

Registered No. 2196.

THE Bharata Dharma

A Magazine of Liberal Hinduism

—The Official organ of the Arya Mata Sabha—

[The Sabha is however, not responsible for opinions or statements published in this magazine unless they are contained in an official document]

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

VOL. XII]

FEBRUARY, 1935

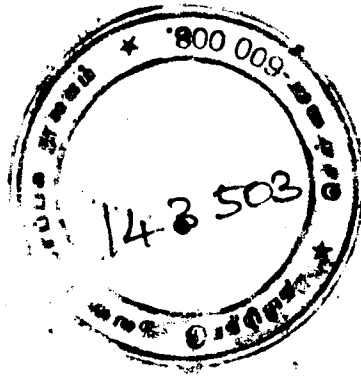


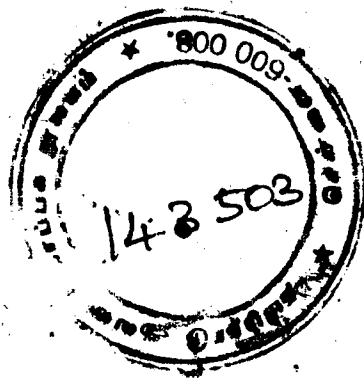
चित्रं वटतगेमूले वृद्धा शिष्या गुरुयुवा ।

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.

PUBLISHED ON THE 15TH OF EVERY MONTH AT "MORYALAYA", ROYAPETTAH.
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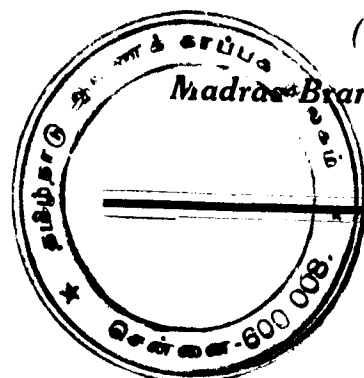
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THE BHARATA DHARMA

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THE

Bharata Dharma

FEBRUARY 1935

[No. 11

VOL. XII]

WORSHIP THROUGH SELF-TORTURE.

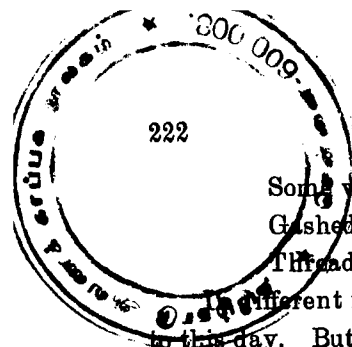
By

K. V. SESA AIYANGAR

Self-torture in the name of religion is as old as religion itself, and is found in the history of nearly all the great religions in the world. There was a stage in the development of each religion when it was the standard for judging religious merit and constituted an essential part of aintliness. Underlying it was the assumption of duality in human nature and of the need for conquering the fleshly sensations and desires which are man's inheritance from the brute. The mortification of the flesh and the various other forms of mortification were organised and codified both in Roman Catholic Christianity and in Hinduism. In Hinduism under the name of *Tapas* it claimed and obtained votaries throughout India. But this was mainly as an expression of ascetic life and of a longing for rapid spiritual progress. In this scheme Sudras were denied the right—may we not say excused from the obligation—to perform *Tapas*.

In course of time there arose the practice of resorting to self-torture or attaining definite worldly ends, for securing a comfortable time both on earth and in heaven. Self-torture was believed to bring psychic powers, and propitiate malevolent Deities. It was also penance and expiated sins. It was a means of realising one's desires. When Prince Siddhartha wandered forth from home in quest of truth he was first attracted to these men.

"A gaunt and mournful band, dwelling apart;
Some day and night had stood with lifted arms,
Till-drained of blood and withered by disease—
Their slowly wasting joints and stiffened limbs
Jutted from sapless shoulders like dead forks
From forest trunks. Others had clenched their hands
So long and with so fierce a fortitude,
The claw-like nails grew through the fettered palm



Some walked on sandals spiked; some with sharp flints
Gashed breast and brow and thigh, scarred these with fire
Threaded their flesh with jungle thorns and spits.*
In different forms and degrees this habit of self-torture has continued
to this day. But now it is practiced mainly among communities who may
be said to be less enlightened from a religious point of view and nearly
always in the fulfillment of a vow to go through it before a religious shrine
or on the occasion of a religious festival. The object sought to be attained
is the cure of some illness or the achievement of a personal desire. A
common form is that of hook-swinging prevalent in the Tamil country.
It consists of swinging from iron hooks let into loops of flesh cut into
one's back, or dragging chariots or other vehicles by hooks so attached, or
by fastening into the flesh rows of small hooks to which beads were
attached.

While it is impossible to deny the sincerity of the faith of the votaries
and a certain amount of religious value in such performances, our atti-
tude towards them has to be that which was declared by the Buddha who
was tempted to exclaim thus at the sight of these gruesome self-tortures.

"Will ye, for love of soul, so loathe your flesh,
So scourge and maim it, that it shall not serve
To bear the spirit on, searching for home,
But founder on the track before nightfall
Like-willing steed o' ver-spurred? Will ye, sad Sirs,
Dismantle and dismember this fair house,
Where we have come to dwell by painful pasts;
Whose windows give us light-the little light
• Whereby we gaze abroad to know if dawn
Will break, and whither winds the better road?"*

The Bhagavad Gita is no less emphatic in its condemnation of the
practice. In the seventeenth chapter, Sri Krishna speaks of those

"Who practice bitter penance, not enjoined
By rightful rule—penance which hath its root
In self-sufficient, proud hypocrisies—
Those men, passion beset, violent, wild,
Torturing—the witless ones—My elements
Shut in fair company within their flesh
(Nay, Me myself, present within the flesh)
Know them to devils devoted, not to Heaven"

* Light of Asia 5th Book.

Almost the same note is struck by a Western philosopher. Speaking
of the evolution of the religious consciousness touching this practice in
Christian countries, Professor James says (1):

"A strange moral transformation has within the past century swept
over our Western world. We no longer think that we are called on to
face physical pain with equanimity. It is not expected of a man that
he should either endure it or inflict much of it, and to listen to the recital
of cases of it makes our flesh creep morally as well as physically. The
way in which our ancestors looked upon pain as an eternal ingredient of
the world's order, and both caused and suffered it as a matter-of-course
portion of their day's work, fills us with amazement. We wonder that
any human beings could have been so callous. The result of this historic
alteration is that even in the Mother Church herself, where ascetic dis-
cipline has such a fixed traditional prestige as a factor of merit, it has
largely come into desuetude, if not discredit. A believer who flagellates
or 'macerates' himself to-day arouses more wonder and fear than emula-
tion. Many Catholic writers who admit that the times have changed in
this respect do so resignedly, and even add that perhaps it is as well not
to waste feelings in regretting the matter, for to return to the heroic
corporeal discipline of ancient days might be an extravagance".*

To those who desire the unification of Hinduism by the levelling
up of beliefs and practices the persistence of outgrown forms of
worship and religious practice, like the one through self-torture
constitute a serious obstacle. While on the one hand it may be
assumed that the intelligentsia look upon such practice with disapproval
and share the disgust which people of other countries feel at the
sight of such practice, it is equally true that those who indulge in it,
believe in it with fervour and are not actively discouraged by public
opinion. The State has stepped in, in some cases, especially with respect
to "Hook-Swinging" and has authorised the Magistracy to prevent the
practice wherever possible, the discretion being entrusted to them as to
when they should exercise their powers. The Government notification
on this subject was issued in the nineties of the last century but, like
many other laudable resolutions it has not been in active operation.
Stray attempts in carrying out the resolution are only partially success-
ful. Some times they result in serious riots leading to loss of life. A
recent instance is one which occurred in a village in the Tanjore District,
when according to newspaper reports Police Officers and the Magistrates

* Varieties of Religious Experience.

were set upon and murdered, by an infuriated mob of many thousands collected to celebrate "Mari Amman Festival" with hook-swinging.

The situation is one which calls for steady and concerted action both by the public and by the State. There is no doubt that the practice is becoming less frequent, but there is great need for the acceleration of progress in this direction. Liberal minded Hindus cannot content themselves with mere advocacy of proposals for speedy reform leaving their enforcement to the Magistracy and the Police as is happening now. The incidence of trouble and danger in their enforcement can be substantially diminished if public propaganda is conducted prior to the celebration of festivals associated with these practices. Experience justifies the hope that such propaganda will have a decided moral effect. The educative work in connection with the offering of animal sacrifices has considerably helped people to understand that it is not indispensable that such sacrifices should be made. A similar effort is called for in the field of self-torture in the name of religion. Any way it does not appear to be fair to force the Police and the Magistracy to court martyrdom for the cause of social progress. The work is undoubtedly difficult, and the difficulty has been considerably enhanced by the attitude which is recently developing of considering that whatever is in the matter of social practice *is right*. We shall also be faced with the academic argument that the matter is one which affects the religious beliefs and usages of the people. Of course in one sense there is hardly any practice in Hindu Society with its conception of Dharma comprehending all human activity, which cannot be traced to religion. But surely there are gradations. It should be perfectly legitimate to level up beliefs and to hasten such levelling up by mild sanctions if necessary. There can be no doubt that the worshippers who resort to these practices can be made to realise that religious merit, and earthly and heavenly happiness, can be secured just as well by other and less self-harming forms of worship, and that by resorting to these practices they are not doing any good to themselves but are outraging public opinion and are subjecting themselves to penalties sanctioned by the State.

THE SPIRIT OF SEEKING.

(SCIENTIFIC METHOD AND RELIGION)

By

A. Vibert Douglas, Ph.D.

LECTURER IN ASTROPHYSICS IN MCGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL.

It would probably be possible to compile a statement outlining a scientific method which would be acceptable to the great majority of men of science. Yet, when it comes to the question of the applicability of this method to the investigation of spiritual truth in general, and the scientific attitude of mind towards religion in particular, no two people, if they think at all, will think exactly the same about it. Such an attempt as that which follows, will, therefore, completely satisfy no one—not even the writer—but it may have its value nevertheless. It may lead to criticism; and constructive criticism, when honestly given and tolerantly received, is twice blest, "it blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

I

Let us consider, first, the necessary attitude of mind for the genuine searcher after truth, whether it be truth regarding the world of nature, or regarding the intangible things of the spirit. In either case, there must be sincerity of purpose, extreme honesty of mind, and great courage. Perhaps the last should have been placed first. Robert Louis Stevenson has stated that "courage is the principal virtue, for all others presuppose it." It often requires courage, determination and honesty, to face facts squarely, and not to distort them into evidence for some preconceived theory which they do not truly uphold. Without bias and without prejudice, so far as is humanly possible, the real significance of things must be sought.

"Once upon a time," wrote Jacobi, "there were one thousand years of night." This was the period following the publication of Ptolemy's compendium of Greek knowledge of the world of nature, the *Almagest*, when in Europe it was regarded as the height of folly, of impropriety, and of impiety to venture to question the truth of the pronouncements of Aristotle. Every statement had to be accepted unquestioningly, and the minds of men were bound as with shackles of steel. The *Almagest* carried all the weight of authority in physical matters that the Bible and the doctrines of the first dozen centuries of the Christian era carried in spiritual matters. Thomas Aquinas had so interwoven the one with the other that to doubt the one was to dishonour the other. Now, according to Professor Hocking, Giordano Bruno typifies for us the new spirit, the

scientific mind which emerged in the sixteenth century and burst the chains of spiritual despotism, setting the minds of men free to search for truth without let or hindrance. Bruno was born in Italy five years after the death of Copernicus and the publication of his heliocentric theory in 1543. Revolting against the spiritual and intellectual tyranny of the times, he left the Dominican monastery at Naples and travelled to centres of learning in Switzerland, France, England and Germany, "determined to see for himself the noble Universe unclouded by the mists of authoritative philosophy and church tradition." The highest function of man he considered to be the contemplation of divine unity discoverable under the manifold phenomena of nature. He had grasped the meaning of the paradox enunciated by Christ, "he that would save his life must lose it." He realised that the man who would fill his mind with the truth must first empty it of all cant, pretence, prejudice, and unthinking allegiance to dogmatic tradition. In 1600 Bruno was burned at the Inquisitors' stake, and forty-two years later there died another brave independent thinker, narrowly avoiding a similar martyrdom, Galileo, who like Bruno deserves to be described in the words of Huxley as a man "filled with the divine afflatus of the Truth Seeker." Theirs was the spirit that must be ours, if we would likewise follow the pursuit of Truth.

II.

The scientific method, as a mode of procedure, may be briefly summarised under five headings. First, there is observation of natural phenomena and the collection and arrangement of facts—all the relevant facts possible, not just those which fit in with some preconceived ideas. Then, there is the performance of simple or elaborate experiments with a view to increasing the number and variety of the facts to be added to the collection. The formulation of a tentative hypothesis follows. This hypothesis is not an end in itself—it is a means to an end which can never be fully achieved; but that mankind may approach gradually closer and closer to the ideal of complete knowledge of the Universe is the firm conviction of every man of science. He believes that the fluctuating, wavy curve of knowledge does ultimately run asymptotic to the straight line of truth. Sir, J. J. Thomson once made the memorable remark to a class of students at Cambridge that "a theory is a tool, not a creed." A tool is never an end in itself, it is valuable only in so far as it assists in the production of something finer. So, too, a hypothesis, or a theory, in science is only of value in so far as it can be made a stepping stone to more complete knowledge. A theory which does not lead, either by in-

ference or prediction, to something as yet unknown is merely a *cul de sac*. Having found a fruitful hypothesis, one that not only covers the known facts but by logical deductive reasoning leads us to penetrate further into the unknown by pointing to certain phenomena which ought to be observable, or to certain results which should follow from certain causes, or to the existence of something hitherto unsuspected, the next stage in scientific method is to subject this hypothesis to crucial tests. Look for the thing the existence of which the theory predicts: carry out experiments to see if the logical results follow from the causes according to expectation; put your theory to the most severe and exacting tests that your knowledge and experience can suggest. Perhaps you will be convinced that the theory is untenable in the light of the new facts thus ascertained. Another and more consistent theory must then be sought. But perhaps the theory will be vindicated, all the new facts confirming it. If so, further deductions in the light of the newly established facts or relationships must be sought for; and, being found, they, in their turn, must be put to the test. What most often happens is that the results of further investigation partly confirm and partly conflict with existing hypotheses. This calls for careful, deliberate, sometimes drastic modification of the basic theories. The new or the enlarged or the modified theory, as the case may be, has then to be subjected to the same critical scrutiny and its implications to further observational or experimental tests.

An important and significant point to be borne in mind is this: Science is never ashamed of having modified a theory or even of having laid aside one theory in favour of a totally different one. Science welcomes change, hailing it as a mark of progress, and with a great optimism and untiring enthusiasm the man of science grasps at a new outlook, new theories and hypotheses, as providing fresh vistas through the cloud-enshrouded wilderness beyond which lies the truth. Why has religion in the past dreaded and opposed change? Professor A. N. Whitehead has urged that "religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science."

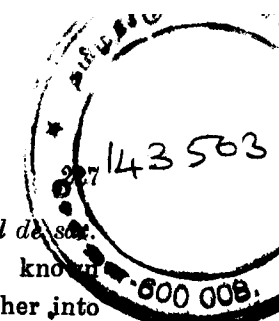
III.

What is religion? The Oxford Dictionary says it is a system of faith and worship; human recognition of superhuman controlling power and especially of a personal God entitled to obedience; and the effect of this on conduct. Plato defined religion as the recognition of all our duties as divine commands.

JL

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In his book *Religion in the Making*, Dr. Whitehead says "there is no agreement as to the definition of religion in its most general sense, including true and false religion; nor is there any agreement as to the valid religious beliefs, nor even as to what we mean by the truth of religion." He proceeds to compare and contrast an arithmetical relationship with a doctrine of religion, and he adds: "No one is invariably 'justified' by his faith in the multiplication table. But in some sense or other, justification is the basis of all religion. Your character is developed according to your faith. This is the primary religious truth from which no one can escape. Religion is force of belief cleansing the inward parts. For this reason the primary religious virtue is sincerity, a penetrating sincerity. A religion on its doctrinal side can thus be defined as a system of general truths which have the effect of transforming character when they are sincerely held and vividly apprehended. In the long run your character and your conduct of life depend upon your intimate convictions." And further: "Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness If you are never solitary, you are never religious. Collective enthusiasms revivals, institutions, churches, rituals, bibles, codes of behaviour, are the trappings of religion, its passing forms. They may be useful or harmful; they may be authoritatively ordained, or merely temporary expedients. But the end of religion is beyond all this."

It is perhaps hardly fair to take one sentence out of the above statement, the sentence involving the word "solitariness," as Dr. Gore does, and criticise the author for giving a very imperfect and inadequate definition of religion. It is one of four sentences in which Dr. Whitehead crystallises four mutually dependent ideas or partial aspects of religion. But the late Bishop of Oxford made a strong point when he insisted on the social aspect of religion. A man's attitude towards, and dealings with, his fellow-men are the truest indication of his inmost convictions. Religion finds a higher form of expression in kindly service to humanity than in the ecstatic vision of the recluse; but surely it is equally true that the former activity will wear itself out if the spirit be not replenished by resort to the fountain head of spiritual inspiration in the quiet of solitude "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Many writers have considered religion from the point of view that all its forms, whether of the primitive or of a higher type, have as their common basis the recognition of the sacredness of some idea, whether that idea be or be not associated with a material object. To turn the search-light of critical inquiry upon religion, in the scientific spirit, is, therefore,

to ask and to attempt to answer the question: Is this fundamental assumption that something is sacred a justifiable premise; and, if so, what are the logical inferences?

IV.

I consider next some of the contrasts and some of the analogies between science and religion. As I have said, sincerity of purpose, honesty of thought and open-mindedness are the *sine qua non* in the pursuit of both science and religion. Science, and I am restricting the word to the physical sciences, deals with everything that is measurable. The attempt is made to describe and relate the phenomena of the physical world in mathematical form or symbolism, the three fundamental units being mass, length and time. The more completely the physicist succeeds in this task, the more completely does he build up a mathematically logical symbolic counterpart of the sensible aspects of the actual world. A map of the earth's surface will exhibit certain features with extreme accuracy, will of necessity distort others and entirely omit many more. It can, therefore, in no sense be regarded as a true model of the earth. It has its uses, but more must not be claimed for it than the inherent limitations will permit. So, too, the symbolic world, which the physicist constructs from his measure-numbers, embodying the laws and relationships subsisting between them, may be regarded as a map, but in no sense as a complete model of the world. Some features, the measurable ones, are accurately represented, some features are, of necessity, distorted; other features are inevitably omitted. These other features, which can never be reduced to measurement in terms of mass, length and time—such things as beauty, love, joy, friendship, goodness, motives—form a vast realm of human experience, into which the physicist using the weapons of the laboratory will never penetrate. This is the realm of the philosopher and of those who seek spiritual truth. "We all know," says Sir A. S. Eddington, "that there are regions of the human spirit untrammelled by the world of physics. In the mystic sense of the creation around us, in the expression of art, in a yearning towards God, the soul grows upward and finds the fulfilment of something implanted in its nature. The sanction for this development is within us, a striving born with our consciousness or an Inner Light proceeding from a greater power than ours. Science can scarcely question this sanction, for the pursuit of science springs from a striving that the mind is impelled to follow, a questioning that will not be suppressed. Whether in the intellectual pursuits of science, or in the

mystical pursuits of the spirit, the light beckons ahead and the purpose surging in our nature responds."

Both in science and in religion, it is, then, an urge from within our own consciousness that *starts* the quest. Furthermore, both in science and in religion it is faith that *keeps* the quest ever in view—faith that the pursuit of truth is worth while; faith that there is an underlying order in Nature, that there is a discoverable harmony in the spiritual, as in the natural, world. "Faith in reason," writes Professor Whitehead, "is the trust that the ultimate natures of things lie together in a harmony which excludes mere arbitrariness. The faith in the order of Nature which has made possible the growth of science is a particular example of a deeper faith." "Of course we all share in this faith (this instinctive faith); and we, therefore, believe that the reason for the faith is our apprehension of its truth."

A primary urge, a sustaining faith, and a reliance upon reason are thus seen to be common to both science and religion. Furthermore, each finds room for intuition. A flawless proof is a mathematical ideal, closely approached but not always fully attained even in pure mathematics, much less in physics. "In science," says Eddington, "we sometimes have convictions as to the right solution of a problem which we cherish but cannot justify; we are influenced by some innate sense of the fitness of things. So too there may come to us convictions in the spiritual sphere which our nature bids us hold to . . . We have to build the spiritual world out of the symbols taken from our own personality, as we build the scientific world out of the metrical symbols of the mathematician."

Two of the most outstanding mathematical thinkers of our day have recorded their dependence upon intuition in a very striking manner. Professor Hermann Weyl, attempting to derive from "world-geometry" not only gravitational phenomena, as in the pioneer work of Einstein, but also the full range of electro-magnetic phenomena, finds himself thrown back upon intuition at the very outset of his task. "To bring about the transition from affine to metrical geometry we must," he says, "once more draw from the fountain of intuition." And referring to one particular line of mathematical reasoning, the Abbe Lemaitre writes, "this method provides a very intuitional way of considering the equations of the universe."

The man of science does not scorn to fall back upon some intuitive knowledge as to the direction in which truth is to be sought: the seeker after spiritual truth must rely on this inner sanction altogether, for flaw-

less proof appears to be absolutely impossible in this realm. We must not make a fetish of the word *proof*. Theology has constructed many attempted proofs of the existence of God. Augustine constructed an extraordinarily interesting and ingenious proof of his own individual existence. All these are examples of mental gymnastics, valuable in their place, but like an attempted proof of some physical theory they are absolutely unconvincing unless substantiated by experiment. That in science is an intrinsic part of scientific method. Is, then, this method applicable also in religion? In a very real sense, yes. There is such a thing as experimental religion. John Wesley laid great stress upon it. The evidence of transformed lives upholds it. Saul becomes Paul in broad daylight in the midst of a wide-awake Palestine. In the midst of seventeenth century England, John Bunyan, the careless waster, becomes Bunyan the portrayer of a life-long pilgrimage towards truth and righteousness. There are men walking the streets of our cities to-day, respected and esteemed, who are living witnesses to the reality of some religious impulse having the power to transform character. Such an appeal to experience, with its close analogue in the experimental tests which form a part of scientific method, is not only evident in the extreme cases of totally regenerated lives, but in the every day experience of those to whom religion is vital. "There are some," says Sir A. S. Eddington, "to whom the sense of a divine presence irradiating the soul is one of the most obvious things of experience . . . The most flawless proof of the existence of God is no substitute for it."

V.

Not only so. In both science and religion there must be imagination if there is to be progress towards truth. But, whereas science is frequently criticised, and very unjustly, as being lacking in imaginative qualities, religion is criticised, and sometimes with good reason, for being too imaginative. Science is not a prosaic, mechanistic, unimaginative branch of human thought. On the contrary, the greatest men of science in every age have been the men of vision, possessed of winged imaginations, which have carried their thoughts high above the dark clouds of ignorance and uncertainty, until some ray of light is seen pointing the direction towards the full light of truth. Dean Inge, unlike so many contemporary men of letters, understands this spirit of the scientific inquirer. "The dramatic fancy which creates myths is," he writes, "the raw material of both poetry and science." Of course, imagination unbalanced by sane, honest critical judgment is always dangerous, and leads to fanaticism. From

this type of person science has suffered as well as religion, but to a lesser degree. Yet, without the gift of imagination there can be no inspiring vision, no rising out of the common ruts of thought, either in science or in art or in religion. Imagination is also essential as an antidote to intolerance. Intolerance is a vice more common in religion than in science. "Theology as well as astronomy may be Ptolemaic," wrote Principal Fairbairn. "It is so when the interpreter's church, with its creeds and traditions, is made the fixed point from which he observes and conceives the truth . . . But Theology may also be Copernican . . ."

The imposition of creeds is apt to be a huge stumbling block. The man of science conceives a theory to be a tool, not a creed. The word creed has by usage come to signify a fixed, unchanging and unchangeable belief. It should never have acquired this meaning. It should never be regarded as an end in itself. A creed, or statement of belief, is of value in religion only in so far as it forms a stepping stone to a further revelation of spiritual truth. If the worship of God be an adventure of spirit, it is not a mere repetition of fixed beliefs regarding a completed revelation of truth. An adventure is a striving out after something as yet unknown. "He who strives without ceasing, is not beyond redeeming," is the final dictum of Goethe, in *Faust*; while Sir A. S. Eddington, writing in a similar vein, says: "How difficult to convey the scientific spirit of seeking which fulfils itself in the tortuous course of progress towards truth! You will understand the true spirit neither of science nor of religion unless seeking is placed in the forefront."

VI.

It is a matter of experience that the more closely any event is examined the greater the number of contributing factors which are found to be involved. Science would make small progress if it sought immediately to relate all the factors involved in any phenomenon. There must be a process of sorting out of the main factors and a deliberate placing upon one side, at least for the time being, of the factors which seem to be of secondary importance. Such recognition of what is essential requires keen scientific insight—indeed one of the highest marks of genius evinces itself just in this connection, the intuitive recognition of the essential features of any situation.

Now, in the pursuit of religious truth, this intuitive discrimination between the essential and the non-essential is of paramount importance. Thus, in attempting to apply the scientific method of investigation in the realm of spiritual inquiry, it may be necessary to set certain questions

completely upon one side, not forgetting their existence, not dogmatically denying the possibility of their greater importance at some future time when new knowledge may throw upon them a clearer light, but not allowing them in the meantime to obscure the main issues. In this category of non-essential problems, we might, for example, place the problem of miracles. Belief or disbelief in the literal truth of the miracles of the Bible does not separate the sheep from the goats. This problem pales into insignificance compared with what is the essential and central problem of all religion, the problem how a man should live, and towards what end.

Success in life is a universal ambition of mankind. We want the zest of life, adventure and achievement: and if we are wise we want also peace of mind and conscience. Ruskin maintained that he only is advancing in life "whose spirit is entering into *living peace*." The founder of one great religion made two tremendous assertions, not contradictory but complementary, when he said, "I came that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly," and again, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Ruskin's expression "living peace" represents the perfect blending of these two ideals. One may, however, here easily be misunderstood, for such an expression as this can be distorted to mean almost anything, from the extreme of high pressure, intensely active life with next to no peace of spirit, to the opposite extreme of selfish, contemplative peace, undisturbed by the press and surge of life around. I mean by it that balance of life in which there is full participation in the great struggle and game and fight of life: but, at the same time, a sanction of conscience that the ideals towards which life is leading are of intrinsic value; that the mode of advance is worthy of the aim; that the highest things which the human spirit is capable of appreciating are not being crowded out.

Thus interpreted, living peace is a worthy ideal, and something within assures us that it is an ideal the attainment of which will justify great effort. How can it be attained, this almost universal aspiration? Nineteen centuries ago, the world's greatest (? Ed. B. D.) religious teacher made the startling statement, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

Now, what should be the scientific attitude of mind towards a claim such as this? Here is a religious theory, I will not call it a creed, that by following the example and teaching of Christ we may live more fully and richly, and experience living peace. The scientific method of procedure is clear. Here is a theory. It may seem improbable, but nothing is impossible. It is a theory that fulfils one of the essential requirements

of a scientific theory, because it may be put to the test of experience. That it involves incidental mysteries, the mystery of the Godhead, the mystery of the Incarnation, the mystery of personality, is no reason for refusing to make the crucial test. Science itself is surrounded on every side by mysteries. Mystery should challenge us, not depress and baffle. Following the scientific method, we should, therefore, gather together all the relevant facts about the moral and spiritual teaching of Christ, the influence of his example on those who have also striven to attain his ideal; and with honesty, sincerity, and whole-hearted perseverance, not laying aside our own critical faculties, we should put the theory to the test in our own life. And it might be regarded as strong evidence that the claim of Christ is not without foundation if, as a result of such crucial test, we found ourselves entering into "living peace."

There are those who would state with confidence that this experiment sincerely and persistently tried, *cannot* fail. I do not wish to argue about that contention; and, in any case, such argument would be futile. But, in regard to the great ideals of the spirit—truth, beauty, righteousness—there is a court of appeal higher than the pragmatic court of experience. In science, we touch on the edge of this when we speak of that scientific intuition as to the direction of the truth, which may remain unshaken in spite of apparent inability to prove the particular point by logic and by experiment. In the realm of religion, the realm of ideals, this rises into the noblest attribute of the human spirit. The final court of appeal between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, is within one's own individual consciousness: and with an audacity, unexplainable in terms of anything less than divine inspiration, a sincere man will fling to the winds all short-sighted pragmatism, and stake his all upon the conviction that "because right is right, to follow right were wisdom, in the scorn of consequence." (From the *Hibbert Journal*)

THE SOCIAL VALUES OF RITUALS.

BY RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE.

[Prof. Radhakamal Mukerjee the head of the Department of Economics and Sociology, Lucknow University].

The impulses of sex and food build the home and the family. Thus the religious rites and ceremonies come early under the custody of the family priest and the women of the household. Yet a domestic observance or ritual is also a public event. A transgression of a domestic ritual is treated as a crime punishable by the whole community. Such punishment often takes the form of social ostracism when the primitive horror of a novel act or the ancient fear of the unknown has been mitigated to some extent. Thus while religion contributes to the integrity of the family by controlling and chastening sex and by inculcating the reverence of food as the sustainer of the household, the violation of a rite is treated both as a domestic calamity and social crime.

Birth, adolescence, marriage and death which are the most significant events of the household are also the chief occasions of religious observance. With the differentiation of the family organisation from the tribe and the community a great part of religion thus comes to be regarded as a private observance though none the less a public concern. The reason is not far to seek. Man must act in unison with the members of his family in his most vital concerns, and in his most fundamental desires. Thus the ritual becomes living and real, when persons who are his nearest kindred participate in it.

Amongst all peoples such crises in life as conception, pregnancy and birth are associated with a crop of magical rites and beliefs which have their origin in man's perennial interest in sex and reproduction. A vast number of magical beliefs and practices passes for religion among civilised peoples, so far as the prevention of barrenness, causation of sex, protection of the expectant mother against miscarriage or premature and painful delivery, etc. are concerned. It is true that science is gradually banishing her bastard sister, magic, from such fields but where science fails magic rules. There is no need to decry magic which in most cases represents a form of observation by trial and error and thus represents really the crude beginning of science. Where causal connection cannot be established and experiments are impossible, magic formulates a hypothesis. Suggestion then operates and in cases like those mentioned above nervous disorder and barrenness are actually cured or a premature childbirth avoided. Religion then comes as an ally of magic and magical

practices, charms, amulets, rituals and incantations are incorporated into a system of socio-religious observances. The rites performed at the time of puberty ('second marriage' among the Hindus) may be mentioned here. The girl is kept in seclusion within the four walls of a room for five days when she is enjoined not to see the face of her husband. On the fifth day she has to perform certain rites which are nothing but the dramatic representations of the period from pregnancy to child-birth. Thus a small doll made of barley is touched on her womb and glided down signifying conception and birth. Then the doll is placed on her lap and she gives it suck. On the same day the girl is ceremonially bathed, and decked with new clothes, comes back into the household.

Similarly at birth there are various ceremonies of purification which are undertaken by various people. In India, birth causes ceremonial defilement and there are gradual stages of the mother's progress back to ritual purity. The boy or girl is also regarded as impure until some ceremonies are performed. In one of these the ears are pierced and the officiant says: "See what is good with the eyes, hear what is good with the ears, smell what is good with the nose, taste what is good with the mouth". In most such ceremonies the rejoicing of the community at the new birth, their participation in the glory of the motherhood, as well as the dedication of the new-born to the community or to the gods are all evident.

As the boy or girl comes of age, there are performed rites of initiation. Among primitive peoples these are hidden in secrecy and comprise obscene rites which celebrate the advent of maturity actually tested or enacted in a mimetic performance. Sex maturity is regarded as an object of tribal pride and hence of ceremonial rejoicing. The significance of the institution of dormitory amongst the primitive tribes of India centres round the performance of religious rites, calculated to educate the novices in sex-matters as well as in social and economic obligations. Sometimes we find such dormitories for segregating the unmarried of both sexes. It is in the bachelors' house that trophies of the annual hunt, weapons, musical instruments etc., are kept. Indeed, these are schools of tribal tradition and mysteries and train the young for taking up the duties and responsibilities of tribal life. There is also another aspect of an initiation ceremony, *viz.*, the ceremonial expression of the value of tribal mysteries and sacred culture-objects. When the temptations of youth are too strong, and a revolt of sex or self-assertion is likely to endanger social cohesiveness, religion intervenes to resolve a possible inner conflict. Through the pomp, grandeur and mystery of the initiation ceremony which exhibits

the existence of a supreme power from which tribal law and morality are derived, sex and self-assertion are conducted into legitimate channels. The novice henceforth can cope with the development of sex and bodily powers with less of mental strain. In advanced civilisations the initiation ceremony symbolises the advent of a strenuous life of austerity and self-control dedicated to the cause of learning. In the ceremony of the investiture of the sacred thread, for instance, among the Brahmins, the novice, who is then taught by the preceptor the sacred verse of illumination by truth (*gayatri*) takes the vow of celibacy, and there is a mimetic performance first of departure for a distant seat of learning, amid the wailings of the family, of an austere student clad in deer skin, with his staff, books and a bundle of rice ceremonially presented and secondly, of his home-coming as a prospective householder, well-equipped in all the arts and sciences. Throughout India in the homes of Brahmins a small drama is enacted, reminiscent of the old days when the young boy left his family to seek knowledge, perhaps, never to return home, or come back after a lapse of good many years, fully prepared for his domestic and civic duties. The journey abroad and return home now have lapsed into mere mimetic ceremonies in the Brahmin's household, but the sacred thread still continues to be worn throughout his life time.

Next comes marriage, which in both primitive and higher civilisations is a religious ceremony and which must be public and carried out by the would-be partners in a set manner. Where law is absent, religion inculcates the socially desirable marital behaviour and inflicts punishment for departure from it, and the whole community by its presence sets its seal of approval, and enforces it by public enactment. Indeed, the public character of the marriage ceremony is a guarantee against eccentric marital intercourse and of homogeneity and uniformity in the relations between the sexes. The law of exogamy and the dual organisation and classificatory system of relationship which it gave rise to amongst many primitive tribes could only have been maintained by the injunctions and penalties of religion. Various rites characterising the biological and economic aspects of the marital relations gather round the ceremony picturing definitely the issues of the future. Thus symbols drawn from plants and animals or directly from sex life or the sex organs, which represent fertility, virility or reproduction are quite commonly used in marriage rituals. Other rites indicate the economic inter-dependence of husband and wife as a family is started. Some other rites emphasise the change of status or the introduction of a new unit. In higher religions the magical rites and practices intended to bring together the boy and

girl sexually are left to women or to servants of inferior social status and do not form the essentials of the marriage ceremony. Similarly, the rites which are vestiges of primitive marriage by capture or by purchase are relegated to the background. In Hinduism there is the all-important mystic rite of taking the seven steps. The bridgeroom and the bride begin the journey of life together, step by step. This rite is followed by the sacrifices to the sacred fire and by the ceremony of looking at the Arundhati or pole star which symbolises constancy. There is also a ceremonial participation of food between husband and wife. Thus ceremonies of a varied nature, some magical with scarcely veiled hints of the sexual process, some economic inculcating collaboration between the husband and the wife, some social indicating the change of the system of relationships, are all blended together and over them is superimposed an almost mystic religious obligation of chastity and mutual faithfulness. The social group is present throughout. Without the feasts, again, which subserve an important sociological function the marriage is not acceptable to the community. It is thus that the association of religion with marriage has contributed to the integrity and solidarity of the joint family among the Hindus and to high ideals of purity and chastity in marital life.

There is another event which denotes the greatest crisis in a man's life, *viz.*, death. Among all primitive people death mobilises the whole community which must forgather and carry out certain religious obligations to the dead. Fear and sorrow, horror and disgust, which alternately possess the members of a bereaved community are all resolved in the ceremonial co-operation of all in the sacred mortuary rites. Rites such as cleansing and anointing the corpse, decking it in beautiful clothes, ornaments or flowers express the tender emotions which the near ones of the departed must feel at this fateful moment. But religion chastens the love and sympathy for the dead. By prescribing a host of rites and ceremonies religion consoles the bereaved and conquers fear and horror. The presence of the whole community directly participating in some of the rites as a religious obligation also gives comfort. Lastly, there are rituals which directly inculcate the truths of immortality and the beauty, order and justice of the next world. Religion by engendering hope in a future life conquers the despair and perplexity which man must feel in the face of death. There is no more powerful impulse than that to live, there is no more ubiquitous religious belief than that of immortality. Death terminates adjustment in our lives, and hence is the most important occasion for religious rites. Man is faced with perplexities and despairs

in different phases of his existence, but at this supreme crisis of life, his lack of adjustment is the most profound. Thus religion which is spread over a man's life through a succession of events and experiences is now provoked into its most supreme and complex manifestation. For the most part, as the strength of the social bond is measured by the sympathy that death evokes as expressed in public mortuary rites and ceremonies, a religion is to be judged by its adjustment to death.

The above crises of a man's life are among the most important occasions of religious observances. These enable man to adjust himself more readily to the critical situations. Such observances resolve the inner conflict between basic drives which besets man on these occasions. Wherever we see the birth of new interests or the satisfaction or denial from a given social situation of a variety of man's impulses and desires, we find such occasions celebrated with a religious rite. These arise, as we have seen, not merely in the course of changes which mark the instinctive life of normal men and women with birth, initiation, puberty, marriage, parentage or death as their landmarks but also in the procession of the seasons, characterised by contrasts of living conditions. Such for instance, are the spring and autumn festivals, annual hunts and dairy festivals, sowing and harvest ceremonies which are cyclic in their recurrence. Social development has transformed the major impulses of man into essentially social ones and these must accordingly seek satisfaction in a social situation. Hence religious objects and values become essentially social values and the events which most critically involve these social values become religious occasions. Thus as society develops a tradition and a memory, significant events of social and national life are linked with Nature itself and their commemoration becomes also seasonal and cyclic. In all these we find religion subserving the purpose of an inner adjustment based on the instincts and the environment and also of society's external relations, and thus bringing about a stability, both in individual life and social organisation. There is therefore an intimate connection between man's mental development and the occasions of religious celebration. Further, with man's mental evolution there is a marked transformation of the rites and observances themselves. As social integration advances there is an unconscious social modification of ideas and emotions and the individual expression of emotions is relegated to the background. In fact, custom and tradition, however, inchoate and rudimentary in character, discipline the impulses and emotions. Even among primitive peoples the participation of the group or the com-

munity in the tension, excitement or crisis contributes towards the stabilisation and organisation of the emotions. Instead of violent gestures, and outbursts we have a traditionally prescribed set of activities which re-enact birth, death, marriage, hunt, sowing or other critical occasions. A dance, mimetic representation or commemorative performance prepare the entire community for the next momentous event in tribal history and makes easier the task of individual education and adjustment. The rites in fact become the foci of new ideas and social standards which interpenetrate and surround the main events of life that cease to engender doubt, fear or despair. Not merely are the emotions co-ordinated and rendered durable and the activities generalised and abstracted but there is introduced into rites and observances conscious purposes and ideals in the form of myths and legends. Thus the rituals which subserve at first the function of releasing emotional tension or conflict are elaborated and repeated for their own sake bringing with them not only the joy of rhythmical or harmonious action or movement but also emotional integration. Through all this process rites and observances become more efficacious as forms of social control and guides of behaviour, enabling the individual to secure an effective adaptation and the group its solidarity and unity of action when these tasks become peculiarly difficult in the vital crises and momentous events of human existence. Finally, as man becomes critical and ratiocinative he attempts to eliminate the licence from the marriage ritual, the obscenity from initiation or the horrid and disgusting aspects from mortuary observances. Rationalisation and symbolical interpretation accompany a moral expurgation and evaluation of the old rites and observances. It may even be that these are shorn of their attendant emotions, which would mark the transition from the sway of tradition and wooden conventionalism to the abrogation of all old rites and observances characterised by strong emotional expression. With cultural progress there is a tendency to demand an intellectual type of satisfactions from rituals, and to depend upon science and the cultivation of aesthetic attitudes and social virtues and affections to control and orient the whole of social activity. Yet there cannot be any doubt that the conservative influences of religion along with other means of social control are immensely strengthened by the aid and co-operation of the special arts and ritualistic activities and exercises, which provide a satisfying emotional experience of mutual responsiveness the loss of which we all deplore in self-conscious societies. (From "The Twentieth Century").

BHARATA SAMAJA

I

Annual Report for 1934.

MEMBERSHIP. The number of Registered members on the rolls at the beginning of the year was 58. Three members, whose names were on the 'Suspense' list, renewed their membership in the year and there were four new admissions or an increase of 7 while one died and 12 are placed on the 'Suspense' list for non-payment of dues for over three years under Rule VI (e) or a decrease of 13. This leaves 52 members on the rolls at the close of the year.

COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT. At the meeting held on 28-12-33, 16 members were elected to the Council, of Management, which elected Rajadharma Praveena Dewan Bahadur K. S. Chandrasekhara Iyer as President and the undermentioned gentlemen to the Executive Committee. (1) Dr. G. Srinivasamurthi, Chairman, (2) Mr. C. Subbaramayya, Secretary, (3) Mr. A. Ranganadha Mudaliar (4) Mr. C. V. Krishnaswamy Ayyar and (5) Mr. C. Subbarayadu, Councillors.

FINANCE. A sum of Rs. 999-3-8 is invested in the banks, Rs. 700 as a Fixed Deposit in the Cooperative Central Bank, Conjeevaram and Rs. 299-3-8 in the Indian Bank, Mylapore under 'Savings Bank' account. Of the total amount, Rs. 845-0-0 relates to endowment Fund leaving a balance of Rs. 154-3-8 only for current expenses. Excluding the amounts paid for the Endowment Fund (viz) Rs. 125 in the current year and Rs. 80 for last year the Receipts have fallen much below last year being Rs. 227-2-8 against Rs. 330-6-7 of last year. The decrease is under all heads of income. Our thanks are due to Mr. Mavji Govindji who collected a donation of Rs. 100 towards Endowment Fund from two private gentlemen. The expenditure for the maintenance of the temple works out to Rs. 151-7-9 in the year against Rs. 177-7-0. It has been brought to a minimum but as it is now proposed to have evening Pooja as well, though on a smaller scale, the expenditure will increase. The Samaja hopes that well-wishers of the Temple will be able to collect some donations towards the Endowment Fund.

ACTIVITIES. The only activity of the Samaja that is now being carried on is the Pooja, conducted daily at Adyar. It is also conducted at all T. S. gatherings in the Moffussil and on occasions in some of the T. S. Lodges.

II

Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Convention of the Bharata Samaja held at Adyar on 29th December, 1934.

With Mr. K. S. Chandrasekhara Iyer, President for 1934 in the Chair. The annual report of the Samaja for the year 1934 was read and adopted. The following members were elected to the Council of Management for the year 1935. 1. Mrs. Rukmini Arundale. 2. Mr. K. S. Chandrasekhara Iyer. 3. C. Subbaramayya. 4. N. P. Subbramanya Iyer.

5. A. Ranganatha Mudaliar. 6. Dr. G. Srinivasamurthi. 7. C. V. Krishna-swami Ayyar. 8. C. Subbarayadu. 9. Mrs. G. Srirangammal. 10. L. B. Raje. 11. G. N. Gokhale. 12. H. K. Mehta. 13. Mavji Govindji. 14. N. G. Kanitker. 15. D. A. Jayavant. 16. Dr. K. V. Hord.

It was resolved that the Executive Committee be requested to make arrangements to formulate and publish a shortened form of rituals for the "funeral" and "Shradha" ceremonies as was done for "Upanayana" and "Vivaha" by late Pandit A. Mahadeva Sastri and that the said Committee be authorised to incur expenditure not exceeding Rs 25 for that purpose.

III

The above Council of Management met on 29th December 1934 and re-elected the President, Secretary and the Members of the Executive Committee for 1934 for the ensuing year 1935 also.

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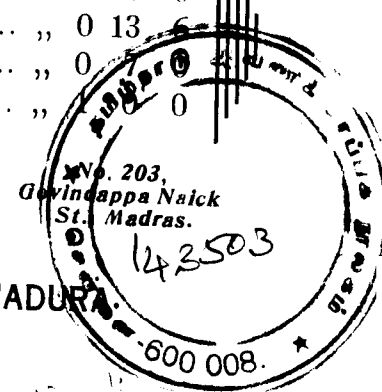
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