered place. Parents should not be allowed to see or even have correspondence with them. Co-education of even children of 5 years was not to be permitted. All scholars, rich and poor, were to be treated alike in the matter of food, drink, dress, seats etc. "Be they Princes and Princesses or children of beggars, all should practise asceticism" said he.

He showed combativeness in his dealings with other religionists and was a great fighter against faiths like Christianity and Muhamadanism, and even against some aspects of Hinduism. Evidently he was no believer in the fellowship of faiths. Perhaps that attitude was necessary in the religious condition of India in his time when Hinduism was at a low ebb of influence. Probably he over-stated the case in favour of the supremacy and sufficiency of the Vedas. All may not agree with his interpretation of several texts in them. His attack on idolatry may have been due to a misconception. But few can fail to recognise the vigour he introduced into the decaying Hindu society, or the value of his work in purging popular Hinduism which had allowed many an ugly element to masquerade as part of it, or the beneficial results of his effort to open its door to those of other faiths, by means of the Suddhi Ceremony, thus expanding its influence in a way not easily possible before. Sister Nivedita than whom there was no more sympathetic student of Hinduism used to plead for an aggressive Hinduism. If ever there was a reformer in recent times who made Hinduism legitimately aggressive, it was Swami Dayanand, and all lovers of it will always be grateful to him for doing so, if for nothing else.

(Continued from page 162.)

that we should endeavour to impart our joy to others—that a goodly custom should have sprung up whereby on Christmas Day the poor and the needy are helped towards the realization of the great brotherhood of humanity, for our Christmas joy can be perfect only in so far as we share it with others less fortunately circumstanced than ourselves.

THE TEMPLE ENTRY BILL.

By

C. V. KRISHNASWAMI AYYAR.

The campaign which Mahatma Ghandi has begun, to preach anti-untouchability, will draw pointed attention to the bill, recently ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be circulated for eliciting opinion, relating to the entry into Hindu temples of certain classes who do not have the right to do so. Custom which is as good as statutes in Courts prevents their entrance now, and the object of the bill, to put it briefly, is to enable Hindus of certain qualifications resident in the locality where the temples are situated to throw open their doors to these excluded classes. That it will cause a notable change in the practice of ages is not and cannot be denied by any reasonable student of the problem. That there is a large body of persons—call them obscurantists or by any other name—who sincerely believe that this departure is not only not to the best interests of Hinduism but is positively dangerous, cannot also be questioned. The bill, therefore, requires to be carefully examined, and the objections to it should be met before the change contemplated by it is approved.

The entire bill save for one clause as to its "extent" was printed in a previous issue of the "Bharata Dharma" for January and February 1933, but as it is to be proposed in what follows to consider the objections to it in some detail it will be useful to have the exact text ready at hand. So it is reprinted below, specially as many who will read this issue may not have taken the earlier one.

Short Title and extent. 1. (1) This Act may be called the Hindu Temple Entry Disabilities Removal Act, 1933.

(2) It extends to the whole of British India.

Definitions. 2. In this Act, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context :

(1) 'Board' shall mean the Board of Commissioners constituted under Section 10 of the Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act, 1926 ;

(2) 'Excluded caste' shall mean any caste or class of the Hindu community excluded by reason of established usage or custom from entering a temple ;

(3) 'Temple' shall mean a place, by whatever designation known, used as of right as a place of public worship by the Hindu community generally except the excluded castes ;

(4) 'Trustee' shall mean a person, by whatever designation known in whom, the administration of a temple is vested; and

(5) 'Voters' shall mean—

(a) when used in connection with a temple having an annual income of Rs. 500 and above, the Hindu voters in the electoral roll of the Corporation of a City, or in the electoral roll of a Municipality, or a District Board or a Taluk Board or any other similar local authority, constituted under the Local Boards Act within the area of which it is situated, and

(b) when used in connection with a temple having an annual income of less than Rs. 500, the Hindu voters in the electoral roll of the Municipal division in the City or the Municipal ward in the Municipal area in the mufussil or the Panchayat area within which it is situated.

3. (1) After the commencement of this Act, a written requisition signed by not less than fifty voters may be made to the trustee of a temple asking him that the question of throwing open the temple to any excluded caste may be referred for decision to the general body of the voters.

(2) Upon such requisition, the trustee shall forthwith refer the question to the voters for the decision in the manner prescribed.

(3) The decision of a majority of the voters who have recorded their opinions shall be binding on the trustees of the temple and on all worshippers therein.

(4) Where the decision is in favour of allowing the entry of any excluded caste into the temple, the trustees shall publish an order in the manner prescribed that the excluded caste shall have a right of entry into such temple.

(5) Notwithstanding any law, custom or usage to the contrary, it shall be open to a trustee of any Hindu temple himself to publish in the prescribed manner a notice that unless an objection is lodged with him within a period of one month from the date of publication of the notice, he will make an order allowing an excluded caste, mentioned by him in the notice, to enter into such temple.

(2) Within one month after the publication of such notice by a trustee, a written objection signed by not less than fifty voters may be lodged with the trustee, objecting to such entry. Upon the lodging of such objection, the question whether the excluded caste concerned shall

Entry of excluded castes into temples to be decided by reference to the general body of voters.

Entry of excluded castes into temples by notice by trustee.

or shall not be allowed entry into the temples shall be referred to the voters under sub-section (2) of section 3 as if a requisition had been made under subsection (1) of that section.

(3) The decision of the majority of the voters recording their opinions shall be binding on the trustee and the worshippers of the temple.

(4) Where an objection has been lodged under sub-section (2) and the decision of the majority of the voters recording their opinions is in favour of allowing the entry of the excluded caste into the temple, or where no objection is raised, after the expiry of the period mentioned in the notice under sub-section (1), the trustee shall publish an order in the manner prescribed that the excluded caste shall have a right of entry into the temple.

5. On the publication in the prescribed manner of an order by the trustee under sub-section (4) of section 3, or sub-section (4) of section 4 it shall be lawful for any member of the excluded caste referred to in such order to enter into the temple for the purpose of worship therein, subject to such general regulations for the maintenance of order and cleanliness and the due observance of the religious ceremonies in the temple as may be made in that behalf by the trustees.

6. Where a reference has been made to the voters under sub-section (2) of section 3 or sub-section (2) of section 4 and the majority of voters who have voted have decided against the throwing open of a temple to any excluded caste, no written requisition under section 3 shall be made nor a notice under section 4 be published for a period of one year from the date of which such reference was made.

7. In section 40 of the Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act, 1925, the words "subject to the provisions of the Hindu Temple Entry Disabilities Removal Act, 1933" shall be inserted at the commencement.

8. The trustees of a temple may, with the previous approval of the Board, make regulations—

(1) for the maintenance of order and cleanliness in the temple; and
(2) for the due observance of the customary religious ceremonial in the temple.

9. (1) The Local Government shall have power to make rules for the purpose of carrying into effect the provisions of this Act.

Entry of excluded castes into temples to be lawful after publication of the order.

Fresh reference to voters not to be made before the expiry of one year.

Amendment of section 40 Mad. Act II of 1927.

Power to make regulations.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, the Local Government shall have power to make rules prescribing :—

- (a) the form of the requisition by the voters for a referendum, and the manner of its presentation to the trustee;
- (b) the manner of publication of the notices and orders of the trustee;
- (c) the method of obtaining the opinions of the voters; and
- (d) the decision of disputes regarding the ascertainment of such opinions.

Now to the objections :—A printed memorial is being circulated with our valued contemporary "The Arya Dharmam" to be signed and sent to the Viceroy by those who are against the bill. It contains in a compendious form nearly all the arguments advanced by its opponents, and it would be useful and desirable to take them seriatim for discussion.

(1) That the bill directly affects religion and is, therefore, beyond the competence of the Legislature.

It is section 65 of the Government of India Act that should guide one as to the competence of the Legislative Assembly. Any one reading it will see that it does not expressly exclude measures affecting religion. It enables the Assembly to pass laws concerning all men and things. Pandit Sen who led the opposition in the Assembly to the circulation of the bill, did not say that Section 65 was a bar. His argument was that the British Government on some occasions had stated that every man will be guaranteed freedom from interference in the exercise of his religion. That no doubt is true. But it is, if anything, a constitutional objection and not a legal objection. "Competence" of a Legislature is a matter of law. It may be that the Government will be acting wrongly in supporting the measure, but that does not affect the legal question. An attempt was made at one stage by Mr. Thampan to show that the Assembly was incompetent to deal with the bill because "Religious Endowments" were peculiarly within the jurisdiction of Local Councils. This shows that local Legislature could deal with the bill. If it can, it does not improve matters from the point of view now urged. But that objection was got over by the Viceroy giving sanction under the provisions of Government of India Act which, as Mr. Thampan admitted, he was entitled to do, though he was wrongly advised in the exercise of his discretion. The constitutional objection will be discussed in dealing with objection No. 2.

(2) That the bill violates the pledge of religious neutrality in the Queen's proclamation and is a departure from the wise policy of non

interference in religion guaranteed by Parliamentary statutes and followed by the British Government hereto.

The pledge is not so wide as it is commonly represented to be. It never covered practices like Sati or the enforcement of physical conjugal rights before puberty, which no civilised Government can permit. It at best guaranteed only personal religious freedom. So no one can be compelled by the Government to do a thing which can fairly be objected to by him as opposed to his religion. If the present bill was a compulsory one—like the Sarda Act—there might be some force in the objection, but it is not so. It only permits a majority of people interested in the temple to effect a change if they want, and enables them to implement their decision. No one is compelled to vote in any particular way. No doubt the majority can by its vote compel the minority to do what they may not like, namely, to allow the excluded classes to enter. But it is not interference by the Government. On the other hand, the bill shows a commendable desire on the part of the Government not to interfere by its own command, but to leave the community affected to settle its difficulties. Let us look at this objection from the other side.

Suppose the majority want the change. Is the guarantee to be used to suppress their desire for change by maintaining a law that is not wanted. Will it not be interfering with a man's conscience and religion to make him stick to what he considers obsolete in religion. Is the minority to compel the majority to stick to what it considers wrong? There is no doubt a certain amount of compulsion either way; which is more objectionable, compulsion by the majority or that by the minority. This does not mean that the provision contained in the bill as to the method of ascertaining the wish of the majority is the best that can be thought of. Of that later on. Unless one takes the view that all change is taboo, there must be some method found for effecting the change.

(3) That the bill affecting as it does particularly the Hindu religion should not justly be considered by a Legislature composed of members of all religions.

This will be a sound objection, if the change can be effected otherwise. If there is no legal objection to the change and the community can effect it itself, it is a serious objection. But unfortunately it cannot. Even if 999 out of 1000 temple-goers want to effect the change, under the law as it stands, the one man left can legally object to the change and prevent it being brought into effect. So one has perforce to go to the Legislature. It is quite reasonable to say that non-Hindus should not vote

on the bill; if there is a provision of Law which can prevent them from doing so, it should be enforced. But there is no such provision. The best way out is for the Governor-General to enforce a convention which was thought of some years ago. By that convention if the majority of the members of the Legislative Assembly belonging to the community affected by a bill are against it, the fact that the minority has the support of the members outside the community should not matter. The Governor General should refuse his assent unless the majority support a view so opposed to civilized life as Sati. No one can fairly and reasonably say that the refusal to let in excluded classes into a temple is on the same level as Sati. If the non-Hindus are not allowed even to vote, the bill passed by the Assembly will be invalid. If their being allowed to vote is to debar the Legislature from considering the bill, there is no other way of changing the law, in any reasonable time. To wait for the emergence of a new custom permitting the entry is to practically negate the desire of the majority.

(4) That the temple in which caste Hindus usually worship have been founded, endowed, or maintained only for the *benefit* of the four fold castes of the Hindu community.

If this statement means that only the four fold castes are ordinarily to enter, then it is a correct statement. But if it means that it was intended that the excluded classes should not derive any sort of benefit, it is not correct. The provision for Utsavams in the temples in which idols are taken out of the temple and in which the excluded classes also take part, for example by dragging the car, and by supplying articles for drums etc., show that these classes were not altogether outside the intentions of the founders and endowers and that they were also intended to be benefitted though not by entry. Readers are referred to the speech of Mr. M. C. Rajah on 23-9-33 in the Legislative Assembly for instances as to how far the depressed classes have been allowed to have the benefits of these temples.

(5) That such temples have never been since time immemorial claimed or used for worship by the excluded communities.

In the main this statement is correct. But in some cases, even of the most sacred temples, such as Melkote and Guruvayur, the excluded communities have been allowed to enter the temples on some days.

(6) That there is no general desire on the part of the excluded classes to enter the caste Hindu temples, *that such classes have their own deities places and modes of worship* and that they have not any such grievance as the bill alleges and seeks to remove.

That part of the statement which is in italics is true. The rest is only partially true. The famous example of Nandan shows that the desire to go to the higher classes of temples is there. Who knows that there are not many mute inglorious Nandans even to-day. That till recently they have not been vocal in this matter is no indication of a want of desire. Their economic subordination to the higher classes may well have been a good reason for their being silent. Further, slaves have often been found to defend slavery. That did not stand in the way of the humanitarian attempting to free them. Similarly, the higher caste Hindu is bound to act, in spite of the apathy of the excluded, in this matter of temple-entry. Any way, now that the question has been raised, the result of any referendum among the excluded classes will be in favour of the bill. Further, this bill is not confined to any one excluded class. It refers also to certain classes which are in some districts allowed to enter and debarred in others. For example, oilmongers are allowed to enter certain temples but not the one in Tiruchendur (Tinnevely Dist.). They have filed suits showing their desire to enter. The Shanars form another class who have similarly shown their desire to enter.

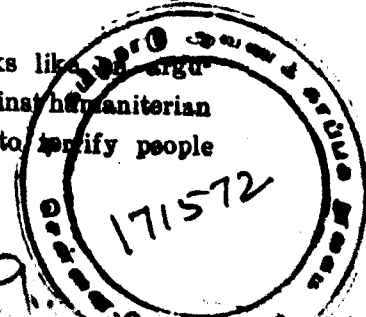
(7) That the whole movement adverted to in the preamble of the bill has been engineered by a few politicians for political purposes.

This may be discussed with objection (18) which is "That the bill originating from Mr. Gandhi's fast has been pushed to an artificial prominence and to an unreal urgency by the unexampled facilities for publicity which Mr. Gandhi and his associates have at their service".

These arguments have a family resemblance to the die-hard attack on the political demand of the Indian Intelligentsia. It is said in that connection that a few educated Indians have advertised the national demand, but that the masses want no change. The answer is the same in both cases. The reformers are always the few. But they it is that lead, and the masses only follow and take the benefit. Any way, now that the question has been raised, Hindu society cannot shelve it. It must decide it one way or the other. Shelving will only postpone the trouble, but cannot solve the difficulties.

(8) That the bill involves a disastrous experiment *as it applies the principles of communism in the sphere of Hindu religion*, setting at nought fundamental principles of equity, law and religion.

The italicised portion is much too vague and looks like an argument common in British political controversies to-day against humanitarian proposals adumbrated by the Labour Party. It is easy to terrify people



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by raising the bogey of communism. It may bamboozle them for a time as it did the British electorate at the last election. But it cannot misguide them long. Are the few who *ex hypothesi* object to the entry in the position of capitalists. They would not care to avow that openly. What principle of law or equity is there that says that the majority of *joint owners* should be governed by the minority's view as to the method of their own enjoyment of the common property. In the case of communism one is trying to give rights to those who never had them, without the consent of those who have the rights. If the excluded classes are to be allowed to enter, against the wish of the majority of those who can now enter, then there will be something in the argument. The bill only permits the majority of owners to share their rights with others, *if they wish to do so*.

(9) That the said temples have been founded and are functioning in modes and under the principles and injunctions ordained by the *Agama Sastras* and other scriptures of *divine* authority.

This may be discussed with No. (10) which says "That your petitioners believe in the spiritual efficacy of consecration of idols and the ritual for their worship in temples, as enjoyed by the *sastras* and in the axiomatic validity of the rules of the *Agamas* which prohibit the entry of the excluded castes within the temples".

It is true of the majority of temples that they are governed by *Agama Sastras*. There are a few temples which exclude certain classes, of which it cannot be positively predicated that they are so governed. But for the purpose of argument let it be taken that the statement is true. That does not settle the matter. Do the *Agama Sastras* prohibit the change sought to be made. It will take much space to show in detail that there are at least two different views on that matter. Readers will find the arguments in favour of the view that the *Sastras* do not prohibit it marshalled in a pamphlet by Principal Dhruva of the Benares University—no iconoclast and in "Do *Sastras* justify Touch Pollution" by Mr. B. Sitarama Rao of Madras. When the *Shastris* differ, what is to be done? The decision of the majority of those likely to be affected by the change is the least objectionable way out, though it may not be a perfect way. What is the alternative suggested by the no-changer? Why should their interpretation be taken as correct?

(11) That the bill violates their conscience and faith as it amounts to a negation of certain essential doctrines of their religion and scriptures.

That again raises the question as to whose conscience should give

way, as a matter of practical work, if the majority among the community feel that their conscience revolts against the exclusion. As to the exclusion being an essential part of the religion, it is essentially a matter of interpretation, which has been dealt with in discussing points 9 and 10.

(12) That the bill admittedly seeks to effect a vital change in the existing law and established usage.

(13) That the bill proposes changes which seek to bring about by Legislative enactment, a social and religious revolution in the Hindu community, as its provisions contravene religious traditions, caste usages, and immemorial customs believed in and observed by the cast Hindu community for ages.

It is for the community to decide whether it would effect a change in such vital or important matters. That is why votes are to be taken and the view of the community is to be ascertained as to whether it favours the change. The change is no doubt important, though opinions may differ as to its being *vital*. If the community wishes the change why should it not be assisted in effecting the change. If a Legislative enactment is the only way in which it can effect the change and if the community wants it, the Legislature is bound to assist it.

(14) That the bill proposes to enable trustees of temple to commit breaches of their trust on the sole strength of a majority of opinions of certain kinds of voters in local areas; while the opinion of only those who are believers in the *Sastras* and worshippers in the temples should justly count, if at all, for the purpose.

The italicised portion begs the question. The enforcement of the change ceases to be a breach of trust, when the change is made with the consent of most of the beneficiaries. The temple is for the benefit of the community, and if it allows the change who is to complain. The latter part draws attention to the really vulnerable part of the bill, and is no doubt a good objection. I shall deal with it latter on.

(15) That the proposal to decide what is essentially a question of religion and faith by the votes of a majority in an *ad hoc* election is a capricious expedient unsustainable on principle, and unsupported by precedents.

Would the opposers kindly suggest a better alternative? The saying "that the duty of the opposition is only to suppose" may be good as a piece of a parliamentary tactics, but is not an useful contribution to the solution of what is admittedly a grave problem, and to the ascertainment of truth.

(16) That the worshippers of temples are not confined to local areas, and in the case of famous temples, worshippers and devotees thereof count by millions all over India.

This is no doubt true and it may necessitate a change in the provision of the bill as to who should vote, but it is essentially a question of method and does not affect the main principle of the bill. I shall discuss the method later on.

(17) That the members of the present Legislative Assembly have no mandate from their electors for considering this bill or any matter raising religious issues.

Unless an assembly is elected at an election held on a single issue, the members of no elected assembly can be unequivocally said to have a mandate. Members in all decent democratic assemblies, are not mere mouth pieces. That no doubt is the claim of some, but it is not admitted. The commonly accepted view is that a member is selected for his capacity and character, and he is to vote according to what he considers is best for his electors. Otherwise it will lead to making an automaton of him. It is sometimes possible that his views on a particular bill are not those of the majority of his electors. Then it is open to the electors to dislodge him at the next election or call upon him to resign. No decent man will refuse to resign if the majority of his electors want him to resign. If he does not, the newly elected assembly may then work for the repeal of the law passed with the assistance of the previous member's vote. No other method is workable. For example, have the present members of the Assembly any definite mandate to vote for the establishment of a Reserve Bank, or any law for the suppression of crime? Yet not one seems to question their right to vote as they think fit, on those matters.

(19) That the passing of the bill into law will cause widespread commotion in the country and provoke strife and bitterness between the caste Hindus and those classes for whose benefit the bill is said to be intended.

This is an echo of what was said when slavery was abolished. Who is likely to create the strife? Not the majority who are given the power to decide whether there is to be a change or not. If a few who do not want the change create strife the arm of the law is long enough to reach them however influential they may be. The fact is that such threats lost their sting long ago.

All that I have said above does not mean that the bill should be allowed to be passed as it is. It is evident that it has been drafted in haste. Perhaps it was hurried to create immediately an opportunity for the Legislature to discuss the main principle of the bill. Its provisions show that it was intended only for the Madras Presidency; and not all the necessary changes were made when it was introduced as an All-India measure. For example, it could not have been intended that the Board which according to the definition in the bill is a creature of a Madras Act and intended to function only in the Madras Presidency should approve of (as provided in clause 8) of regulations for temples all over India. Both the term "Trustee" and "trustees" are used; see clauses 3 (1) and 4 (3) & (8). If according to a well known section of the General clauses Act the singular includes the plural why are both used. Clause (5) provides that the trustee can make certain regulations as to cleanliness etc. There is no reference in it to approval of the regulations by the Board. Are these regulations different from those contemplated by

clause (8)? Clause (8) is otiose in a bill before the Central Legislature. The wording of the latter part of clause (5) and of clause (8) is very wide. In the form of making regulations for the maintenance of order and cleanliness, a trustee and the Board may practically nullify the decision in favour of a change. Some provision should be made to avoid that. It should not be assumed that they will always be sympathisers of the change. Some definite provision should be made in the bill itself to show that previous decisions by courts denying the rights of entry should not debar a referendum. There may be no usage or custom but a wrong decision on say a point of limitation may stand in the way. The bill does not refer to such cases. What about temples over which the Board has no control? Is each Local Government to make a different set of rules? Is the Central Government not to have powers to make any kind of rule? In the case of a temple with over Rs. 500 income within a Taluk Board area which in its turn will be within a District Board area, who are to vote. Is it only those in the former area or those in the whole District Board area? This is not clear. How far are the excluded classes to be allowed to go when they are permitted to enter? Is this to be prescribed by a regulation under clause (8) or is it to be left to be determined by the trustee, or is it to be a matter on which the electors are to be called upon to express an opinion. This must be definitely provided for in the bill. Otherwise there will be trouble. The last will be the best solution. There are many such defects in drafting but they will be set right, we hope, when the bill is taken into consideration.

The real defect of the bill is in the provision it makes as to the method by which the opinion of the community is to be ascertained. Shortly put, the provision is that the Hindu voters of the locality for Municipal and Local Board purposes are to determine in the matter. For the qualifications of such voters the readers are referred to the Acts constituting the Local Boards and Municipalities. That provision in the bill, we think, is not satisfactory. To take it as it is, it does not say who is a Hindu voter. Nowhere is the term "Hindu" defined. Not even in the Acts referred to above. One knows that there is a great diversity of opinion as to who is a "Hindu". Not even the qualification that he should profess Hinduism at the time of the voting, as in Section 23 of the Hindu Religious Endowments Act, is put in. Does this omission mean, that if a person was born of Hindu parents, he would be entitled to vote? But even profession of Hinduism would not seem to be enough. Brahmos and Jains are for some purpose classed as Hindus. Are they to vote? There are good Hindus who have no faith in temple—worship and who do not care what becomes of idols and temples. Should they be allowed to vote; obviously it will be unjust to allow even such Hindus to vote. As the bill stands now it is not clear that it does not allow Hindu voters of even the excluded classes to vote. They are also "Hindu" voters. That is obviously unjust, as they are likely to vote in their own favour. The basic principle on which the encroachment contemplated by the bill

can be justified is that the majority of those who have the right to enter agree to it. The voting should be confined to those who have something to lose. So the excluded classes must be excluded for the purpose of voting, and some sort of confession of faith in the worship of idols in temples and Agama Sastras should be insisted on. For example, a special list of worshippers may be prepared for this purpose, and each intending voter should be asked to file a sworn statement that he has such faith. According to the bill some property qualification is necessary, for such a qualification is prescribed both by the District Municipalities Act and District Boards Act for a voter. This is hard on the poor. There are often more pious men among the poor than among the rich. If in any case adult suffrage is to be adopted this would seem to be the proper case. The present rule prescribes a very narrow local circle for temples in municipalities and cities. Nearest to church, farthest from God. Dwellers in cities are often less attached to temples than those in the villages near them who go there oftener to worship. It would be better if an uniform limit of a 10 miles radius is fixed for the smaller temples and 100 miles radius for the bigger ones. Perhaps even wider circles may be required for temples like Tirupati and Rameswaram, though fixing all India for them is not practical politics. According to the present bill read with the Acts referred to above 120 days residence in a locality is enough. This may lead to migrations for the purpose of election. One year would be a fairer test. A bare majority is all that is prescribed by the bill. This will lead to election abuses. A two-thirds majority which is often prescribed even for less momentous decisions such as the unseating of an elected official, should be insisted on. If not a rule like the rule for admission to clubs that one vote against admission or one black ball should count as much as 2 or 3 for admission or a white ball should be provided for. To prevent hasty decisions, a period of say one year should be allowed to elapse between the voting if it is for a change and its being given effect to. In the meanwhile, on the deposit of the necessary expenses a fresh voting should be allowed to be called for once by the no changers. All these amendments no doubt involve expense and delay and work. But in view of the importance of the change contemplated they should be faced, if injustice is not to be done to those who hold honest beliefs though they may be in a minority, and if enthusiasts are not to be allowed to create inconvenient and dangerous precedents though in this particular case they may be on the right side, and if no just room is to be given for bitterness. Will the Sanatanists direct their energies in these directions, and not try to mop the Atlantic? Will they benefit by the fate of their wholesale objection to Mr. Sarda's bill?

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