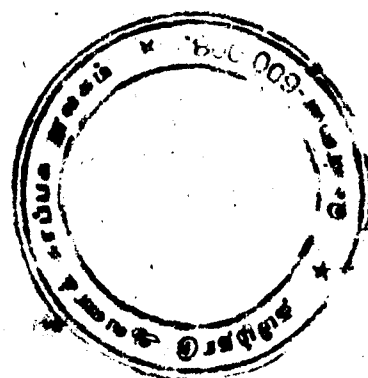




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THE Bharata Dharma

Magazine of Liberal Hinduism

Honorary Editors : { C. V. Krishnaswami Ayyar,
K. V. Seshu Ayyangar.

VOL. XI]

MARCH, 1934

[No. 12



On the front parapet of THE TEMPLE OF LIGHT, Adyar

चित्ते वटतरोर्मूले वृद्धा शिक्षया गुरुयुवा ।

गुरोस्तु मौनं व्याख्यानं शिष्यास्तु छिन्नसंशयाः ॥

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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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.

MADAME MARY RAINE (AUSTRALIA).—The Bharata Dharma fills my heart with inspiration, love and pity and quickens the body to acts of helpfulness and brotherly love....I have found it a great comfort and education and look with joy to its arrival each month as it enables me to regulate my life in harmony.

Shri T. L. Vaswani writes :—The "Bharata Dharma" is precious to me as a noble aspiration to interpret the ancient wisdom in the light of the modern spirit. Great is India's destiny and great the mission of the Hindu Dharma in the new age. May you and your work be ever increasingly blessed in the service of *Satyam Sanatanam*!

T. V. VENKATARAMA AIYAR.—The Bharata Dharma is an organ of humanity and stands for the highest ideals of Hindu culture and Philosophy. Sincerely edited.



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

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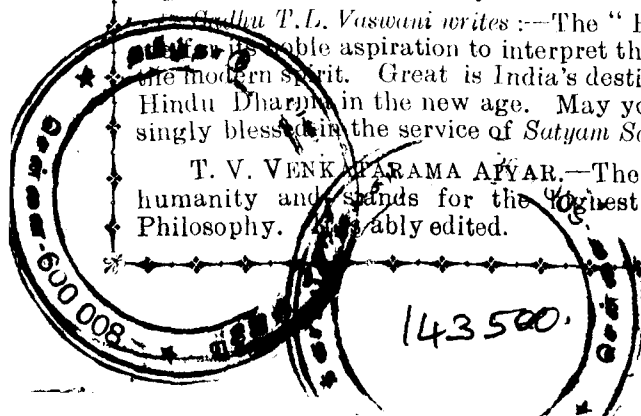
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SANATANA DHARMA AND UNTOUCHABILITY.

BY

MR. T. R. VENKATARAMA SASTRI, C.I.E.

The Vedic Religion is the religion of a comparatively homogeneous people and has points of contact with the religions of other well-known Aryan groups like the ancient Persians and Greeks. When the Indian polity was developed so as to include a vast indigenous population of the country within its religious and cultural fold, the Vedic religion itself underwent a change and in this changed form it has received the name of Hinduism. That is not *our* name for our religion. The word is derived from the name which the Persians gave to India as the country of the Sindhu river then known to them (H being the Persian equivalent for Sanskrit S.) The mixed religion and culture have given us some peculiarities which are no part of the Vedic Religion but which naturally sprang from the situation in which we were placed. These peculiarities were of very slow growth. They did not come in a day. For example, take the idea of touch as pollution as it prevails in South India with which we are most intimately acquainted. No Brahmin will eat the food touched by a Sudra. According to modern orthodoxy there are no Kshatriyas or Vaisyas and the problem of accepting or rejecting the food touched by a Kshatriya or a Vaisya does not arise. The result therefore is that an orthodox Brahmin will not, and cannot, eat food touched by a non-Brahmin.



Apastamba, the puritan, who treats himself and even Svetaketu of the Upanishad and the White Yajus as persons of a far later age than the Vedas, lays down the rule that a non-Brahmin may cook the food of a Brahmin. If the Sudra cooked under the supervision of an Arya, it may be accepted straightway. If it is cooked by a Sudra without such supervision, the Brahmin can put the rice-pot over the fire and sprinkle water over it and it immediately became fit food for Gods and men.

Food brought by a slave at night may be eaten but not if brought by a woman-slave. There are also regulations as to how the Sudra cook should shave and dress. He ought to shave every day or at least twice a fortnight.

We have the Mahabharata telling us that Krishna preferred to stay with Vidura rather than accept the hospitality of Duryodhana. This is far earlier than Apastamba according to tradition.

If we come to the later Smritis we find slow refinements as to which Sudras may be accepted as permissible of touch, and which not, with a division into *sat* Sudras and *asat* Sudras. Roughly these were those who were in contact with the three higher castes in every-day life and those who were not. The non-brahmin castes whose touch did not pollute varied in different parts of the country. The potter, the shepherd and the barber may touch according to some. The barber may not according to others.

The whole of our modern stricter notions developed as we gave up beef first and flesh food next and the classes, other than the Brahmin, retained flesh; and the necessity to take in non-brahmin cooks possibly ceased by a comparatively growing Brahmin population.

This was helped also by another movement that made women cooks of the household. Of old women could learn Vedas just like men; they had initiation (*upanayana*) just the same as men. The Asura, that is, Parsi women to this day retain the corresponding *Kusti* ceremony; they performed the Gayatri ceremony (the daily morning and evening prayer). Slowly all this fell into desuetude. The women took charge of the household and their cooking and the preliminary throwing of a little rice into the household hearth became the substitute for her ancient fire worship in her own right. No longer were cooks needed; she made the kitchen clean. The ancient rule that no one should go into the kitchen and witness the uncleanness there was no longer required.

The Sutra prohibits two things much prized in these days as a symbol of purity, the cooking by women and the cooking for oneself. The

Vaishnavas and the Madhwas still retain something of the first prohibition and prefer the man's (Achari's) cooking; and the Smartas who prefer the new rule still treat the woman's cooking as requiring purification at a ceremony for the ancestors on the anniversary of their deaths.

All this will make clear that the touch purity or impurity is the resultant of two forces on the reform of food and repugnance to flesh foods and flesh eaters and the availability of a new set of cooks more clean and acceptable.

Apart from this evolution of the ideas of touch purity or impurity we have actual injunctions in the Avesta of the Parsis and in our own scriptures that purity comes of the idea of cleanliness. The performer of a ceremony exercises extra care in regard to cleanliness but it is still cleanliness that he is after. In the ceremonies for the gods, the cloth may be accepted straightway from the washerman's hand but the ceremony for the manes of the ancestors demands stricter cleanliness.

My friend Mr. T. M. Krishnaswami Ayyar propounds the following view:

"By a system of untouchability (*achara*) starting with the members of the family and gradually extending beyond *sanatana dharma* secures for its adherents the beneficent result of the contemplative solitude of the forest within the crowded activities of the social polity. No westerner unacquainted with the details of the social system or even the Hindu who has lived the life of *anachara* can ever appreciate the basic foundation of *sanatana dharma* on *achara* and *anushtana*. To mistake cleanliness for *achara* is to confess ignorance of Hinduism.

"*Achara* is not the product of the best washerman, not even the result of the most punctilious and careful disinfection. It is the making of a physical and mental isolation into which alone can be drawn the spiritual magnetism of the higher powers. If *achara* is once abolished the Hinduism which is essentially founded on *sanatana dharma* can only embellish the dead libraries of museums; its living results can no longer fertilise the minds of men.

In the first place the word *achara* is not *untouchability* in Sanskrit; the secondary meaning attached to it in Tamil has led to this hasty expression of view. The word *achara* in Tamil is really *s'uchi* in Sanskrit which means *clean*; *as'uchi* means *unclean*; *Asaucha* means *uncleanliness*. The touch of one in *asaucha* due to death or birth is *unclean*. According to ancient ideas *particles* go out of the unclean man's body and find lodging in the body of another who is thereby made unclean. In the Ramayana the

rishi asks the disciple to give him the bathing cloth because the water of the *Tamasa* is clean or clear like the mind of a good man. It is the cleaning effect of the bath and its value as a preparation for body duties that is aimed at and he therefore prefers it even to the Ganges. The connection between cleanliness and godliness and holiness is an ancient conception and feeling.

The idea is cleanliness. At any rate its origin in cleanliness cannot be denied. The development to-day of that idea has gone into unhealthy and morbid lengths. I have seen women coming from the river with a pot of clean water going back and entering the river again for a purifying bath because they had trodden on a bit of broken pot or a thread of cloth on the way. I have seen a man purchasing oil in the shop in his own vessel dipping the vessel carefully in water up the neck because the shop-keeper touched the vessel. I give these illustrations because the ancient common sense prescribed the washing of the leg in the one case and stated it to be no pollution in the other that the vessel was touched by the shop-keeper. Still there can be no doubt that if the mind is disturbed by the idea of pollution the only means of purification is that which the mind itself requires.

The most important point however is that the *achara* (untouchability?) was intended neither to reproduce the conditions of the forest nor to produce any physical or mental isolation as a condition of drawing to oneself any magnetism.

On the other hand it seems to me that it exemplifies the extravagances and dangers of the cultivation of an exclusive sense of purity. In this as in other matters, moderation and the recognition of the value of a sense of proportion and the adoption of a middle course will be found to be valuable.

The ultimate aim is the clearness or cleanliness of the mind. The ancients recognising the difficulties of life achieved the balance of mind by not going into the kitchen and contracting a repugnance for the food prepared in the not quite clean conditions there, and by purifying the food by the faith that they had in their own power of imposing purity on the food and in the resistance of their highly disciplined constitution. That was not in all cases possible and purification was necessary but the desire for purification might easily become morbid if it saw uncleanness everywhere and tried to erect a wall around itself for protection against the contaminations of the outside world.

In another sphere also we see the same slowly growing exclusiveness.

In Manu the most ancient Smriti under the mixed polity, the Brahmin was allowed to marry from all the four castes. In Yajnavalkya we have the repugnance to accept a wife from the Sudra class. Even in Manu's time, opinions on the mixture of classes were not uniform. Some considered acceptance of a Sudra wife was itself degrading; others considered the reproduction of himself in such wife degrading; and still others deemed his having no children except through such wife alone as irredeemably degrading. These views were based both on a theory of eugenics and on the duty of attaining immortality in the continued existence of himself in worthy descendants in the world under the Sun. Slowly with the new theory of no *kshatriyas* or *vaisyas* in this age, marriage within the caste came to be established and that strengthened the new conception of purity.

Thus progressively accumulating consequences of changes in life produced the extreme conception now claimed to be the basic truth of *Sanatana dharma*, and that in a sense which it does not bear.

I must take leave of this topic about untouchability as of the essence of Hindu Religion and note one peculiarity. Since the days of the three great *acharyas*, Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhwa there has been no great religious movement in the South. Whatever Sankara may have intended, his movement has fostered a certain intellectualism and attachment to strict Smriti traditional observances. It is not reformatory in tendency. Its iconoclasm was in that high altitude of speculative philosophy that its influence on conduct was easily put aside by a division of truths into those that apply to the work-a-day (*vyavaharika*) world and those that did not. Ramanuja's system had more place for emotion and his followers made attempts to uplift the lower classes in the social scale. It is difficult to say that Madhwachariar's *bhakti* school had the same urge of social uplift. Ramanuja's, which had the most stress on uplifting social service by carrying the redemptive message to the depressed and the lowly, suffered by the overshadowing predominance of the Smarta School. It is ever the way in the contact of diverse Schools. The weaker in influence—not necessarily the weaker in intrinsic quality, but the weaker in the place and at the time—grows apologetic and conformist by a process of interpretation. And there is also the familiar fact that on the death of *acharyas* with a new message the next generation slide back and interpret away the saving truth. The result is that so far as the south is concerned it has become intellectualistic and untouched by the higher human emotion. While the north has thrown out reform movements stressing human equality

and the value of social service; the south has remained self-satisfied, in love with its appraisal of its own higher purity and contemplating with satisfaction on its own uncontaminated isolation. And the west coast has carried it to the logical extreme bordering on insane obsession. Probably the longer contact with foreign religions and the greater exposure to their powerful challenge which the north has had also accounts for the greater aliveness and reaction to the challenge to be found in the north.

The south is so self-satisfied that it has actually located the next coming *avatar* in South India and in the southernmost part of it, farthest away from the impure north.

Orthodoxy claims that it is not the less intent on uplifting the lower classes but it only objects to the misguided agitation for temple entry. I would ask orthodoxy to look into its own heart and consider—there is no denying the truth when we are alone in the presence of the Eternal Witness—whether it is not true that we have never lifted a little finger to purify or uplift the untouchables and we do not intend to do any work in that direction and as soon as the present danger is averted we propose to go into slumber again until the next wave of agitation should come, whenever that may be.

We can purify. We can uplift. The way was shown by Ramanuja though many even of his followers now disown his way. If we followed it, there will be no untouchable left in the land. There will be no untouchable recognisable as such. I am charging nobody with any *sin* for the present state of things. But we shall be guilty of sin if we recognised the duty of uplift and yet refused to discharge it. Those who had achieved their highest philosophy while they were still beef-eaters and evolved the modern purity out of the beef-eating and drink-sodden conditions of earlier days can purify the Harijan class equally.

Is then any *dharma* or justice or purity or good sense in treating these as untouchables while they remain Hindus and abolishing untouchability as soon as they become Christian or Muslim. You dare not do that to the Christian or the Muslim that you do to the Hindu. It is a desire for self protection and a sense of helplessness that accounts for the difference of treatment. I personally feel it shameful that we should not ourselves raise them to a state of cleanliness and abolish untouchability.

Those who see nothing but a political stunt in the movement to abolish untouchability do not see truly or far. Moreover as I said on another occasion, citing from Mazzini, every political question soon becomes a social question and next a religious question.

I am not concerned with the changes of view on the part of any single individual nor with the errors or blunders of any political leader. I am aware that there is a great deal to be said against legislation as a method of introducing a change in the social outlook of people.

Nor is it my intention to commend the resuscitation of old institutions. They are gone never to return in their old forms. Newer ideas and appropriate changes are in progress. They cannot be prevented. They are going on under our eyes even in orthodox households. That the conception of untouchability is an essential part of our *Sanatana dharma* or that it is the most valuable idea that Hinduism has evolved in the course of its variegated history is neither right nor conducive to the vital reactions of its inner life which it must establish if its influence is not to decay and die.

THE LATE MR. A. RANGASWAMI AIYANGAR.

BY

V. C. KRISHNASWAMI.

When the history of these troublous times comes to be written there will emerge, amongst a few, a figure familiar to every South Indian for its simplicity and force. A man of perfect honesty in politics and rare probity of character, he had no vanity, no egotism, no jealousy. With a conviction intense in the justness of his cause and with a passion to further it through thick and thin he was an Indian first, an Indian always and it is this singleness of aim to serve his country undeflected by side issues, that gave him such driving power and made the opposition quail before his approach. He was at once a great political seer and political Engineer ever solicitous of the applause of his own conscience and with a resistless logic, of a powerful well-informed and scientific mind that marshalled his resources with incomparable ease and certainty.

He never clouded his purposes with any sophistry, never uttered what he did not honestly feel. Personal considerations never stood in the way of what he conceived to be the duty to his country and if he is great to-day, it is not because he sought it but because he found it in the path of duty.

"Nature made him an amiable gentleman naturally considerate to the feelings of others entirely without venom, honorable and veracious in his intentions".

Such was the late Mr. A. Rangaswami Aiyangar and by his demise we have lost one of the chief masons in the building of our country's future.

THOUGHTS FROM VEDANTA DESIKA*

K. V. SESA AIYANGAR

आभगवत्तः प्रथितामनधामाचार्य संतति वन्दे ।
मनसिममयत्प्रसादाद्वसतिरहस्यत्रयस्य मारोऽयं ॥

'Adoration to the holy and distinguished line of teachers reaching up to the Lord Himself through whose grace the essence of the Three Great Spiritual Secrets have abided in my mind'.

Before entering upon his great work of exposition the Swami invokes the blessings of ancient teachers and affirms his obligation to the predecessors who have striven for the discovery of the spiritual path and made it possible for their followers to tread it. The First Great Teacher is God Himself. All revelations proceed from Him and descend through a hierarchy of teachers known and unknown stretching down to the last teacher.

This reverence for the past, this desire amounting almost to anxiety, to acknowledge one's debt to the past and to be recognised merely as the transmitters of spiritual knowledge, is a prominent feature in the ancient teachers. That their mission is to fulfil and not to destroy is their assertion however startling might have been their doctrine as compared with the previous state of religious faith. In an age when the desire for change and novelty is becoming almost an obsession when thinkers and writers compete with one another in proclaiming and advertising that their ideas are new and original, when the public is continuously exhorted to look down upon, to disown, and to break with the past, this attitude may seem strange. Why did they not openly denounce the past and proclaim themselves as the authors of a new revelation? Why were they at particular pains to conceal the obvious and to persuade people that they are saying nothing new? There is more than one explanation. To persons who have contacted the Higher Presence and acquired the discipline to live continuously in that presence nothing is more real than the achievements of those who have laboured in the past in the field of spiritual knowledge. The history of the world is rich in precedents for all phases of religious thought, and the religious mind is peculiarly sensitive to past experience on similar lines. To the vision of the religious mind the distances in time between successive periods of illumination in the world's history appear small. It sees the progress of humanity in terms of the promulgation of vital messages. The consciousness expands so as to take in the past present and future. The units of

* From the Rahasyathrayasara of Sree Vedanta Desika.

time cease to be the ordinary earthly units. A thousand years become as yesterday. This perhaps is a partial explanation of the familiarity with which the religious mind sees events which transpired in the remote past as if they were contemporary occurrences. Secondly it would have been distinctly unwise to renounce the legacy of the past and the accumulated racial experience embodied in thought and tradition. Who can say that life will not be richer today in those countries where a new religion has completely destroyed all traces of the past than if such a thing had not been? Thirdly in a country where tolerance has been carried to an intolerable extent where it is almost an established convention not to resort to coercion in matters of religion, a new message has to rely for its acceptance and expansion largely upon its conformity to the acknowledged sources of past revelation. It cannot expect to propagate its tenets by force. The chances of its recognition are greater when it is proclaimed merely as an interpretation of the past than when it claims to be a discovery unknown to the ancients.

It may be useful to remember that the initiation of new lines of thought and conduct is not inconsistent with a real reverence for the achievements of our ancestors. It is not possible to disconnect ourselves from the past anymore than it is possible to jump away from the gravitational pull of the earth. The grip of the past is a powerful one. The mental and emotional atmosphere of society is saturated with stereotyped thoughts and sentiments of ages. Tradition confines human life along ancient ruts. Therefore while it is absolutely essential that our faces should be turned to the future this should be by a shifting of the focus as it were and not by closing our eyes to the past. We should not by unduly magnifying the present and future, lose the sense of proportion in the long sequence of events. It may be positively harmful to expend the social energy in perpetual contemplation of past achievements real and legendary. But it is equally dangerous to assume that we are writing upon a clean slate.

The best thing is to acknowledge our debt to the great ones of the past who in their day have served their time and generation, and to realise that we are mere channels for the release of the power of God through whose grace alone all good things come to pass.

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THE FORERUNNER.

(Rajah Ram Mohan Roy.)

BY

T. L. VASWANI.

I have called him "The Forerunner." I believe history will justify his claim to this title. The true proportions of this great man are not yet seen by the present generation. I trust a careful study of his life and writings may indicate to Young India that he was really a forerunner of Indian freedom. Passionate was his love of liberty. He expressed it in his actions. He had a strong sense of social justice; he resented the injustice inflicted on the men and women of his country. So he bestirred himself to abolish *suttee*. So he protested against the 'Press Regulations'; he put in an earnest plea for a Free Press in India; and he asked for India's freedom. In his "Appeal to the King in Council" he pointed out that while "under their former Mohamedan rulers Indians enjoyed every political privilege in common with Mussalmans, being eligible to the highest offices in State, entrusted with the command of armies and the Government of provinces and often chosen as advisers to the Prince without disqualification or degrading distinction on account of their religion or the place of their birth, under British Rule the natives of India had entirely lost their political consequence." He dreamt of free India and pointed out to the British that their own interests should dictate a progressive policy in this country. With increasing "knowledge and energy," he added, "India would prove from her remote situation, her riches and her vast population either useful and profitable as an "ally of the British Empire" or "troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy." He it was who, almost a century ago, pointed out also that if India chose, she could be more "troublesome and annoying" even than Ireland. An Englishman of his day rightly said of Ram Mohan:—"He would be free or not be at all. Love of Freedom was, perhaps, the strongest passion of his soul,—freedom not of action merely but of thought."

In him was a power of the Spirit; and they whom the Spirit raises to redeem societies, to help the Nations, to bear witness to the values of life and be the burden-bearers of His Truth, they, indeed, are our Rajas,—Kings in the realms which will endure through the ages when the kingdoms of the earth will have passed away. Homage to this Raja who was a servant of India! Homage to Ram Mohan Roy!

This man, who stood on the warrior's path to fight for truth and right was a seer; this soldier of the Spirit was a seer. What did he see? In his own heart he saw the glory of an India going abroad on a world mission, becoming again a preceptor of the Nations and honoured by the peoples of East and West. In his own heart he saw a New India strong in the strength of her ancient wisdom and in touch with modern science and culture. But the *actual* India he saw with his eyes,—how different this from his vision! He lived from 1772 to 1833. Dark days had come upon the India of that age; the ancient glory had departed. How could such an India be honoured among the Nations and make the message of her Ancient Wisdom,—the wisdom of the Vedas and Upanishads,—heard in a modern world? India must become herself to give her message.

And to be herself India must be free. The years of Ram Mohan's life were spent in efforts to break India's bonds. He saw that there were customs, institutions, creeds, which had stifled for centuries the life of the Indian people. These, he felt, must go, if India was to step forth with the strength and freedom of a vigorous Nation. I can think of no greater blessing for individuals and Nations than freedom; let their energies have free play, and they will yield rich harvest.

The main incidents of his life have been recited by many, many times. I do not wish to repeat them; love of freedom runs as a thread through them all. On receiving the news of Spain's being granted a constitutional government, he is filled with joy; he gives a dinner at the Town Hall in honour of the event! On his way to England he halts at the Cape for a short time, and though limping, he walks up to the French Flag there to touch it and so to salute symbolically the Spirit of the French Revolution! He expresses sympathy with Ireland in Her struggle for freedom. He pleads for a free press in India. In his evidence before the Board of Control in India, he condemns Acts and Regulations passed by Government ignoring the "feeling of Indian subjects." He urges that all posts should be thrown open to Indians, and points out that even under Moslem rule, Hindus were of "political consequence, the highest posts being always open to them." He asks his countrymen to educate women, pointing out that India produced in the days of her greatness such cultured ladies as 'Maitreyi, Lilavati and the wife of Kalidasa.' He organises a Vedanta College. He fights with success against the cruel custom of *suttee*. He publishes pamphlets and articles on the teachings of Christ, Islam, and the Upanishads; he establishes the Brahma Sabha. He does it all to help India become a Nation of the free.

Ram Mohan passed away at Bristol in 1833. In a quiet place there stands the *samadhi* of this great man. Many years have passed since I visited that shrine at Bristol. An Englishman was there to guard it; he had a book, a register; to look into it was joy; it was full of tributes to Ram Mohan and his work by men of different creeds and countries who had visited the *samadhi*. I wrote some words in the book, then returned to the *samadhi*. How quite the place, how lonely. A bird or two sat above it; was he a lover of birds? And did they commune with the departed Indian sage in the seclusion of Bristol? At my mental image of the Great Man, I placed flowers of affectionate reverence. I sat for some time in silence and I asked:—"What is thy message for this thy servant and thy countryman?" Did I feel a responsive vibration at the moment? Something sprang spontaneous in my heart:—"I am lonely. Unite and Build." Yes; Ram Mohan is lonely. A century has passed since he passed away in Bristol: he is lonely still; not yet has the spirit of his teaching penetrated the heart of India; not yet have the great masses of India heard his message; not yet have we carried the Light to the villages of India. In a lonely spot in his shrine in England, Ram Mohan is lonely; and he asks us all to unite and build,—a new temple for the Mother! Let Hindus and Moslems, Parsis and Christians unite and build. Not by smooth words but by strong resolves and noble deeds may we build a New India. The path of freedom is not strewn with roses; the path is paved with pains and penalties, with suffering and sacrifice. Therefore have I asked youngmen to practice *tapasya* in daily life; therefore do I ask all to build with a strength born of suffering, with hearts inured to sacrifice. Unite and build,—nor barter the Mother's honour for ease and the yellow dust. Build with love and truth the Mother's new Temple. Unite and build so that Hindus and Moslems and Parsis and Christians, all communities and all classes, crossing the limit-lines of castes and creeds, may bring their diverse gifts, and in the joy of fellowship worship Her,—the One Mother. Unite and build! The Light of the New Temple will shine afar, and its song will ring again India's message to the Nations.

RATIONALISM AND INDIAN RECONSTRUCTION.

A prospect of good-humour in Indian Life.

BY

M. V. V. K. RANGACHARI.

Let me consult an astrologer as to the problem that confronted me in my fifth year, which recurred, forty years after, to a whole set of brains. In the early nineties, life here was free-er. At least, that was the child-experience that walked the streets nude without protest. Civilisation crushes even the cradle under cumbrous clothing. The trappings of the full-suit lend decency to boyhood, though latterly the half-knicker attested the relativity of good taste for even the adult. It is fabled of Paris, that skirts promise to meet other vestments, but to the new-world is given the colonial order to patronise nature in all naturalness. Mr. G. B. Shaw as witness, his African black girl forgot her God-quest mending her husband's clothes which she could not persuade him to cease to wear. Before India is held the picture of the loin-cloth. Will that go to—? One half of human want in this world, and the opportunity of the other, hangs on whether, and in what degree, clothes hang about us.

Who has got to search long to find reasons for both the ends of fine feeling? In Mediaeval times, cleanliness was a point of theological debate. Henry C. Lea's documented book "the History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church" proves the rigours of clerical observance that left no time to take good care of God's temple by washing or cleaning. Disease was hailed as the divine pleasure to sound the devotion to the Lord. To administer drugs to alleviate pain ill-accommodated with orthodox notions of human ethics. Our faiths were not farther from Catholic rigour. "*Kimaushadhaih klisyasi mudha durmate*" (the stupid and perverse man that bothers about drugs or medicines, Mukundamala, Sloka 31, line, 3.) is the voice of the same spirit. It is an unstinting allegiance to the super-natural. Withal, reasons are assigned even by the visionary for his dreams. To wash, be clean, and dress properly, even they are not absolute axiomatic postulates.

The variety of human reason is such that there is not a place under the Sun whereat it does not enter its caveat. It has a hold on the hair, on the head, on the chin, on the face which it variously marks. It perforates the ear and the nose, and tears the skin. Religion touches the barber's shave, the washer's tub, and the cobbler's shoe. Thanks to the Golden Bough (our tenderest sympathy to Sir James G. Fraser for the

blindness that has overtaken him in old age) even the waste nail-clippings have had a sanctity of theirs. And religion is nothing if it is not man's first, primary, reason, though a supernatural one, for the universe and his own place therein.

We close a third of the present century. In England—and France counts a yet earlier record of rationalism—it stands for the age of the Rationalist Press Association, a body organised to propagate the doctrine of the supremacy of reason. Here we now witness the new birth of an avowed rational press. But the margin of thirty years between a fatherland and a mother-country is no great disparity, provided the temperaments agree. The century and half of the joint lives of partnership is on one side. But human will is not produced in straight lines, so that the parallelism once started in chance-history may remain constant. Incompatibility of temper is not uncommon at advanced ages of the contracting parties. Visions of an economic culture are not the less obtrusive. Where domestic relation is none too facile for an inert massive dame yoked by irritating steel to force marching ahead of reason, the rub is there, soft though the eye-wash, within, and neat the whitewash, without.

That is rambling into the field of political or economic reconstruction, on which, mostly social life is grounded. Some even hold that rationalism is identical with socialism, which may be left for examination later. Here, it is permissible to point out that India is not ruled from Johnson's Court, the Head Quarters of the R. P. A., but from Whitehall, the bureaucratic centre wherefrom emanate its naval, military, administrative impulses. Not in the volumes of rationalist literature, but through ordinance and rule impressed in the blue books and white-papers, is the destiny of the evolution of the entire continent sealed. Just as for an individual a sense of fatality, divine coercion, cripples the freedom of moral responsibility, even so, for the vast country, freewill is determined from without. Apostles of English liberty, seers of social wisdom, spirits that moved in J. S. Mill, Bentham, Spencer, Bradlaugh, and the rest, rationalists, past and present, do you hear?

Till lately, John Bull had been a good-natured Banya gentleman. He had the sense to give and take, though the Guzerati Banya that towered into the Mahatma would complain that he took more than he ever gave, or even intended to give. Since when the head of Oxford-culture gave away Indian reins, English humour seems to have gone into the waning moon. In times of uncommon penury and want, good-humour is the last thing

to stay. "You will teach me, oh, will you"—thundered a husband, power-drunk. And the wife knows she is in the grip of anger, of relentless waste, her house ill-furnished, and in disorder, stores empty, and the children crying from hunger ignorance and disease.

Little indeed is the possibility of reconstruction handicapped by empty purse, and an enfeebled power to sense things aright. Science is a costly midwife. Birth control tends to lessen unborn entries into misery-competition. Even that we are not free to teach. Like the mediaeval canonised saints; there be clerics that raise the hue and cry against wanton interference with God's mystery plan. Ecclesiastical justice has a soft corner for germ-plasm. Where it does not impregnate, they are powerless to banish disease, but where it is sought to regulate, they have their hoarse sermons ready. Abhorrence of the science of medicine is reincarnate in our century in the modified form, though drugs and the use of anaesthetics to soften pain and ailment have survived the primitive Gods).

Control or none, children are born. Feed and clothe the child one must, in the hot as in the cold climates. But before it begins to feel that it is one among the millions that open their eyes under the same sun, before it knows the unity or similarity of child-life, in food and raiment, in the way the hair is worn, tuft and pigtail, and all that marks for the peculiar community of the accident of its birth is soon impressed on the little person: In its first syllables it lisps the spirit of the Fearful Person that haunts its memory ever thereafter. The black Krishna, the white-robed Jesus, or the brown or yellow Prophet fills the miraculous presence. Juvenile queries are referred back to the sayings and doings of the unexplained faith, and life expands entwined on one or other of the historic creeds. Mostly it is the survival of the fear in the jungle.

At school careful design curbs bubbling originality. Inconvenient questions are avoided or duly punished. And thanks to an obliging overlord, religious instruction is not farther away from entrance. Christian Missions tell bible-prayers, and muslim schools gain their birthright. A little attention will sound the Gita tunes for the Hindu too. Tight compartments revive diversities of faith, which the comparative method may turn to advantage. Are we going to accentuate these differences, or are we to obliterate the demarcations? Are we going to plan a programme of conscious activity or shall we ride on the policy of drift? It all depends on the place you give to the race-horse of Indian reason.

Elsewhere human genius has probed into the problems of society, Eugenics, the young science of population minds the balancing of supply

and demand. Family limitation, contraceptives, sterilization of mental defectives and the physically unfit, disease, its cure and prevention, segregation &c are some instruments in her laboratory. In medicine natural therapy is fast replacing the methods of sorcery and witchcraft. Even psycho-therapeutics is claimed to be broadbased on natural science, more than on supernatural intervention. While we have not yet taken to sectarian merger or the fusion of the castes, or reached anywhere near untouchability, education, housing, sanitation and secular morality concern high and low alike. Unemployment has not caught the ear of the temple, and the Mutt, cloister, church or mosque, whose spiritual quests ought to mould man into better shape. Properly harnessed, does not the wealth beneath the idol and the Peeth, contribute to the common weal? When may charitable foundations cease to feed the idler? When to turn them into poor-houses, the nucleus to provide for the destitute, weak, disabled, maimed or the diseased?

Are women to be put forward as an eternally distinct species of animal? Or will they share with men in greater abundance the benefits of education, vocational training, fine arts or learned professions? Where are they now in the matter of competence for maternity or child-welfare, in public service or franchise? Will they ever become really independent to handle the purse? Going down, when will the prostitute and the dancing girl cease her trade? When shall tolerated houses disappear? And in the name of religion which was man's jealousy, shall marriage remain forever the over-stressed mystery-affair in life that it continues to this day? Severally, and by appropriate organisation, legislative and judicial assistance, when will infant-marriage, money-making alliance, or close-circle-union become social impossibilities? By all these means, will re-marriage, inter-caste marriage, and inter-racial union be promoted to mitigate caste-prejudice and remove the colour-bar? Where the union proves unsuccessful, when will men and women be free to tell each other their minds plainly, without society interposing shackles to perpetuate the conventional lie? When will man regain the sense of proportion that his existence bears to the vast universe? When do the ghosts that he raised in individual and social life disappear? To our nearest neighbour a visitor from Mars, when shall he appear just a man, no more no less? With no pretensions to mysterious supernatural association, when will human reason plod along the weary path of social experiment and failure, and in the lessons of defeat that nature provides, vision forth the promise of further stages in evolution?

Some rationalist friends also ask for my card. Some hold that none may be a rationalist that is not a socialist. It may be right. But as every judgment, it may only be relatively correct. It would be also true to say that none may be a rationalist unless he is a cleric: at any rate, a stranger to clericalism may not make a good rationalist. Socialism is an economic issue. Money is a sectional phase of human life, howsoever important its domain. If you please, you may call it rationalised economics, just as one may speak of rationalised engineering, law, medicine, or something else. Rationalism has a wider, more comprehensive role. It is essentially a mental attitude, opposed to the acceptance as truth of the dogmatic supernatural claims of religion. A Catholic may be an engineer, lawyer, or doctor, as also a protestant, and the rationalist. The basic investigations of their respective faiths lead each one of them to behave differently from the rest, perhaps, even in the very exercise of their callings; though one would be a bad engineer that prays that the river-flood may subside, be a bad doctor that prays for his patient's recovery, and the bad lawyer that prays that his client may win the cause. The rationalist is on firmer ground with regard to his facts than the religionist professional whose basis is relatively more fictional. So too, the religious economic is more allied to individualist capitalist exploiter than to socialism. But on that very score, socialism does not connote rationalism. The coercive element may intrude therein. Rationalism fights arbitrary authority on all fronts. Reports of enforced socialism verging on the irrational are conveyed regarding Bolshevik regime. We may not judge of their truth, as interested mud-slinging or white-washing does not help in its discovery.

I only repeat in this context what Prof. H. J. Laski reminds us in his article (Rationalist Annual, 1934) on the "Social Obligation of Rationalists" that 'eternal vigilance is the inescapable price of freedom' here, there, and elsewhere. Rationalism stands for individual liberty, no less than for social emancipation. "Scientific socialism" may be a more practical ideal than the vision of an "enlightened anarchy", where each citizen is a sage, and there is no need for government from without in any form. But even socialism may not avoid class-war, or group-conflict. The highest reach of the natural philosopher has gained the nomenclature 'scientific humanism' which in its sweep round the planet is one entire race. Liberal rationalism ought not long to remain the preserve of the few, but the possession of the many. Its spirit ought to remain constantly inclusive, unlike religion which is nothing if not exclusive. Else it withers away even faster than faith, for it has not its backing in wealth or power. As freedom is relative, so will rationalism be wholesomely relative to the environment as the body of reference. After Einstein, we are no longer believers in the absolute, good or bad, the God or the Evil One.

Doubtless, India is the land of the idolater. We shall be missing the real spirit of our lives, were we to neglect that fact. Discarded idols

need something to replace with. Rationalist efforts may succeed by a judicious displacement of idolatry through idolatry. It is not worse than bibliolatry, Mariolatry, Hitlerolatry or Mussolini-worship. Man has nowhere ceased to worship ideas. What we should guard against is the tendency to transfer such worship to the men that are responsible for these ideas. When we respect ideas, we are aware that they may be only partially true, as no truth that is absolute is within human reach. We presume that truth has limits. But when we begin to defy men, we lose sight of the natural. Hero-worship is a subtle insidious process of supernaturalism, and is the worst enemy that reason has to contend against. As Carlyle stressed, Odin that invented rhunes (the primitive script) was acclaimed as God by fellowmen, and he too felt that perhaps he was the divinity that others supposed to rest in him. Such petrified allegiance resting on the so-called religious sense brings in the whole volume of the spirit of mystification. Human nature the world over is given to idolatry, which is another name for the worship of reason. But while elsewhere man employs reason, India loses herself immersed in the worship. A concrete instance will illustrate this indiscriminate submission. Man has long reflected on the properties of the circle. He invented the wheel. While machine-industry the world over pays practical homage to the plain and the cogged wheels in the million, India yet paints with saffron, turmeric or Kunkum, and breaks coconuts on the wooden wheels of the bullock-bandy, or the more recent spinning wheel. We have not applied Vishnu's weapon to our industry on any appreciable scale, but chant learned verses in praise of the Chakra. We seem to possess an innate aptitude to symbolise readily, and employ the remote figures of speech in our daily affairs, and think in terms of the synecdoche, and metonymy. We have lost the real spirit of the Bhagavad-Gita which taught:

Vyavasayatmika buddhir ekeha kurunandana

Bahusakhahyanantascha buddhayaavyavasayinam (II, 41).

(Determinate reason is one-pointed, O, Joy of the Kurus, varied and unceasing are the ratiocinations of the irresolute).

Given any set of facts, to reason out the effect should not be difficult. Failure results from defective reasoning led by an imperfect knowledge of the data. This Buddhi Yoga (the exercise of reason) is expressly enjoined throughout. (See, II, 39, 40, 49, 50, X, 10, XVIII, 57). We may fold up the book, if we please, and folding our brains, we may worship the volume with flowers and sweet food-offering, secreting at the same time the reasons that give it the sanctity in some underpocket beyond reach. Let rationalism pick these secret pockets bare to evaluate their content.

Small as is our orbit, man has woven so much falsehood into the fabric of his mental cobweb that in tints of light and shade it baffles research even as the cosmic ray. Mystery pervades the stratosphere and beyond. An expanding universe, spiral nebulae, stars and planets run forth as ever they do, while the birds sing, and the bees gather honey

from the earthly flower. Our nearest ancestry toiled its time without bank accounts, cheques, exploitation, and savage exclusion from the fruits of nature. All that the visitor from Mars has on record of the storms that rose in the depths of the skull began when man lifted his head a few feet higher from the ground. We that have forged an eminent consciousness confound the issues of life now prevalent, as also mark that which is yet to come. To signify the import of the problem to us and our successors, I collated at random a few of the more insistent questions. Shall we as reasonable men and women, apply a conscious direction and control, try to answer them as waking men should, or will they be left to be carried on the winds, wherever they listeth, as if man was not born here? Our attitude toward the destiny of the race, the snapshot of our hazy pose, our blurred figure, the outcome of a shaking head, shall we present that as trophy to the Martian visitor, the token of pity to the poor confused earth? While our senses last, no, an emphatic No.

THE TEMPLE ENTRY BILL AND MAJORITY VOTE

BY

S. VENKATASUBBA ROW PANTULU, B.A., B.L.

Retired Sub-Judge, Nellore.

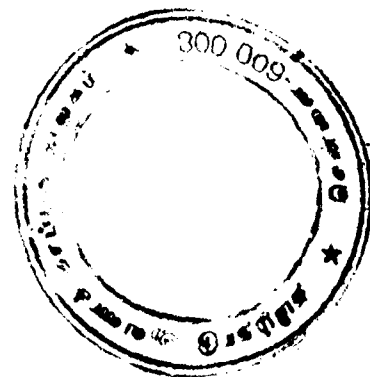
As the Majority vote is a fundamental plank in the structure of the Bill, it is worth while to consider the significance and implications of that vote. In this Democratic age 'Majority vote' may be thought as competent and sufficient to decide every conceivable affair. But in actual life, however, men are more practical. When we wish to equip a science laboratory, Hospital, Electrical Station, or any technical institution, we do not consult the lay Majority vote about it, but are guided by the advice of the few Scientists, Doctors, Electricians, or others competent in that particular subject. But where the question of a Temple, its ritual, worship or entry is concerned, it is thought that any lay Hindu (worshipper) Majority vote, however ignorant of the Temple lore is quite sufficient to decide it.

Temples are built with brick or stone and mortar like any other building and the images in their Holy of Holies are made of ordinary stone, metal or wood. Why then are Temples and the Images therein held more sacred than other stone buildings, or metal or stone images that can be got for a price in the market? Even the supporters of the Bill should be deemed to believe in the sanctity of Temples, as otherwise there can be no meaning in their fight for entry of others into Temples in which they themselves have no faith. Is the average Hindu, who generally is ignorant of temple lore, its signifi-

cance, and proper methods for the conservation of its sanctity, then competent to decide all such momentous and technical questions? If, apparently, he is not competent, where is the meaning of the Bill seeking to decide the important question of the entry of the excluded classes by the votes of the ignorant Majority?

The orthodox conception of a Hindu Temple is not that of a Prayer Hall, or Religious Meeting Place, where the religious-minded could meet, but as a centre of Superphysical beneficent influences radiating from a Temple built according to the rules prescribed for it and duly consecrated and maintained by prescribed ritual worship etc., to conserve and maintain it as a powerful centre of such efficient and benevolent radiation, as in the analogous case of distribution of electrical energy from an efficient Power House properly equipped and maintained. The fact that, in the recent earth-quake that devastated the fair plains of Bihar or Nepal, amidst crumbling buildings around, some important Hindu Temples had stood without the slightest damage only went to strengthen the popular faith in the sanctity of well-conducted Temples. As regards changes in the age-long customs connected with Temples held in such veneration, only persons duly qualified for it by study and contemplation etc., would be competent to advise. Temples are not, by their very nature, fit places to force far-reaching drastic changes into them by the votes of an ignorant Majority.

This 'Majority Vote' has also another significant aspect. To-day the call is for entry of the excluded classes. Suppose to-morrow the Majority of the Hindu-born worshippers of some Hindu Temples begin to lose faith in God or Temples and wish to propagate their 'No God Campaign' by converting the Temples into Public Museums, Art Galleries, Theatres, Cinemas, Opera Houses, or Dancing Halls, what would then be the fate of the Temples held in such veneration, if the 'Majority Vote' be held omnipotent to do or undo anything it may please? Supporters of the 'Majority Vote' in such purely religious affairs will pause and consider its logical implications! All this is apart from the question as to how far it is wise statesmanship to link the estimable cause of the removal of the legitimate grievances of Untouchables, which like every other reform is best served by persuasion and conversion, to the contentious waggon of the Temple Entry Bill.



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